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Perceptions of and Approaches to Social Support Exchange While on Probation and Parole

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**Perceptions of and Approaches to Social
Support Exchange While on Probation and Parole**

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Abstract

The vast number of individuals on community supervision (i.e., probation and parole) remains at around 4.5 million Americans and suggests a need for research that delves deep into the nature of challenges faced by this population. Research demonstrates individuals on community supervision tend to rely on others for and provide social support to manage the challenges and conditions of community supervision. Simultaneously, many criminological theories incorporate elements of social support and speak to the importance of social relationships as predictors of criminal behavior, but less is known about the mechanisms underpinning social support exchange. Examination of the delivery and perceptions of social support can provide policymakers with insight about how best to create policy which aids this population. Given the importance of social support exchange for criminological theory and policy, I use qualitative interview data with 62 people on probation and parole in the St. Louis metropolitan area to explore how people on community supervision access, approach, and think about social support exchange. Findings suggest theoretical explanations of social support exchange should be expanded to account for the diversity in support sources and the ways it is exchanged. The participants in this study typically relied a great deal on their family members, as opposed to romantic partners, and sometimes pieced together support from many friends and acquaintances in the absence of family. Probation and parole officers also played a key support role, but their support was overshadowed by the fact that they could implement sanctions if participants were honest about their struggles with compliance. Participants relayed the most helpful support from others came from those who could understand their experiences with the criminal legal system or who had system

experience. Finally, participants' reciprocation was predicated on their ability to convince others they were worthy of help and their access to instrumental goods. Policy efforts should be structured to support more equitable social service distribution for persons on community supervision because their livelihood can depend on the precarious and piecemeal support of informal relationships as well as individual probation and parole officer approaches.

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Chapter I. Introduction

The current era is described as one of "mass probation" (Phelps, 2017, p. 54), "mass social control" (DeMichele, 2014, p. 548), "excessive penal control" (Doherty, 2016, p. 291), and "surveillance" (Young & Petersilia, 2016, p. 1321), which brings with it great challenges for the millions of American adults supervised by correctional systems and their social support systems (Condry & Minson, 2020). Scholars often mention a "carceral state," which refers to the punitive orientation of government operations and expansion of state power via penal operations (Beckett & Murakawa, 2012; Berger, 2019; Friedman, 2021). Indeed, individuals under community supervision, or people on probation and parole, make up the majority of all adults under correctional supervision in the U.S., at 55.1% and 13.9%, respectively. Though the overall number of individuals under community supervision has decreased to its lowest level in the last two decades, the population of individuals on community supervision remains at almost 4.5 million Americans, or about 69% of the country's correctional population (Minton et al., 2021). The vast number of individuals on community supervision suggests a need for research that delves deep into the nature of the challenges faced by this population and that explores how they manage the challenges of supervision.

Scholars have pointed to the proliferation of misdemeanor case processing (Kohler-Hausmann, 2018; Natapoff, 2018; Stevenson & Mayson, 2018) and "net-widening" effects of community supervision (Phelps, 2017) as some of the major drivers of the expanded supervised population in the community. While probation was historically explained as a potential alternative sanction to incarceration, low-level cases that were previously assigned sanctions such as fines are now diverted to probation (Aebi

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et al., 2015; Blomberg & Cohen, 2003; Morris & Tonry, 1990). Moreover, at the "back end," the restrictions imposed on individuals sentenced to probation increase the probability that individuals will be sent to prison and eventually be paroled (Caplow & Simon, 1999; Klingele, 2013; Tonry & Lynch, 1996). For instance, individuals sentenced to probation and parole often face significant imposed conditions including, but not limited to regular reporting to their probation officer; making payments on fines, fees, and restitution; attending treatment and other court mandated programs; and complying with electronic monitoring (Klingele, 2013; Phelps & Ruhland, 2022).

Not only has the population of individuals under community supervision remained relatively large, but researchers contend that penal control produces myriad consequences for those under community supervision. People who encounter the criminal legal system experience "carceral citizenship" meaning their interactions with the public welfare agencies, the labor and housing market, families, and civic life are fundamentally altered by such contact (Miller & Stuart, 2017, p. 533). Scholars note that the procedural hassles of compliance (e.g., transportation, childcare, access to court information) and exorbitant amount of time necessary to comply with these conditions are costs in and of themselves (Feeley, 1979; Kohler-Hausmann, 2018). Additionally, individuals who come into contact with the criminal legal system are often forever marked via publicly accessible court data and online criminal record keeping (Jacobs, 2015; Lageson, 2020; Pager, 2003). In consequence, contact with the criminal legal system promotes avoidance behaviors wherein individuals avoid socialization with others in their communities (Fader, 2021; Leverentz, 2020), areas they perceive to be overpoliced (Giuffre & Huebner, 2023), job applications which might utilize private background check

companies (Lageson, 2016), labor organization (Reich & Prins, 2020), voting (White, 2019), healthcare (Fong, 2019, 2020), and educational opportunities (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017). Police contact is also known to exacerbate hypervigilance as well as health issues, especially among communities of color (Smith et al., 2019). Simultaneously, interactions with the criminal legal system have become increasingly financialized. The vast expansion of criminal legal operations and decline in state revenues has also transferred the monetary correctional costs to "users" of the system, meaning the system attempts to recoup money via fines, fees, surcharges, and interest which scholars have termed "legal-financial obligations," "LFOs," or "monetary sanctions" (Harris, 2016).

Recent scholarship speaks to the conflicting functions of community supervision as coercion and care (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). These conflicting functions stem from the conditions of "carceral citizenship" (Miller & Stuart, 2017). Miller and Stuart (2017) contend individuals who come into contact with the criminal legal system gain access to social services that are not accessible to the broader community, but such services are provided in a stigmatizing, punitive, and fragmented environment which limits their efficacy. In a perverse sense, people under community supervision gain access to care in terms of healthcare, drug treatment, counseling, and job training, when they are incarcerated and then paroled (Miller & Stuart, 2017).

Phelps and Ruhland (2022) explain people under community supervision must balance many responsibilities in order to remain in the community. Often, the threat of revocation looms as a potential consequence for inability to comply with the conditions of supervision and, "strips adults of their independence and the ability to make

autonomous choices about their lives" (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022, p. 806). Community supervision is uniquely punitive in that individuals under this form of correctional control are not allowed to choose where they live and work, how they spend their time, and with whom they associate (Klingele, 2013; Petersilia, 2003; Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Phelps and Ruhland (2022, p. 811) contend community supervision can act as a "lifeline" for some, but the time and financial costs of supervision compound with the responsibilities of daily life such as employment and maintaining relationships with family.

Scholars detail how penal control has permeated American family life. The social and financial challenges of community supervision often cause system-impacted persons to rely on their families for assistance (Boches et al., 2022; Phelps & Ruhland, 2022; Western et al., 2015). System-impacted people rely on others for social support, or perceived and actual emotional (e.g., love and a sense of belonging), instrumental (e.g., housing, transportation, money), and interactional (e.g., advice, guidance) resources (Mowen et al., 2019). This reliance leads to what Miller (2021, p. 123) terms the "economy of favors." Miller (2021) argues that in this informal economy the survival of individuals serving community supervision sentences is dependent on others' willingness to help them, causing conflictual relationships and compounding the instability of an already precarious situation. Literature on the impact of criminal legal system contact on the family supports the notion that relatives of system-impacted individuals experience "symbiotic harms" of system contact, meaning the negative effects of punishment flow, "through the interdependencies of intimate associations" (Condry & Minson, 2020, p. 9). This intensive reliance on others may promote guilt (deVuono-Powell et al., 2015), a lack of independence (Nagrecha et al., 2015; Pleggenkuhle, 2018), and a cycle of poverty

(deVuono-Powell et al., 2015; Huebner & Shannon, 2022; Nagrecha et al., 2015; Pleggenkuhle, 2018) that permeates informal relationships of system-impacted persons (Boches et al., 2022).

Despite these challenges, many criminological theories incorporate elements of social support and speak to the importance of social relationships as predictors of criminal behavior. For example, supportive relationships may help individuals cope with stress and strain, reducing the likelihood a person will engage in criminal behavior (e.g., Agnew, 1992). Life course researchers find relationships can act as key turning points or hooks in system-impacted persons' lives, fostering identity change and promoting prosocial behavior (e.g., Giordano et al., 2002; Sampson & Laub, 1993). At the same time, control theorists argue strong social bonds can increase a person's investment in conformity and raise the stakes of engaging in criminal behavior (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 1990). While the potential for these relationships to influence criminal behavior is well documented, less is known about the ways in which individuals access this support and what the mechanisms or process is when support is exchanged (Mowen et al., 2019). Research additionally remains limited in its ability to explain both how individuals under community supervision, as opposed to those in prison, navigate support from their social networks beyond women family members and partners (Condry & Minson, 2020). The "economy of favors" to which community supervised people are so often subjected is made up of an unpredictable, piecemeal network of support people (Miller, 2021), suggesting many types of relationships may have important downstream effects on crime. In consequence, some researchers have suggested that the established empirical and theoretical support for the importance of relationships during community supervision for

recidivism warrants inquiry into *how* and *why* relationships matter for people with system contact, rather than asking *if* support matters (Mowen et al., 2019).

Deep examination of the delivery and perceptions of social support can provide policymakers with insight about how best to create policy which aids the large population under community supervision (Mowen et al., 2019). System-impacted persons are formally and informally excluded from some sources of support when they are legally barred from certain settings or resources and discriminated against (Miller & Stuart, 2017). People affected by the criminal legal system may therefore have less access to formal supports such as medical professionals, counselors, educators, and clinicians (McCamish-Svensson et al., 1999). Consequently, naturally occurring sources of support including family, friends, and acquaintances are particularly important targets for policy intervention (Cullen, 1994). For instance, when social support from informal sources is nonexistent or limited, interventions may help individuals build a social network upon which they can access and rely (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011). For example, social network interventions have connected individuals with substance abuse problems to substance-free community volunteers at weekly sessions and then attend substance-free social activities (Brooner & Kidorf, 2002). Moreover, when individuals' support needs do not align with the support that they are given, policy efforts, can be designed to help individuals and their social networks build appropriate supports. Psychologists have suggested community supervised people develop appropriate social supports through family counseling (Sullivan et al., 2002). At the same time, community supervised persons' relationships with their probation and parole officers can act as important formal social supports, particularly in an absence of informal assistance. For instance, people on

probation report their officers connect them with important resources that help them stay sober and address instrumental needs (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022).

Given the importance of social support exchange for criminological theory and policy, the goals of this dissertation are threefold. First, this dissertation seeks to deepen criminologists' understanding of people on community supervision, their relationships, and how they access social support from a variety of sources such as family, friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, and probation officers. Second, this dissertation seeks to understand the kinds of support community supervised persons need and what they do to get that support. Last, this dissertation attempts to explain what community supervised persons' think about social support exchange. To accomplish these goals, the dissertation uses semi-structured, qualitative interview data from individuals on probation and parole in the St. Louis metropolitan area of Missouri to answer three research questions: (1) How do individuals under community supervision build, maintain, and sever relationships with sources of support (e.g., family, friends, romantic partners, acquaintances, probation/parole officers) and how do these strategies vary by relationship type? (2) How do individuals under community supervision exchange support with their social networks and how do these strategies vary by relationship type? and (3) How do individuals under community supervision perceive social support exchanges?

Overview of the Study

One goal of this dissertation is to document how individuals on probation and parole build, maintain, and sever relationships with the sources of social support in their lives (e.g., family, friends, romantic partners, acquaintances, probation/parole officers) and what social support exchange looks like within those relationships. Further, this

dissertation seeks to expand upon how individuals on probation and parole conceive of social support exchange and what that process means to them. Using semi-structured, qualitative interview data, this dissertation takes a detailed look at how the unique obligations and constraints imposed on individuals serving community supervision sentences shape their everyday lives while paying particular attention to the "economy of favors" that system-impacted persons often must navigate (Miller, 2021).

This dissertation proceeds in the following way. Chapter II of this dissertation explores how social support exchange is operationalized in the psychological and criminological literatures and the established empirical support for the importance of social support exchange in terms of well-being and health. This chapter also provides an overview of community supervision conditions as they relate to the concepts of carceral citizenship and the economy of favors. The chapter concludes with a description of the common ways social support exchange has been studied in the criminological literature and extant literature that explores how and with whom individuals on probation and parole exchange social support. Chapter III provides information on the study site, data and recruitment methods, interview materials, and grounded theory qualitative methodology I utilized in this project. Chapter IV presents the ways in which the participants discussed they built, maintained, and severed relationships with others and includes a discussion of how these strategies varied by relationship type. Chapter V discusses how the participants exchanged support with others, meaning the ways in which they asked for help and the types of things they exchanged (e.g., instrumental, interactional, emotional) and how these strategies varied by relationship type. Chapter VI of the dissertation explores how the participants felt about social support exchanges and

what social support exchanges meant to them. Finally, the dissertation concludes with

Chapter VII which discusses the findings and makes recommendations with respect to

policy, future research, and theoretical development.

Chapter II. Literature Review

This chapter begins with background literature on social support exchange and discusses how social support exchange is important for health and well-being to underscore its relevance as the subject of the current study. Next, the chapter details the history and purpose of community supervision and the conditions of compliance typically associated with this mode of correctional control. Further, the chapter links community supervision to the concepts of coercive care and carceral citizenship, with particular attention to how the structure of community supervision promotes reliance on others through the economy of favors (Miller, 2021; Miller & Stuart, 2017; Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Finally, the chapter explains the existing ways social support exchange has been studied in the criminological literature and the current state of research as to how and with whom people on community supervision exchange support.

An Overview of Social Support

Existing criminological scholarship typically uses Lin's (1986) definition of social support. Lin (1986, p. 18) defines social support as, "perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners." In the criminological literature, emotional support is loosely defined as feeling close to others or loved by others while instrumental is defined as support with housing, employment, transportation, and monetary assistance (Taylor, 2016). Mowen and colleagues' (2019) findings suggest there is a third dimension of social support – interactional – which they distinguish as being able to talk about problems with others, turning to others for suggestions, and relying on others for understanding. Mowen and colleagues (2019) distinguish emotional support from

interactional support in that emotional encompasses feelings of love and belongingness, while interactional encompasses guidance, advice, and information giving. In this study, I adopt Mowen and colleagues' (2019) dimensions of social support to describe exchanges, discussing (1) emotional, (2) interactional, and (3) instrumental in the context of community supervision.

Importantly, Lin (1986) makes a distinction between the objective delivery and perception of social support. On one hand, support is objectively delivered, but on the other hand, the person receiving support has their own perceptions of the support which may impact whether the support helps the person in some way (Cullen, 1994). Further, social support is provided within particular relationships and during specific interactions (Reis & Collins, 2000), which can communicate feelings of attachment, intimacy, mutuality, and solidarity (Rutter, 1987). For instance, Semmer and colleagues (2008) explain that instrumental acts may carry emotional meaning and communicate caring, empathy, respect, and acceptance. In effect, the manner of delivery of the support may matter (see also Kras, 2019). Therefore, an increase in social support does not necessarily lead to feeling like more help was provided (Schilling, 1987).

Both the source and dimensions of social support are pertinent for researchers to understand because they likely impact how individuals perceive social support (Lincoln, 2000). Further, social support perceptions are linked to mental health outcomes. Persons who perceive social support in a positive light report better mental health. Positive perceptions of social support also have as great of an effect on mental health as the actual support (Reis & Collins, 2000; Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998; Rook & Underwood, 2000; Wills & Shinar, 2000). For example, an adult person who moves back into a house with

their parents to save money may simultaneously receive instrumental support and have better or worse mental health depending on the quality of their relationship with their parents. Other characteristics of the support, such as the type, extent, and quality are likely to influence whether that support promotes conflict or builds relationships, yet these characteristics are largely unexplored within criminology (Mowen & Visher, 2015).

Lin's (1986) definition also explains social support comes from different sources (i.e., community, social networks, and confiding partners). Social support serves an important function as something that can be provided by an individual, but also a, "property of social networks and of communities" (Cullen, 1994, p. 531). Equally important, social support may be provided by formal agencies and institutions (Vaux, 1988). People who provide informal social support include family, friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners while formal social supports could include schools, hospitals, mental healthcare providers, and the criminal legal system (Cullen, 1994). Some evidence suggests emotional support can be helpful to enhance quality of life, no matter the source. In contrast, individuals express preference for interactional support from "experts" such as formal sources of support. Interactional support from informal sources like family and friends may be perceived as unwanted advice. Evidence is mixed as to whether the source (i.e., formal or informal) of instrumental support affects whether it is perceived as helpful (Helgeson, 2003).

Social Support, Well-Being, and Health. Social support is an important concept for criminologists given its connection to stress and strain (Cullen, 1994). Social support can mitigate the effects of stress and strain by helping people cope with strain or alleviating the source of the strain, potentially reducing criminal behavior (Agnew, 1992).

Relatedly, social psychology research suggests the effect of social support on wellbeing and quality of life may be buffered by stress. If an individual has little to no stress in their life, simply having a social network of others around and feeling like one is a part of a group can enhance perceptions of quality of life. However, when an individual reports they have high levels of stress in their life, social support resources may be necessary for the individual to cope (Helgeson, 2003). The nature, timing, and severity of a stressor may also affect how a person perceives the effectiveness of support. For example, if a stressor is perceived as controllable, interactional support guiding the person what to do about the stressor may be most helpful. If the stressor is uncontrollable, emotional support may be perceived as most helpful (Helgeson, 2003). Jacobson (1986) posits there are three phases of a stressor, which may influence how an individual perceives the helpfulness of the support. In the first phase, which Jacobson (1986) terms the "crisis phase," the person becomes aware of the stressor and emotional support might be most needed. People in the crisis phase want to know others will be available and willing to help if needed. In the second phase, termed the "transition phase," the individual uses particular mechanisms to cope with the stressor and may need information, or interactional support, from others about how to cope. Finally, in the "deficit phase," the individual may be overwhelmed by the excessive demands of the stressor and need instrumental support from other people the most (Jacobson, 1986).

Perceived available social support, or the belief that social support will be available if needed, is most strongly related to health outcomes in the psychological literature (Blazer, 1982; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Helgeson, 1993; Kessler & McLeod, 1984; Uchino, 2004, 2009). Social support may only be helpful when it is perceived as

responsive by the recipient as helpful to their individual needs (Maisel & Gable, 2009). This is in contrast to received or enacted support, which refers to the support that is actually received (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Feeney and Collins (2015) explain that the support recipient's perception of the support mediates the support provided and thereby impacts the recipient's outcomes in terms of health. They suggest the perception of the support as a mediator can explain some of the disparate findings with respect to received support on health (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Some studies show received support can ameliorate health (e.g., Collins et al., 1993; Costanza et al., 1988; Winstead et al., 1992) while others find received support can make health worse (e.g., Forster & Stoller, 1992; Krause, 1997; Penninx et al., 1997) and some find there is no relation between self-reports of received support and mental health outcomes (e.g., Barrera, 1986; Dunkel-Schetter & Bennett, 1990; Sarason et al., 1990).

Evidence suggests the exchange of instrumental support poses unique stressors for individuals living in poverty. For example, individuals' social networks are typically governed by the principle of "homophily," meaning people create social networks with others who share similar characteristics like gender, race, education, and social class (McPherson et al., 2001). In result, individuals' social networks may have limited economic resources to exchange depending on the network's characteristics (Portes, 1998). People experiencing poverty will typically exchange instrumental support with other people experiencing poverty, limiting the amount of instrumental goods within the network (Harknett & Hartnett, 2011). Extant research demonstrates people living in poverty who receive instrumental resources from others also provide it to them (Hogan et al., 1993). Moreover, even when people in poverty have connections with relatives who

have relatively more instrumental resources, those relatives are unlikely to provide them with instrumental support (Lubbers et al., 2020). People with criminal convictions may rely heavily on others to meet instrumental needs, but also rely on others who are living in poverty to meet those needs which limits both parties' ability to build economic resources (e.g., deVuono-Powell et al., 2015).

Reciprocation of social support has important implications for health, well-being, and relationships. Scholars suggest caring for others' needs creates a snowball of positivity which benefits both provider and recipient (Canevello & Crocker, 2010). Social psychologists argue individuals have an inherent need to provide social support to others and are psychologically healthier, have improved mood, and better self-evaluations if they are able to do so (Bowlby, 1982; Deci et al., 2006; Williamson & Clark, 1989). People who are able to provide social support to loved ones have a reduced risk of morbidity and mortality (Brown et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2009; O'Reilly et al., 2008) and better cardiovascular health (Piferi & Lawler, 2006). Moreover, spending money on other people has a greater positive impact on mental health rather than spending money on oneself (Aknin et al., 2013; Dunn et al., 2008).

Providing social support can also increase feelings of social connection with others, and particularly among romantic partners (Inagaki & Eisenberger, 2012). For instance, giving and receiving support is related to marital satisfaction (Brunstein et al., 1996; Kaplan & Maddux, 2002) and greater reciprocity predicts better daily emotional well-being (Gleason et al., 2003). People in romantic relationships who exchange social support report better relationship closeness (Gleason et al., 2008) where the feeling of responsiveness of a partner increases the recipient's expression of gratitude and affection

(Collins et al., 2014) and their prosocial motivation and behavior towards the person who provided the support (Reis et al., 2010).

Reciprocation additionally plays a key role in relationship satisfaction and with instrumental social support exchanges (Lubbers et al., 2020). Lubbers and colleagues (2020) explain relational conflict can occur when individuals are not able to reciprocate instrumental exchanges and non-reciprocation is most likely to occur when individuals experience poverty. Individuals experiencing poverty who cannot reciprocate may also be reluctant to ask for social support from others given that they know they will be unable to provide it back. Family members, in particular, may believe they have a duty or obligation to provide instrumental support to others within their family. This sense of obligation or duty may mobilize the provision of instrumental support, but if this support is not reciprocated the provider may experience emotional damage or perceive a lack of love or rejection (Lubbers et al., 2020). Consequently, family members may avoid asking for support from others in their family to avoid these negative emotions and relational problems (Offer, 2012). If family members provide continuous instrumental support, conflict can occur when the receiver of the support does not reciprocate the exchange in some way. People with criminal convictions who receive instrumental support and cannot repay it due to outstanding criminal legal debt and limited access to formal employment may therefore be indebted to family members in times of poverty (Giuffre, 2023). In sum, the perception of social support, and especially its availability in times of crisis, can buffer life stressors. However, the effectiveness of such a buffer depends heavily on whether the support is reciprocated. The particular characteristics of the social network,

such as economic status, are likely to play a role in whether or not the support is reciprocated (see e.g., Lubbers et al., 2020) or received well (Semmer et al., 2008).

History and Purpose of Community Supervision in the U.S.

This dissertation specifically explores social support in the context of community supervision given criminology's primary focus on social support in the context of incarceration (Condry & Minson, 2020). "Community supervision" refers to sanctioning which allows people convicted of crimes to serve their sentences in the community. Community supervision can act as an alternative to incarceration, or be imposed as a part of an individual's reentry from prison. Community supervision sentences imposed instead of prison incarceration are termed "probation" and those imposed after a prison term are termed "parole" (Klingele, 2013). Individuals on probation may also experience jail incarceration prior to their probation sentence (Petersilia, 1997). Probation and parole also differ in that probation is a sentencing option for local judges, while parole is granted by a state agency (Petersilia, 2011).

Many scholars view community supervision as a "risk management" tool designed to surveil marginalized populations and send individuals deemed "too dangerous" for the community back to prison and jail (Klingele, 2013; Lynch, 1998; Phelps, 2018; Simon, 2013; Werth, 2013). Feeley and Simon (1992) argue there has been a shift towards "identifying and managing unruly groups" as opposed to punishing or rehabilitating people with criminal records. Historically, probation was implemented to keep individuals convicted of a crime for the first time from incarceration and induce rehabilitation (England, 1957). In practice, probation is sometimes used as a prosecutorial tool to convince defendants to enter guilty pleas (Rothman, 1980). Probation, however,

can potentially offer an individual the opportunity to maintain work, relationships, and have access to community programs they would not otherwise have access to if they were incarcerated. Probation also allows the state to surveil and monitor individuals while providing these services (Miller & Stuart, 2017).

Similarly, parole was designed to serve rehabilitative and surveillance aims, but for those incarcerated in prison. Parole was first predicated on a prison warden's determination that an incarcerated person was rehabilitated enough for release and then states shifted to the use of parole boards who make that determination (Scott-Hayward, 2011). Parole was originally designed to aid system-impacted persons in their reentry into the community, but high-profile crimes committed by parolees increased political pressure to implement additional restrictions and treat violations harshly (Petersilia, 1999). Scholars argue surveillance (Klingele, 2013) and law enforcement (Petersilia, 2011), as opposed to rehabilitation, are now the main purposes of probation and parole.

Criminal legal theorists argue the shift to more punitive, surveillance focused community supervision operations coincided with the growth of the carceral state and a shift in social service operations (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Welfare spending for the working poor, elderly, and disabled has increased (Moffitt, 2015), yet is characterized as surveillance oriented and punitive (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). These scholars point to the neoliberal and paternalistic attitudes inherent in current welfare policies. Individuals who need welfare are encouraged to become self-reliant market actors and consumers and they are managed and disciplined by state agencies when they do not work in the formal labor market (Bonnet, 2019; McNeill, 2020; Soss et al., 2011). Individuals with fewer economic means and people of color are overpoliced (Bach, 2019; Greene, 2019;

Herring, 2019) and jails and prisons function as the problematic locations in which

marginalized groups receive services (Comfort, 2008; Sue, 2019; Western, 2018).

Community Supervision Conditions

A growing body of literature documents the conditions imposed on individuals

under community supervision. For instance, Huebner and colleagues (2023) find

probation and parole conditions can include reporting regularly to a probation officer,

maintaining stable employment, attending classes and treatment programs, avoiding

future criminal behavior, and obtaining permission before traveling outside the

jurisdiction of the probation and parole officer. If community supervised individuals do

not follow the conditions set forth by the court and their supervising agency, they can

receive a probation or parole violation at the discretion of their supervising officer and a

judge. Violations can result in additional sanctioning, such as prison incarceration or an

extended community supervision sentence (Huebner et al., 2023). These conditions can

also vary by crime type. For example, individuals convicted of sexual offenses may be

electronically monitored, required to engage in polygraph testing, and limit their access to

the internet (Petrunik et al., 2008). Klingele (2013) explains laws around community

supervision conditions allow courts and correctional agencies to impose virtually any

condition on community supervised people as long as those conditions impose a less

punitive sentence than incarceration. Given individuals under community supervision are

legally treated as if they have "diminished" rights during supervision, these conditions

are exceptionally difficult to challenge in the courts (Wynton, 2011). Petersilia (2011, p.

513) contends there has been a "piling up" of unrealistic community supervision

conditions, which are both difficult for probation and parole to enforce and for people under community supervision to know and follow.

Despite the concept of rehabilitation in community supervision resurfacing in recent years (Goodman, 2012; Phelps, 2013, 2018), the restrictions imposed on community supervised people are uniquely punitive (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Though community supervision gives system-impacted people access to particular services like treatment or classes (see Miller & Stuart, 2017), the punitive nature of such care typically overshadows its benefit (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Community supervision services are provided to people who still potentially experience a stigmatizing criminal record, demeaning interactions with a probation or parole officer, financial and time obligations linked to meeting the conditions of their supervision, and revocation (Miller, 2014; Phelps & Ruhland, 2022; Welsh, 2019). For example, individuals on probation in Missouri sometimes reported they faced challenges in communicating with probation officers. People on probation characterized individual probation officer attitude as an important component of probation success (Huebner et al., 2023).

Most pertinent to this study, the conditions of probation and parole typically constrain with whom a community supervised individual is allowed to associate. For instance, in the document outlining the universal conditions that everyone on probation and parole in Missouri must follow, the Department of Corrections (2017, p. 9) encourages the involvement of family, friends, and significant others during supervision. It reads:

> The Missouri Board of Probation and Parole strongly encourages the involvement of your family, friends, and significant others during your supervision process. Family and friends can play a major role of support for you to positively develop as an individual who can make better choices and live as a productive and law-

abiding citizen within a community setting. We hope your family and friends will become familiar with the conditions and expectations of probation, parole or conditional release as set forth by the Court and/or Parole Board. Family and friends are encouraged to openly communicate any concerns they have regarding you to your assigned Probation and Parole Officer.

The Missouri Department of Corrections (2017) encourages support from these informal sources and for those individuals to contact the supervising officer in case of concern. Simultaneously, the Missouri Department of Corrections (2017, p. 5) expresses concern about and prohibits community supervised individuals associating with any other individual (particularly friends and associates), with prior felony or misdemeanor convictions or people who are currently supervised in the community:

I will obtain advance permission from my Probation and Parole Officer before I associate with any person convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or with anyone currently under the supervision of the Board of Probation and Parole. It is my responsibility to know with whom I am associating.

As you review your past life and think about how you got involved in difficulty with the law, many times you will find that your association with some other person, who previously had legal difficulty, played a role in your situation. This condition is to help you avoid this mistake in the future. It will be your responsibility to know with whom you associate. We would caution you to select your friends and associates wisely.

These conditions regarding association with others have implications for the economy of favors proposed by Miller (2021). The Department of Corrections (2017) enhances the control of family members over community supervised people by encouraging them to communicate with community supervision officers, but limits the control of other informal sources of support with criminal records by preventing individuals under community supervision from associating with people who have prior criminal legal contact. Simultaneously, the condition's focus on family members and friends providing a "major role of support" indicates that informal sources of support in Missouri are

encouraged to act as a part of the patchwork web of social services uniquely available to system-impacted persons (Miller & Alexander, 2016). Given these restrictions of association and involvement of probation and parole officers in the lives of community supervised people, this dissertation seeks to expand criminological knowledge about how the economy of favors operates under these constrained conditions. Particularly, this dissertation will elucidate how individuals on probation and parole make sense of the social support they receive from others, the ways in which they go about exchanging social support, and how they choose to form relationships with others to meet their needs while navigating the constraints imposed by community supervision. The following section details how carceral citizenship and the economy of favors link to community supervision and reliance on others for social support.

Carceral Citizenship and the Economy of Favors

Miller and Stuart (2017) put forth the term, "carceral citizenship" to explain the environment in which community supervision services are provided and how social relationships are structured for people under community supervision. System-impacted persons tend to rely on many informally provided services through kinship ties that are, "not structured by rights or recourse" meaning informal supports have no formal obligation to provide support and they cannot be held liable for refusing to provide support (Miller & Alexander, 2016, p. 309). Importantly, Miller and Stuart (2017) discuss how these community members, in addition to social service providers and system-impacted persons, become enveloped by the carceral state. They argue, "understanding this experience and its broader implications requires that we reckon with the politics of informality, as family members, friends, employers and social service providers take up

the slack of an anemic welfare state" because criminal record discrimination and lack of

social mobility often necessitates their involvement (Miller & Stuart, 2017, p. 536).

Criminal convictions thereby alter a person's social relationships when they come to rely

on these informal sources for support.

Consequently, system-impacted persons can be subjected to others' wishes. Miller

(2021, p. 123) contends system-impacted persons' wellbeing is dependent on their

participation in an "economy of favors." The economy of favors refers to the notion that

goods and services are only exchanged with system-impacted persons insomuch as others

are willing to help them and they are able to convince others they are worthy of such

help. Miller (2021) uses the example of housing to illustrate this point. Formerly

incarcerated persons may have trouble finding housing due to their criminal record.

However, a formerly incarcerated person must convince a landlord to rent to them. The

landlord does not have incentive to keep the apartment safe and clean given the landlord

may view the system-impacted person as a risk to their source of income. Miller (2021, p.

254) notes, "You need the apartment or the job with the boss who mistreats you or the

relationship with the lover you no longer care for because you have nowhere to go."

These exchanges pose risks for both the system-impacted person and the person

with whom they exchange resources (Comfort, 2008), but in many cases both parties in

the exchange need each other for support (Miller & Alexander, 2016). People in system-

impacted individuals' social networks support the system-impacted person, often despite

their own financial and emotional challenges (see also Comfort, 2016; deVuono-Powell

et al., 2015). Informal connections of system-impacted people often must go above and

beyond to make up for social service shortfalls, sometimes also sacrificing their

reputation for helping a stigmatized person. Nevertheless, they may also depend on the system-impacted person for things like childcare, rent, public benefits, and mental health (Miller & Alexander, 2016). The helping person may also suffer emotionally as the system-impacted person may recidivate or have previously broken their trust by engaging in violence or abusive behavior towards them (Miller, 2021).

Even though both parties are exposed to some level of risk during these exchanges, the power of the non-system-impacted person over the system-impacted individual cannot be understated. Miller and Alexander (2016) highlight community supervision officers, social service providers, employers, landlords, and family members each have different stakes in the system-impacted person's behavior and whether they have more contact with the system in the future. For example, a landlord could simply find another tenant if the system-impacted person is incarcerated. Community supervision and social service providers rarely have the time or ability to invest in each person they assist (Lutze, 2013). However, family members' stakes are much higher and thus they may have more or less power depending on how much they rely upon the system-impacted person. When a system-impacted person resides in the community, the housing, safety, public benefits, child support payments, childcare, income, mental health, and well-being of the non-system-impacted individual may be affected by the system-impacted person's ability to remain in the community (Miller & Alexander, 2016). Conversely, Comfort (2008) explains when a person is incarcerated, their romantic partners may have more power over their affairs because the incarcerated person may be even further limited in terms of who they rely upon.

Social Support in the Criminological Literature

Existing criminological theories have underscored the importance of social support as a preventative factor for crime. As highlighted above, social support is known to buffer stress and strain (Agnew, 1992). In the life course literature, the effect of social support is typically discussed in terms of desistance and as a positive force (e.g., Giordano et al., 2002; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Such studies focus heavily on whether the presence of a romantic relationship predicts criminal behavior in adulthood (Skardhamar et al., 2015). These perspectives take a symbolic interactionist approach. The symbolic interactionist perspective takes the position that as individuals interact with people and imagine what others think about their behavior, they may appreciate others' perspectives and adjust their future behavior accordingly (Blumer, 1969). Mead (1934, p. xxi) terms this process of interpreting the meaning of one's own behavior in the eyes of others, "role-taking." Through role-taking, the self, "realizes itself in some sense through its superiority to others, as it recognizes its inferiorities in comparison with others" (Mead, 1934, p. 204). This role-taking process, therefore, can provide a comparison of one's own behavior with that of others, which motivates an individual to organize their actions in accordance with larger social groups (Blumer, 1969). For instance, social connections, and particularly romantic partners, may provide a positive blueprint upon which to model behavior (e.g., Giordano et al., 2002) or increase the possibility that they will engage in criminal behavior depending on the partner's own attitudes towards crime (e.g., Giordano et al., 2007). For example, Laub and Sampson (2003) provide examples that the participants in their study created new identities as family men, hard workers, and providers from their relationships with women romantic partners, which steered them away from criminal behavior. Importantly,

these studies also hint there may be various components of social support important for desistance, such as instrumental (Laub & Sampson, 2003), but do not examine the mechanisms in depth. Findings from these studies suggest system-impacted persons may also provide social support to other people in their lives (Maruna, 2001), but also do not elucidate this reciprocation process in detail.

Control theory has similarly tried to explicate how bonds to family members can prevent criminal behavior. This perspective argues crime and deviance follow when a person's bond to society is weak or broken (Hirschi, 1969). Thus, strengthened social bonds are expected to reduce criminal behavior (Sampson & Laub, 1990). Samspon and Laub (1990) emphasize that the quality or strength of social ties matters more than whether the social bond occurred or at what time in a person's life. Social investment in family, work, and the community are typically lauded as the institutions to which adult persons bond (Sampson & Laub, 1990). As Chouhy and colleagues (2020) note, however, there has been a lack of theorizing about what quality or strength means in terms of social bonds. They argue social bonding veers on the edge of social support because social bonding involves many of the same components as social support. For example, a quality marriage may involve the provision of emotional support to buffer stressful moments and instrumental support in terms of sharing material wealth and assets like a family home. A quality spouse might also provide interactional support in the form of guidance about connections to other social institutions such as how to get a job (Chouhy et al., 2020). This dissertation broadens the scope of the strain, life course, and control literatures by examining the process of social support exchange for persons under community supervision. Instead of looking at the presence of a relationship as a predictor of criminal

behavior, this dissertation focuses on describing many types of relationships (e.g., family, friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, probation/parole officers) of community supervised people, what they do to get the support they need and return support to others, as well as their perceptions of the process.

Recent research has tried to uncover some of the nuances associated with social support exchange in criminology. Notably, when individuals have interactions with multiple parties, such as with family and friends, the effect of social support on recidivism may be changed. For example, Boman and Mowen (2017) highlight that individuals who receive positive family support and negative peer support may not appear to decrease their criminal behavior from social support. Boman and Mowen (2017) hypothesize that prosocial attitudes of family could be "cancelled out" by the strong pull of antisocial attitudes of friends. Thus, when individuals receive support from persons with differing attitudes towards crime, the effect of their support may not be captured in quantitative models. Other scholars have spoken to the potential for intimate partners and family to enable criminal behavior by providing instrumental support (Lytle et al., 2017; Simons & Barr, 2014). For instance, if family provides their system-impacted relatives with money, they may be able to purchase illicit substances (Lytle et al., 2017). Moreover, even when families may provide instrumental support, they may still increase the likelihood of recidivism because they impose unrealistic expectations on their system-impacted relatives or provide instrumental support, but act in an abusive manner (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011).

In criminology, relationships with family members and prosocial others are often assumed to play a critical role in reentering individuals' desistance (Mowen et al., 2019)

while relationships with peers are typically assumed to promote antisocial behavior (McGloin & Thomas, 2019). In some cases, however, relationships with family can be criminogenic for individuals under community supervision (e.g., Giordano et al., 2007; Leverentz, 2011), while relationships with friends can provide important access to instrumental goods (e.g., Desmond, 2012; Raudenbush, 2016). Scholars additionally note that a key part of desistance from crime is distance from the "proximate causes and physical environments that led to criminal activity" (Maruna & Roy, 2007, p. 105). Thus, it is important to interrogate how individuals under community supervision forge the relationships with people who can provide them support and break ties with others that detract.

This dissertation also expands upon existing criminological literature which has primarily focused on the effects of incarceration on families and women romantic partners (Condry & Minson, 2020); much less is known about how criminal legal operations' effects reverberate into individuals' broader social networks in the community, including impacts on friends and acquaintances. Given the centrality of social relationships and support in criminological theories (e.g., strain, control, and life course) and the large volume of individuals on community supervision (Minton et al., 2021), a deeper dive into this issue is warranted. The existing literature highlights the social support provided by family members to system-impacted relatives and the potential for this support to impact both the system-impacted person and their family's emotional and financial well-being (Boches et al., 2022). Studying the ways in which punishment affects individuals' social relationships also uncovers the ways that the criminal legal system may exact punishment on legally innocent persons when informal

social supports of system-impacted persons are affected by imposed conditions and constraints (Boches et al., 2022; Condry & Minson, 2020).

Extant literature demonstrates how the prison affects incarcerated persons' relationships, suggesting the constraints and conditions of community supervision may also affect relationships for people on community supervision. In the incarceration literature, individuals build, maintain, and sever relationships with others in the prison environment (Condry & Minson, 2020). Many families spend a great deal of time and money providing for their incarcerated loved ones, which can affect families' emotional and financial well-being (Christian, 2005). Scholars who study the effect of incarceration on families speak to the potential for wives, partners, and mothers to become enmeshed in corrections such that they take on supportive roles as a "primary occupation" (Condry, 2007, p. 55) and "secondary, or surrogate, correctional officers" (Comfort, 2008, p. 187). Women family members and partners of incarcerated men take on these roles when they pay for legal representation, write letters, send packages, pay for commissary, accept phone calls, visit, and encourage their loved ones to comply with the demands of incarceration (Comfort, 2008; Condry, 2007).

Incarcerated persons' relationships are shaped by the financial and emotional conditions of the prison (Condry & Minson, 2020). With little option to get the support they need from the criminal legal system, system-impacted persons must rely on their family members out of necessity (Western et al., 2015). However, this exceptional reliance on family is documented to cause stress and strain in these relationships. Family members report their association with system-impacted family members leads them to feel stigmatized by other community members (Codd, 2008; Condry, 2007). Comfort

(2008, p. 67) likens this feeling to a "secondary prisonization" and Granja (2016, p. 6) discusses it as a "parallel sentence" when families of incarcerated persons take on the punishment of their incarcerated loved ones. In addition, romantic partners of incarcerated men relay fears that the incarcerated men may be using them to gain access to instrumental support, rather than building a romantic relationship built on emotional support exchange. Women in Comfort's (2008) study explained their worries about providing instrumental support made them feel devalued and contributed to conflict in their relationships. Comfort (2008) contends the great deal of social support provided by non-system-impacted persons to incarcerated persons and lack of reciprocation can make the incarcerated person feel powerless and resent the person providing support. With these effects in mind, this dissertation will expand criminological understanding of the impacts of criminal legal operations on social networks by attending to the social networks of persons under community supervision.

In comparison, existing research which explores relationships in the context of community supervision is primarily focused on the reasons why individuals often have access to family members for support and the instrumental benefits this support can provide. Researchers sometimes link this instrumental support to recidivism, showing that the connections others can provide access to goods that reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior (e.g., Berg & Huebner, 2011). This research additionally suggests that individuals with criminal records may face stigma (Uggen et al., 2004) and family members are potentially more likely than others in the community to overlook that stigma and provide social support to them (Braithewaite, 1989; Ekland-Olson et al., 1983; Lofland, 1969; Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Criminal record discrimination

limits access to employment and housing (Lageson, 2016; Pager, 2003) and individuals

with criminal records are more likely to have limited education and work experience

(Visher et al., 2008). If an individual with a criminal record has spent time in prison, that

time may limit their ability to gain new work skills, create gaps in their resume, and limit

the amount of contact they have with community members who could potentially help

them find employment (Western et al., 2015). Families, therefore, can play a pivotal role

in connecting their system-impacted relatives with support like employment

opportunities, which may reduce the likelihood they engage in future crime (Berg &

Huebner, 2011).

  While the criminological literature has established social support can reduce an

individual's propensity to commit criminal behavior, less is known about the process by

which individuals gain access to social support outside the family environment. Some

sociological evidence suggests that individuals with limited economic resources via

family members may choose to create relationships with others termed "situational kin"

in order to gain access to emotional, social, and material goods (Nelson, 2013, p. 270),

though this literature is primarily limited to persons living in poverty and not specifically

system-impacted persons. Granovetter (1974) similarly explains that individuals may

compile information from multiple "weak ties" with others to gain support such as

important information. Further, people living in poverty may create "disposable bonds"

with persons outside their family to amass instrumental resources (Desmond, 2012).

Raudenbush (2016, p. 2021) further argues Black persons living in impoverished, urban

communities may take part in "selective solidarity" or the process of picking and

choosing particular social support persons outside the family to meet instrumental needs

while at the same time being deeply distrustful of most others. Raudenbush (2016)

contends stringent rules prohibiting criminal activity for people living in public housing,

residential instability of the neighborhood, and neighborhood violence contribute to

residents' feelings of unsafety and isolation behaviors. In turn, residents approach

interactions with others in the neighborhood with caution. Building on these concepts of

"situational kin," "weak ties," "disposable bonds," and "selective solidarity" that position

people outside the family as important sources of social support (Desmond, 2012;

Granovetter, 1974; Nelson, 2013; Raudenbush, 2016), this dissertation specifically

explores how people under community supervision access support from and exchange

support with friends and acquaintances in addition to family.

How and With Whom People on Probation and Parole Exchange Social Support

Scholars emphasize how system-impacted people are often instrumental

contributors to their families and romantic partners. Boches and colleagues (2022) denote

how their participants, a group of individuals with legal-financial obligations, were

expected to contribute to the family's rent and household bills. In certain cases, the legal-

financial obligations of the participants were too large, limiting the amount of money the

system-impacted person could provide for their family and engendering familial conflict.

Miller's (2021) ethnographic account of formerly incarcerated people also explains how

many have family members who are also system-impacted. The participants in Miller's

(2021) study sometimes connected their family members with attorneys who could

provide instrumental help in the form of legal assistance. At the same time, many persons

who are system-impacted have children and sometimes child support debt (Link &

Roman, 2017). System-impacted people may also engage in the informal economy, doing

odd-jobs and working for cash, to provide for their romantic partners and families (Giuffre, 2023).

The desistance literature additionally speaks to the ways in which people on community supervision likely provide social support to people in their lives, underscoring the importance of studying social support as a key component of desistance. Giordano and colleagues (2007), for instance, discuss how system-impacted persons provide emotional support to their romantic partners and children. They argue the desistance process focused on role-taking promotes an other-directed worldview. Their participants who were able to engage in loving relationships developed a protective, caring attitude towards their partners and children which helped solidify prosocial identities. One participant from Giordano and colleagues' (2007, p. 1641) study, Colleen, explained about her partner, "He's a wonderful father, not perfect yet, but *I'm working on it*" (emphasis added).

Maruna (2001) denotes how desistance narratives tend to rework criminal histories into sources of emotional and interactional support. Acting as drug counselors, youth workers, community volunteers, and mutual help-group participants served a generative purpose for the people in Maruna's (2001) study. Within these supportive roles, Maruna's (2001) participants explained they felt fulfilled when they gained a new purpose helping others and gained more embeddedness in their communities. Their expertise with the criminal legal system allowed them to engage in reciprocal gestures, often participating in groups where they helped other people navigate desistance. Participants felt they repaid volunteers, counselors, and reintegration workers who had helped them in the desistance process as well. Providing support to others further made

them feel they settled the score with society, their communities, God, and themselves for any harm they had caused. Finally, the participants explained helping others was empowering and therapeutic (Maruna, 2001). Maruna (2001) speaks to the generative potential of twelve-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). These groups may be especially helpful for system-impacted persons in that their core tenets include helping others remain clean and sober (O'Reilly, 1997).

Individuals under community supervision also receive resources from both formal and informal support providers. Probation and parole officers fall into the category of formal social support providers. Such officers are faced with discretionary decisions about how best to provide social support within their officially prescribed supervisory roles. Scholars point to a multiplicity of roles in the community supervision profession. Probation and parole officers must act as "law enforcement" when they ensure community supervised individuals follow the conditions of compliance, but also as "social workers" when they provide social support in terms of rehabilitation (Miller, 2015). Probation and parole officers simultaneously hold authority to surveil, issue violations, and initiate the revocation process, but also connect individuals with therapy, employment, and housing, as well as counsel individuals about their struggles (Hsieh et al., 2015). A third function of community supervision officers is "case management." Community supervision officers are also tasked with assessing community supervised individuals' needs and criminogenic risks and providing services that match those needs and risks and in a way that the person under supervision can understand (Bonta et al., 2008). Ruhland (2020) has proposed a fourth lens under which to view the profession of community corrections officers. In addition to their roles as social workers or law

enforcement officers, community corrections officers also play a major role in collecting

revenue, thus making them "bill collectors" (Ruhland, 2020). Empirical evidence

suggests community supervision officers typically take a "synthetic" approach that

combines multiple roles where they act as law enforcers and support people under

community supervision emotionally and interactionally (Miller, 2015; Skeem &

Manchak, 2008; Whetzel et al., 2011).

Families are typically encouraged to play a role by providing their system-

impacted relatives with support after periods of jail and prison incarceration (Bobbitt &

Nelson, 2004). Individuals returning home from prison tend to rely on family members

for support in terms of housing, finances, and emotions (Ekland-Olson et al., 1983;

Fishman, 1990; La Vigne et al., 2004; Martinez & Christian, 2009; Naser & La Vigne,

2006; Naser & Visher, 2006; Nelson et al., 1999; Nurse, 2002; O'Brien, 2001; Sullivan et

al., 2002) as well as connections to employment (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Evidence

suggests these needs are present, if not more so, for individuals returning home from jail

incarceration. Comfort (2016) explains short periods of incarceration in jail disrupt the

system-impacted person's life in similar ways to prison incarceration (e.g., loss of a job,

government assistance, housing), but differ in that individuals incarcerated in jail are not

provided the same level of services as those in prison. Individuals in prison may receive

educational, drug treatment, and medical services, while those in jail are less likely to

receive them. Consequently, individuals on probation and parole pose, "uniquely

destabilizing" hardships for family members when they rely on them for money, housing,

basic needs, emotional support, and interactional guidance as they cycle in and out of the

jail (Comfort, 2016).

The environment in which social support is provided by family of system-impacted people may be unstable or dangerous. System-impacted persons may also have been convicted of a crime of violence or abuse or one that exhibited a pattern of abuse in the family home yet still return there after jail incarceration (Miller, 2021; Travis et al., 2001). Braman and Wood (2003) denote that when family members have previously engaged in sexual or domestic abuse, the benefits of their support are limited. Family members' emotions may also complicate reconnection. Family members may feel angry, betrayed, or disappointed about the system-impacted person's behavior, potentially leading to conflict (Nelson & Trone, 2000). Family members of system-impacted persons may also be grappling with poverty, substance abuse, and health problems, which can limit the amount, type, and mobilization of support (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001). Grieb and colleagues (2014) found family members provided social support to their formerly incarcerated relatives out of dedication or obligation, perceived injustice about their family member's incarceration, and lack of services in the community. They posit that irrespective of the amount or type of support provided by family members, the additional responsibility, interpersonal conflict of rebuilding relationships, and internal conflict such as feelings of rejection or lack of control over the situation, produced acute stress. This stress can produce negative health outcomes for family members of formerly incarcerated persons, such as anxiety and depression (Grieb et al., 2014). Grieb and colleagues (2014) discuss that caring for a formerly incarcerated family member led some of the persons in their study to unhealthy coping mechanisms like drinking, medication abuse, or fighting system-impacted family members.

Friends and neighbors can be important sources of social support for system-impacted people as well, though the empirical evidence of these supports is more limited than family or romantic partners. Martinez and Abrams (2013) contend that system-impacted persons must balance the potential positives of reaching out to friends and neighbors for help with the understanding their friends and neighbors may exert criminogenic influences (see also Raudenbush, 2016). Moreover, Western and colleagues (2015) study shows friends as a source of housing and transportation, but also a source of anxiety due to their involvement in crime, gangs, or serious drug use. Criminal and supportive influences may come from the same friends. For example, a friend who helps their system-impacted friend find employment, may also encourage them to partake in substance use (Boman & Mowen, 2017). Some evidence suggests formerly incarcerated women rely on others they meet through treatment and the community. Heidemann and colleagues (2014), for instance, found formerly incarcerated women perceived other people on parole whom they met at treatment or reentry programs gave them a sense of belonging, showed them how to navigate the program, and encouraged them. Grieb and colleagues (2014) also found formerly incarcerated women received some support from friends, religious organization, and neighbors, though their discussions were brief and vague. Neighbors may also be a source of social support. For example, individuals on parole in Chicago perceived neighbors as people they could rely on to help solve their problems (Visher & Farrell, 2005). System-impacted persons in Clear and colleagues' (2001) study desired to build connections with friends and neighbors, but feelings of stigma and shame related to their conviction led to their isolation. Hlavka and colleagues' (2015) participants also relayed friends, therapists, mentors, counselors, employers,

advocates, and religious figures provided them with love and emotional support in their reintegration.

Ultimately, various bodies of literature point to the importance of social support in protecting against crime (e.g., Giordano et al., 2002), promoting good health and well-being (e.g., Feeney & Collins, 2015), and serving a generative purpose (Maruna, 2001). Even so, the mechanisms under which social support exchange operates to prevent criminal behavior are not well understood (Mowen et al., 2019) and discussions outside of the family, romantic partners, and prison environment are not common (Condry & Minson, 2020). Some evidence suggests important support can come from a wide variety of sources for people on community supervision (e.g., Hlavka et al., 2015) and people on community supervision reciprocate support in important ways (e.g., Boches et al., 2022). Thus, this dissertation seeks to deepen the current understanding of social support exchange for people on probation and parole. The following chapter details the methods of this study.

Chapter III. Method

Research remains limited in its ability to explain how community supervised persons approach and think about social support exchange with their social networks (Condry & Minson, 2020) as well as the "economy of favors" depicted by Miller (2021). The competing narratives of control and care in community supervision also warrant further study of the relationships probation and parole officers have with the people they supervise (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). This dissertation seeks to answer three research questions to build on these areas of existing scholarship. I ask: (1) How do individuals under community supervision build, maintain, and sever relationships with sources of support (e.g., family, friends, romantic partners, acquaintances, probation/parole officers) and how do these strategies vary by relationship type? (2) How do individuals under community supervision exchange support with their social networks and how do these strategies vary by relationship type? and (3) How do individuals under community supervision perceive social support exchanges?

Study Site

To address the research questions posed, I recruited individuals from four probation and parole offices in the metropolitan area of St. Louis, Missouri. The St. Louis metropolitan area is made up of two separate counties (St. Louis City and St. Louis County) with a total population of about 1.3 million people and sits on the eastern side of the state at the Illinois border. St. Louis County is about two thirds (67.4%) white and approximately one fourth (25.1%) Black where other racial groups make up less than 10% of the population. In comparison, the City of St. Louis is about half white (49.1%) and half Black (44.3%) where other racial groups make up around 5% of the population.

Both St. Louis County and City are less than 5% Hispanic or Latino identifying. About 21.5% of St. Louis City and 10.5% of St. Louis County live under the poverty line (United States Census Bureau, 2023a, 2023b). St. Louis is a classic rust belt city, characterized by declining industry, a falling population, and segregation (Gordon, 2019; Johnson, 2020).

Though individuals on parole are released from prison by a board of seven governor appointed members (RSMo 217.665) and individuals are sentenced to probation by the courts (RSMo 559.012), both groups are supervised by the same probation and parole officers (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2023a). At the same time, people on probation and parole in Missouri are all subject to certain universal conditions of community supervision outlined in the state's "White Book" (see Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017). The Missouri Parole Board or sentencing court also have the authority to impose additional conditions not outlined within the book (RSMo 217.690(4), 559.021(1), 599.100(1)). For example, people on probation and parole must obey all federal and state laws as well as municipal and county ordinances, obtain advance permission from their probation and parole officer prior to traveling or changing their place of residence, and maintain employment while they are supervised in the community (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017)

This analysis relies on data from two sources. First, the project uses data from interviews with participants from a broader grant-funded study examining probation violations in St. Louis County (Huebner et al., 2023). Next, I recruited additional individuals on probation and parole from St. Louis County and St. Louis City to elicit sufficient information from the sample about social support exchange. The broader study

and dissertation received IRB approval through the University of Missouri – St. Louis in July of 2021 and approval to conduct research with the Missouri Department of Corrections shortly after. Data collection for the projects began in the middle of October of 2021 and finished in June of 2022.

The St. Louis area serves as an ideal location to analyze the experiences of individuals under community supervision given the large number of individuals on probation and parole. As of June 30, 2022, the City of St. Louis had 1,057 persons on parole and St. Louis County had 855 persons on parole. In 2022, the City of St. Louis had the greatest number of individuals released onto parole of any county in Missouri and St. Louis County had the greatest number of individuals sentenced to probation of any county in Missouri (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2023b). As of July 2022, 4,086 people were on probation in greater St. Louis. Approximately 61% of those individuals (2,481 people) were supervised in St. Louis County and the remainder were supervised in St. Louis City (Personal Communications with Missouri Department of Corrections, 2022).

Demographic data from the Missouri Department of Corrections shows people on probation and parole in Missouri are predominantly white (77.1%), male (74.7%), and relatively young where the largest age group of individuals on probation and parole is that of individuals between ages 30 and 34 (17.8%). Non-violent and drug offenses make up slightly more than three fourths (75.0%) of the convictions for the probation population and around two thirds (66.8%) of the convictions for the parole population. People discharged from probation or parole in 2022 spent an average of 2 years and 4.5 months on community supervision (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2023b). The

most recent data available on the employment status of people on community supervision in Missouri indicates that more than one third (36.6%) of individuals on probation and parole in the state are unemployed (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2020).

Data and Recruitment

In total, my dissertation chair and I conducted 63 interviews with 62 individuals on probation and parole because one person interviewed twice.[1] We only interviewed individuals with felony convictions because misdemeanor and ordinance convictions cannot be supervised by the state probation and parole officers (Huebner et al., 2023). To recruit individuals on probation and parole from the four offices around St. Louis, my dissertation chair and I posted flyers at each of the probation and parole offices and asked office supervisors to provide copies of the flyer to probation and parole officers. Probation and parole officers were then able to give those copies to potential participants when they reported to the office. Participants who received the flyer then contacted myself to set up interviews over the phone and via Zoom. I also waited at the probation and parole offices, sometimes with my dissertation chair, on reporting days to help answer questions about study participation and interviewed participants if they had time. The in-person interviews were conducted in probation and parole office interview and conference rooms by myself and my dissertation chair. The interview rooms typically had glass doors and officers met with their clients in rooms next to and across from the particular interview room used for this study. The conference room did not have a door and officers sometimes interrupted interviews to ask questions about the study.

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[1] My dissertation chair and I are both white women, which may have influenced participant responses. Scholars have found Black participants may be more likely to alter their responses and downplay the seriousness of their experiences to make white interviewers feel more comfortable (Davis, 1997; Savage, 2016)

Occasionally, participants referred their friends and family who were also community

supervised to participate in interviews over the phone and on Zoom (Biernacki &

Waldorf, 1981).

On average, the participants were around 34 years old and a little more than half

(56.5%) of the sample were white. Only two participants identified as Hispanic. Around

three quarters (71%) of the participants identified as men and more than 80% identified

as straight. About one fourth (29%) identified as women and 20% identified as queer. A

little less than half (48.4%) were unemployed at the time of their interview. About two

thirds (61.3%) had received a probation violation in the past and half (50.0%) had

convictions prior to this probation term, either for violating supervision conditions or for

other crimes. Approximately one third (37.1%) had been to prison. Most (75.8%) of the

sample were supervised in St. Louis County and around half (55.1%) the sample

disclosed their most recent conviction was drug related. The gender representation

appears to closely resemble the broader probation and parole population, but there was a

greater number of people with non-violent and drug offenses (Missouri Department of

Corrections, 2023b) and fewer unemployed (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2020)

than in the sample.

Table 1. Sample Demographics (n = 62)

	% or Mean
Age	34.2
Race	
White	56.5%
Black	32.3%
Multiracial	6.5%
Native American	3.2%
Asian	1.6%
Ethnicity	

	Hispanic	3.2%
Gender Identity		
	Man	71.0%
	Woman	29.0%
Sexuality		
	Straight	82.3%
	Queer	17.7%
Unemployed		48.4%
Past Violation		61.3%
Prior Conviction(s)		50.0%
Prison		37.1%
Supervision Location		
	St. Louis County	75.8%
	St. Louis City	24.2%

Each of the interviews took a semi-structured format and on average lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim utilizing the transcription service offered via Zoom or a third-party transcription service (Rev.com, 2021). Once transcribed, participants provided researchers with a unique pseudonym or were assigned a unique pseudonym to preserve anonymity. Finally, I imported interview transcripts into the qualitative coding software NVivo for analysis. Participants were offered a $30 via Venmo, CashApp, or a gift card as an incentive.

Interview Materials

The semi-structured interview protocol allowed for consistency in data across the research questions, but also allowed participants to elaborate on the topics which they felt were most salient (Spradley, 1979). Related to the broader project, individuals were asked to recall experiences with community supervision and criminal legal system involvement in general, including challenges they have faced, how they communicate with their officer, perceptions of risk assessment, and perceptions of the police and

criminal legal system. Moreover, participants were asked about any probation and parole violations or revocations that they have received and their perceptions about the violation and revocation process. Specific to the current project, participants were asked about the characteristics of their social network, the roles that others (e.g., family members, romantic partner, friends, acquaintances, probation officers) play in their lives, and how exchanging social support makes them feel. The interview guide was developed with the broad idea of "social support" in mind, which acted as a "sensitizing concept," or foundation, for the development of questions (Blumer, 1954).

To understand how individuals under community supervision build, maintain, and sever relationships with others and how these strategies varied by relationship type, I asked participants questions like, "Are you in contact with immediate/extended family members?" and "Can you describe your relationship status?" and "What is your social life like?" and "How is your relationship with your probation/parole officer?" I also probed about how the participants go about meeting others, what kinds of things they do to stay in contact with their social networks, and what strategies they used to sever ties with certain people.

In order to ascertain how the participants exchanged support from their social networks and how those strategies varied by relationship type, I asked participants questions like, "How do you ever ask for help from people in your life?" and probed about who they were asking and for what. I additionally posed questions to elicit examples of times participants asked for help and whether it was easy for them to ask for the help. Moreover, I posed questions like, "Does your support network expect anything

in return when you ask for help?" and "In what ways do you provide support for (or take care of) people in your life?"

To understand how the participants perceived social support exchanges, I asked participants questions such as, "How do you feel when someone in your life expresses they want to help you or offers support?" and "How does it make you feel to ask for help or support from others?" and "How does it make you feel to offer or provide support to others?" and "Does exchanging or receiving support impact your relationships in any way?" I probed participants about the particular relationships that they expressed were meaningful to them, things they wished their support network may have done for them, how they felt about people asking for things in return for social support, and whether they had always felt the same about social support exchanges over their lifetime. The full interview guide is included in the Appendix of this dissertation.

Analysis

Given the goal of the study was to add to the depth of information on community supervised persons' social relationships, how they exchange social support, and their perceptions of this broad process, I employed constructivist grounded theory to inductively analyze interview data gleaned from the project. In this process, I documented emergent themes from the interviews rather than seeking to categorize the interview data into preexisting categories. Constructivist grounded theory methodology stipulates the researcher must pay particular attention to participants' lived experiences and accept that they are the experts on their own experiences. Simultaneously, I paid close attention to my role as a researcher and the social structures that may have influenced participant narratives. This methodology also requires the researcher reflect on

their own biases throughout data collection and analysis and attempt to discern the ways in which data collection and analysis may be influenced by the researcher's experiences and understanding (Charmaz, 2014). To accomplish these aims, I situated participants' narratives within broader scholarship discussing community supervision conditions and consequences and I kept a reflection journal throughout the data collection process to document how I felt during the interview and analysis processes.

Constructivist grounded theory is an iterative process, meaning data collection and analysis adapt over time to try and draw out the most in-depth information available from the interviews. For example, utilizing a constructivist epistemology allows participants to guide the flow of the interview and direct them along new lines of inquiry that may not already be present in the interview guide (Charmaz, 2014). Further, I analyzed and collected the data concurrently, to allow for ample reflection about emerging themes and to reevaluate the existing interview questions and implement new questions that might elicit the most detailed narratives about the studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2014). For instance, at the beginning of the interview process I asked the first few participants to describe the types of things they exchanged with support persons. Upon learning the participants often felt they had little to reciprocate in these exchanges, I revised those questions in future interviews to probe participants about more subtle ways they were able to reciprocate others' help such as by making space for others to express their feelings. Charmaz (2014) notes that analyzing and collecting data simultaneously is advantageous for grounded theorists because it allows researchers to probe about themes that emerge inductively in future interviews. Finally, in the absence

of a second coder, I engaged in intensive discussion with my dissertation chair to check my interpretations of the data (Saldana, 2016).

Though I used the qualitative coding software, NVivo, to organize my analysis, I also mapped emerging themes by hand with notes about subthemes and variations in narratives and similarities and differences among themes (Charmaz, 2014). First, I open coded each interview line-by-line, meaning I assigned small sections of the data a basic description to specify what the data represents (Glaser, 1978). Then, I engaged in a second round of focused coding to identify thematic patterns in the data, using the line-by-line codes to see what kind of patterns were emerging. To identify these patterns, I relied on the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method includes comparing segments of data within and across interviews to certify that the patterns represent the narratives and searching for evidence that would disconfirm such patterns, termed "deviant cases" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These deviant cases are marked as such throughout the findings of this dissertation to provide transparency about cases that did not quite fit with the dominant themes or cases in which the participants' narratives did not have sufficient information to determine whether they fit with the dominant themes. Additionally, I engaged in analytic memo writing to iteratively develop my themes, but also created crosstabulations to see data patterns visually (Macia, 2015). Data collection continued until the emerging themes were significantly saturated, meaning that no new information appeared to emerge from additional data collection (Charmaz, 2014).

Sample Challenges and Opportunities

This sample posed challenges to collect, yet also provided many opportunities to improve upon the current understanding of social support exchange in reference to

community supervision. One of the primary challenges with data collection was accessing a sample of individuals who represented probation and parole more broadly. Black women were particularly difficult to reach and a greater number of the sample was unemployed compared to the broader population of people on community supervision in Missouri (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2020). The sample's responses may therefore have differed from the broader population's in terms of advantages and disadvantages related to race and socioeconomic status. The sampling strategy also primarily targeted persons who were in constant communication with their probation and parole officers. In contrast, people who absconded from their probation and parole officers were likely not well captured in the data. Further, interviews conducted over the phone and via Zoom sometimes did not elicit as rich data as the in-person interviews conducted at probation and parole offices. It was difficult at times to hear participants when this technology was used and calls were sometimes dropped. Moreover, interviewing at probation and parole offices could have posed a risk to participant confidentiality. It is possible that the lack of privacy in the interview rooms may have influenced participants' candor as opposed to those individuals who interviewed over the phone or Zoom. However, the sample includes a wide range of offense types, which gives a broad view of probation and parole. The sample may also provide information that can inform policy in other Midwestern metropolitan areas facing similar challenges. Finally, the sample is unique in that it includes a nontrivial number of women's experiences. Women who participated in the study on Zoom and over the phone spoke to the convenience of being able to watch their children while they interviewed.

Chapter IV. Building, Maintaining, and Severing Relationships

Contact with the criminal legal system and community supervision conditions shaped how participants built, maintained, and severed relationships with their social support systems. Periods of prison and jail incarceration sometimes cut them off from sources of informal social support, which could be difficult to rebuild even with family members (Comfort, 2016). Some participants maintained loving relationships with family (Giordano et al., 2007) which could buffer the stresses of community supervision (Helgeson, 2003). Many participants also felt they needed to build and maintain relationships with the family who expressed they wanted to help them—typically their aging mothers or parents—to meet the conditions of their supervision and basic needs like housing (Miller & Stuart, 2017). In comparison, the participants' interactions with persons outside their family (e.g., friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners) were relatively limited, but some formed many weak ties with this group to meet their needs in the absence of stable or enough family support (Granovetter, 1974). Some participants felt they were ostracized from informal sources of support, effectively severing their relationships (see also Western et al., 2015). Others purposely severed their relationships with specific informal sources of support through avoidance and isolation when they perceived others might expose them to further criminal legal issues (Raudenbush, 2016).

Similarly, all of the participants were forced to build and maintain some semblance of relationships with their probation and parole officers through mandatory reporting or face further sanctioning (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017). Given participants were sometimes recruited through probation and parole officers, this access to community supervision as a source of social support was likely a function of the

sampling strategy. However, the amount of information and emotional support shared between the two parties could depend on participant trust in their officer (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Only when the term of supervision ended or probation officers quit their jobs were those relationships severed.

This chapter details the ways the participants built, maintained, and severed relationships with sources of social support and how these strategies varied by relationship type. The chapter is structured in two sections that detail (1) how participants built and maintained relationships as well as (2) how participants severed relationships. Within the section about building and maintaining relationships, the dissertation explores how the themes varied by relationship type, first looking at building relationships with family, then all other informal persons, and finally probation and parole officers. The section on severing relationships details two ways in which participants' relationships ended with informal sources (i.e., purposeful avoidance and isolation; ostracism) and then probation and parole officers.

Building and Maintaining Relationships

Participants actively built and maintained relationships with many sources of support (Hlavka et al., 2015). Three themes dominated the participants' discussions concerning how they built and maintained relationships with sources of social support. First, the participants often had limited instrumental resources and emotional supports to draw upon (see also deVuono-Powell et al., 2015), which shaped how they viewed building and maintaining relationships with family. Participants explained they needed instrumental support in the form of housing, transportation, and basic needs like food. Often, the participants built and maintained such relationships to meet the conditions of

compliance (Miller & Stuart, 2017) requiring stable housing and transportation to meetings with their probation and parole officers to maintain good standing (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017). Family also provided important emotional support (Giordano et al., 2007), helping participants cope with the conditions of their supervision and daily life (Kras, 2019). Next, in the absence of support from family, participants pieced together many weaker ties for help (Granovetter, 1974). Participants drew upon many other informal sources of support such as friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners that typically made up a smaller, yet important, portion of their social support. Finally, participants relayed how their relationships with probation and parole officers were mandated even though these formal supports could connect them with services and occasionally help provide emotional support (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022).

Relationships With Family Members Out of Necessity: "I got no choice. She's staying with me right now." – Frank

Many participants focused their efforts on rebuilding relationships with family members after criminal legal system contact. Participants most often took steps to maintain these existing relationships because they needed access to instrumental goods (e.g., Nagrecha et al., 2015) and emotional support as they navigated life on community supervision (e.g., Heidemann et al., 2014). When participants were released from jail or prison, their families could become important sources of social support depending on their families' willingness to help them (Miller & Stuart, 2017). In addition, participants sometimes pointed to the lack of choice they had in maintaining these relationships and expressed there could be tension in their relationships because of the control that family members tried to exhibit over their affairs (Comfort, 2008). For the adult participants,

maintaining relationships with parents who sometimes felt they "knew better" than the

participants about how to manage their lives could provoke negative self-feelings and

strain about being productive and independent adults (Grieb et al., 2014; Pleggenkuhle,

2018). Many did not have access to romantic partnerships or marriages (see also

Giordano et al., 2002) and instead relied heavily on family for support. The participants'

family members did not always have many financial resources to help, which could also

add to guilt participants felt about relying on others and stress in these relationships

(Lubbers et al., 2020). In some cases where participants lived with family, these

relationships were challenging to maintain because participants were stressed about

sharing resources and space with parents or siblings (Grieb et al., 2014).

Many participants discussed how their social lives had changed since they aged

and since their contact with the criminal legal system similar to the ways in which

"turning points" and "hooks for change" are discussed in the life course literature (e.g.,

Giordano et al., 2002; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Participants typically discussed they

chose not to spend time with friends as they got older and instead felt building and

maintaining relationships with family members could help them more, highlighting the

importance of understanding social support exchanges for desistance. Participants

sometimes desired to build loving connections with family members, discussing how

their attitudes had developed over the years. This change over the life course could reflect

an "emotional mellowing" process documented in prior literature (Giordano et al., 2007).

When asked what his social life was like, Joseph noted, "I really haven't hung out. Not

really anymore. I have a couple outside friends, but mainly it's just family." He attributed

his lack of friends to his getting older when he said, "I think it's changed since I've gotten

older and changed my life for the better just making better decisions." Joseph explained he preferred to spend time with family members instead, "I come from a tight family, so we always get together, eat, have fun, play games and stuff. Just family togetherness." Mark similarly discussed, "I walk away from all my friends that are using. I step away from that group. I usually stay within my family. And that keeps me sober." Mark felt focusing his effort on maintaining relationships with his existing family instead of friends could help his recovery. Laura also denoted the change in her relationship with her family members after a period of jail incarceration:

> Well I didn't really have a very, you know, strong relationship with my family before I went to jail anyway, because I was in my addiction. So you know I was ashamed to talk to my family, I saw I wasn't in constant communication with them, but once I went to jail I would reach out more. I mean I don't want to say I was just reaching out for money or anything like that, but you know, just to have somebody to talk to when I was in there. I feel like being in jail helped my relationship with my family more than it hurt it.

The individuals in this study, like Laura, often did not have strong connections with others outside their family and thus needed to rely on family members for assistance both instrumentally and emotionally. Though participants mentioned they were able to build stronger relationships with family in some cases after their contact with the criminal legal system, this could be overshadowed by their feeling like they had no other people to turn to for help.

Participants' living situations pointed to the necessity of maintaining these relationships with family members. About half (45.2%) of the participants were living with family members, as opposed to living alone or with romantic partners or friends and almost two thirds (58.1%) of participants identified women family members (e.g., mothers, aunts, sisters) as primary sources of social support. Sara explained she

maintained a relationship with her mother because, "she's just there, she's always there to help me if I need it." Sara lived with her mother and stated, "me and my mom are living together in a condo that we split the rent in. I have a seven-month-old baby boy so right now I'm working on trying to find a job." Sara further explained, "I'm trying to figure out a job that works with very specific hours" so that her mother could watch her baby while she worked since Sara could not afford childcare. At the time of her interview Sara was doing, "side work to help with rent I actually clean the condos in my complex for the people who own it so that money directly goes towards rent." What's more, Sara's mother moved to St. Louis to support her daughter and found her the "side work" cleaning condominiums:

> My mom just moved back to St. Louis. It's a whole story, but she moved to Florida, which is where my sister lives, and she left because she was in a toxic relationship, I was using drugs and she left and she came back recently within the last year and a half, because I got pregnant and I needed help. She got this job and then we ended up moving in here, and she gave the job to me.

Sara was able to maintain almost constant communication with her mother since the time they had moved into the condo together and she explained her mother would provide her with most everything she needed, "but I really try not to ask my mom for too much because she already does so much for me." Sara and her mother splitting the rent also pointed to the mutual need exhibited by system-impacted people and their families (Miller & Alexander, 2016). Sara's pregnancy and her employment difficulties made it necessary for her to maintain this relationship, but she felt guilt over relying on her mother heavily and aimed to become independent from her (deVuono-Powell et al., 2015).

Frank was also staying with his mother until he could get his own apartment through Veterans Affairs. When he was asked if he talks with his mother on a regular basis, he discussed, "Yeah. I got no choice. She's staying with me right now until the VA get me my apartment this week. Then, she going to head back out of town, and it'll just be me." Frank explained how his mother was able to provide him with a place to live until he could get on his feet after being in jail:

> Getting out of jail and not having nowhere to go because I don't have no family here. It's like, I just be out on the street. But, luckily, my mom, she been helping me with all this transition stuff. If she wasn't here, I would of just been... I don't know actually how that work because you got to have a address. I thought I had a address to go to, but that fell through. Then, I had to hurry up and get extended stay so I have somewhere, but like I said, my mom helped me out a lot.

Frank did not have other relatives nor friends to rely on in St. Louis and felt like he needed his mother's help or risk being unhoused.

Participants sometimes discussed how they were grateful for the help from their family members, but their lack of independence from the family home could be a stressor (Pleggenkuhle, 2018) that fostered negative emotions (Agnew, 1992). Spencer relayed how he simultaneously appreciated his parents helped him with housing, yet did not like living with them. He described, "Yeah, my living situation's great. I mean, I don't like living here, but I got good parents and all, so I can't complain." Spencer explained how his parents supported him financially when he said, "they helped pay for a lawyer, so I can't even start on that. They definitely saved my ass." Though Spencer felt his living situation was not ideal because he would like to be more independent, he was grateful his parents were able to support him and felt the outcome of his case might have been different if it were not for their willingness to help (Miller, 2021).

Participants expressed how their limited interactions with people outside the family could provoke intense enmeshment with their mothers. Participants alluded to how the quality of the relationships with family members, as opposed to the presence of support, was important (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Josiah discussed he had no choice but to live with his mother because he had a falling out with his former partner, "me and my baby mama fall out because I feel like we had other people coming into our relationship and then we both just lost a daughter of that same year." Though Josiah needed to live with his mother because he could not afford to live on his own, he discussed his relationship with his mother was strained because of the control she tried to exert over his activities, "she can be very supportive and then sometimes she cannot be supportive" because she would talk, "about the situation to me about what I should have did and what I shouldn't have did." Though family members did not exert the same level of control over the participants' affairs as their probation and parole officers, they frequently expressed judgment about the way participants should lead their lives (Comfort, 2008).

Living with family members could also expose the participants and their family members to conflict and violent situations (Travis et al., 2001). Alex pointed to the difficulty in maintaining relationships with his mother and stepfather given he felt he did not have many other options and because of the nature of his sexual offense conviction (see also Huebner et al., 2019). He explained his living situation, stating, "I right now currently reside with my mom and her husband." However, he discussed how his relationship with his stepfather was precarious at times, so he preferred to keep his distance from his stepfather even though they were living together:

> We're better off not really interacting with each other and we've gotten better over the past eight years. But at one point during my house arrest, I actually snapped

and I head-butted him, and he tried kicking me out of the household under house arrest.

Though living with family was a typical mode of maintaining connections with family members, it could expose participants to dangerous situations (Grieb et al., 2014).

Participants were also exposed to further sanctioning because their family members sometimes called the police to have them arrested, acting as extensions of probation and parole (Comfort, 2008; Condry, 2007). Ray denoted he struggled deciding whether paying for his own place to live would be better than living with his mother and brother when he said, "Do I want to stay in the house and help my mom? And be miserable? Or just move out?" Ray said he struggled to live with his brother and mother because, "ever since I got out [of prison], it's been different there. My mama's boy, my brother, ain't the baby no more. They got this bond, they lived together forever. He gets treated differently." He discussed, "My brother called the cops on me. Had them called on me twice" for having friends over at their house. Dave also discussed how he eventually had to move out of his mother's house for fear he would be sanctioned. He noted his mother called the police on him under suspicion he was using drugs, which made him decide to leave, "Now when she called them [the police], I had moved out." After his conflict with his mother, Dave discussed he, "didn't have nowhere else to go" so he reached out to his aunt and girlfriend, "And that's all I got now. My auntie who I live with and my girlfriend" because "I have no friends."

On occasion, participants explained they had to suppress their emotions when living with family. Desmond discussed the conflict that living with, "my sister family" could bring. He described, "family be the first to fuck you, excuse my language, rather than somebody that you don't know" referring to arguments between he and his sister.

Desmond was living with his sister and her family at the time of his interview. Desmond

maintained his relationship with his sister by remaining quiet about his feelings:

> But me and her, we're more like, it's a debate battle, basically. You say something, I say something, it ain't going to end, because we was taught to stand on what we believe in. So if you can have two people that's dominant, trying to be one over the other, it's going to stir up and start something, every time. It ain't going to end, because you tough, she tough, or both of you tough and don't nobody want to back down, because they feel, that's when the pride come in. So you got to put the pride to the side. Like I come to the point I just let them talk. "Okay, you win."

In order to keep his housing, something he could not afford on his own, Desmond was

passive in family arguments. Participants in these cases made constant choices and

compromises to continue receiving this support. Though the situations with their family

members were not always healthy, they did their best to remain civil with family

members so they could have a place to live. Participants sometimes navigated additional

criminal legal risk living with family but many had such high instrumental needs they had

no other options but to live with family who offered them housing approved by probation

and parole.

In the absence of support from immediate family members, extended family also

provided participants with places to live in times of necessity and this support was often

well received. Extended family was able to buffer some of the emotional tension between

immediate family and fill gaps in support. Some participants denoted the support they

received from family was essential in helping them stay motivated to complete

supervision. Literature has documented social support exchanges in romantic

relationships can promote prosocial behavior (e.g., Reis et al., 2010), but this subtheme

was present for extended family. Ken described how he was a survivor of gun violence,

evicted from his apartment, and having trouble finding a job. Given these challenges, he

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noted he had to rely on his aunt's support. Ken noted, "I live with my aunt and her four children." He discussed how he had to maintain a relationship with his aunt to recover from gun violence when he said, "I needed somebody to take care of me, which I did have my aunt take care of me, as well. I'm staying with her now." Though Ken did not really have a choice but to stay with his aunt and her children from an instrumental standpoint, he characterized the changes to his social life as helpful for moving forward from his contact with the criminal legal system:

> Well, I really have been focused on my family, and less active with people I don't know, and that's what I've been working towards, putting my legal stuff in order, trying to get my business more out there, and getting my life just back, and stuff like that, so…

Ken explained how he participated in activities to try and maintain relationships with his family members, "On Sundays, most of my family members, we got a get-together at one of my aunts' house." Ken's characterization of his family's support was generally positive, but his circumstances were such that he was unable to live alone.

Participants sometimes expressed how the family members who helped them, mostly women, were also shouldering much of the burden for others in the family who needed assistance (Condry & Minson, 2020). Harold was living with his sister and explained how other members of his family also relied on her for housing:

> I'm staying with my sister. I'm right in the upstairs with my sister, in her house. And my youngest brother, he lives on the first floor, and my niece, she stays up on the second floor with me, also. She has a room.

Harold noted how he valued his sister's support greatly because he could see she tried to help many individuals in her life when he discussed, "My sister is my hero. She's younger than me by 13 years, and it's really amazing how she... Well, she try to help, she help everybody when she can." Overall, many participants needed the support of their family

as indicated by prior literature (Western et al., 2015), but access to this support is more complex than originally described. Family members were typically willing to provide social support to the participants (Braithewaite, 1989; Ekland-Olson et al., 1983; Lofland, 1969; Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993), and primarily a great deal of instrumental and emotional support (Miller, 2021). For some participants, the instrumental help was marred by interpersonal conflict because it interfered with the participants' adult roles (Pleggenkuhle, 2018). At times, the instrumental support could also add to their families' responsibilities (Nagrecha et al., 2015). For others, the emotional support was exchanged in loving relationships that appeared to affect participants' motivation to complete supervision (Giordano et al., 2007). In any case, the support was needed cope with the many conditions of supervision (Petersilia, 2011) and manage the financial challenges of supervision (Boches et al., 2022).

> **Limited Relationships With Friends, Acquaintances, and Romantic Partners: "I've done a lot to retry to rebuild. And I've reached out to a lot of people who, former colleagues and friends, who have not have not reached out to me at all." – Reginald**

Participants built and maintained their relationships with friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners in myriad ways, often piecing together limited support from many individuals (Granovetter, 1974). Participants built and maintained these relationships in a selective manner, focusing on those relationships that would not deepen their criminal legal involvement (Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Raudenbush, 2016). The individuals in this study met others with whom they exchanged social support in periods of incarceration, mandated treatment, twelve-step programs, support groups, church, school,

work, gas stations, bars, casinos, and clubs. Participants also met friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners through social media, dating apps, and online video games. Occasionally, participants' existing friends connected them with other people who they befriended or with whom they started a romantic relationship. The ability of participants to meet others and build new relationships depended highly on their conviction type. For example, individuals with sexual offense convictions had a much harder time forging these bonds than individuals with drug convictions (Huebner et al., 2019).

Many participants discussed they built and maintained relationships with others they met through criminal legal sanctioning such as incarceration, mandated treatment, and twelve-step programs (Maruna, 2001). Cindy explained she met one of her best friends, "when I first got on probation" because, "we were both doing the pathways to change class." She noted, "We've been friends ever since. It's been about 12 years." Likewise, Mark met emotionally supportive friends when he was incarcerated. He explained:

> I've met like three really good friends of mine that I'm still in constant contact with, not daily, because we don't live by each other. We still kind of support each other, talk to each other. I live by three friends that are on the same path or thought process as myself.

Mark kept in contact with the friends he met while incarcerated over the phone and they were able to provide him emotional support given they had similar experiences. Mark compared his experiences with friends to family, discussing how family could not understand his drug addiction:

> That's the one negative about the family. My family? I am the only drug user. So, they can't understand what I go through on a daily basis when I'm out in the streets, living that life. Because none of them have ever been there. They can't grasp the concept of what... I use heroin or opiates. So they can't grasp the concept, like, "Why can't you just stop, and not do it anymore?"

Though Mark's family, and especially his sister, helped him financially and emotionally the comments that they made were sometimes damaging to his self-esteem. Mark felt judged for his addiction and had a hard time exchanging interactional support with his sister as a result:

> She has never done drugs in her life, so she doesn't understand. Like she had cancer in 2013, and she called and asked me if I could do her a favor, "Never pick up a needle in jail again," and I'm like, "I can't do that, sis." And she doesn't comprehend that concept, that I can't just walk away from it because the addiction part of it has got me.

Mark's sister's perceptions about his addiction made him feel he could not trust her for guidance and he explained how others had varying perceptions of his addiction, "Some drugs are looked at very differently by people. Some believe it's a disease, some believe it's not." In consequence, his support from friends was especially helpful. Harold relayed he was able to reconnect with friends he had not seen since childhood when he was in prison:

> The one friend that I'm real close to, I met him there years ago in the prison system, but we had grew up together and had lost contact all the way, and I popped up, back up in there, and he was up in there and had an assault on some dude that was trying to disrespect his wife.

Harold remained close with his friend and friend's wife after he was released from prison. He discussed, "they real close to me. They really like my family."

Though participants' involvement in NA and AA often began as a mandated part of their community supervision treatment, some continued to maintain connections with individuals involved in the meetings because they felt it was helpful to their recovery (Maruna, 2001). Mike was actively involved in NA and got started meeting others in

twelve-step programs through an AA program when he was incarcerated and an NA

program when at a treatment center. He noted:

> Actually, Illinois Department of Corrections, I started dealing with AA through there. I'm not really an alcoholic, I'm more of an... Yeah, I'm an addict, so anything I do work from working out to work to drugs to whatever, I do on a completely different scale than a normal person. True NA, I was in [name of] Treatment Center whenever I started it.

He explained how he maintained contact with a man he sponsored when he said, "if I

want somebody to talk to, like if I'm having a bad day, I call him. If he's having a bad

day, he calls me. But yeah, I absolutely love the dude, like as a brother." Adam was also

involved in a twelve-step program where he built relationships with other emotionally

supportive persons. He explained:

> I had to change up my lifestyle and I wasn't really ready to do that before. So I'm currently in recovery. I go to meetings. I have a sponsor. I'm working Steps. Kind of flipped my life around 180 degrees. So it's definitely a lot easier when you're not getting into trouble.

Regular meetings and talking with his sponsor allowed Adam to meet others in recovery.

He described, "Well, with going to meetings, I've been able to build a really good

network of support." Andrew denoted he met others with whom he was able to exchange

emotional and interactional support in a Sexaholics Anonymous group (SA). He

discussed:

> I know some of the guys don't have that. Some of the guys, they just have their mom, you know. And – but because of SA, and its been three and a half years that I've been going to SA, you know met a few people.

Though the participants kept their social activities outside family to a minimum, twelve-

step groups could provide a much needed respite.

Building relationships with people outside the family and officially sanctioned

treatment activities posed difficulty for some participants. Reginald, for instance,

explained how he reached out to friends to try and rebuild their relationships after his

sexual offense conviction. He described:

> I've done a lot to retry to rebuild. And I've reached out to a lot of people who, former colleagues and friends, who have not have not reached out to me at all. And I have almost completed this, but you know just a letter of apology, a you know, you don't need to respond kind of and only one person out of I'd say nearly 20 letters, only one person responded.

Despite Reginald's best efforts, many friends did not wish to maintain contact with him.

Consequently, Reginald found most of his social support in his wife.

Comparatively, Timmy who was convicted of drug crimes, was surprised at the

level of support he was able to maintain. He discussed how he tried to meet people on the

dating app, Tinder:

> My friends have been supportive, so like I've gone on different dates and stuff through Tinder and I didn't I didn't… Basically I had very few people ever who would sort of stop contact after I had told them that I'm on probation. Yeah most of them were actually surprised, I was surprised at how sort of supported they were and like okay with that. I mean it's also because, like my violations are really only drug violations, I don't have anything on their violence or sexual.

Though Timmy disclosed to others he was on probation, he felt the nature of his offense

impacted how he was easily able to maintain these connections.

For some, social media and online video gaming could provide access to social

support. When asked about his social life, Cal indicated he also preferred to spend time

meeting people online, playing the video game Grand Theft Auto (GTA). He relayed,

"I'm normally on GTA. That's about it. I spend most of my time online. I'm a crew leader,

so I got 400 and some people that I'm kind of in control of. So that's about it." Angela

discussed she met friends and acquaintances "in outpatient or maybe people that I meet

on social media." Kelly explained she thought she also met one of her good friends on

Facebook, stating, "I honestly don't even remember. I think it was Facebook." Frank

denoted he tried, "to make friends, getting out on apps, and dating apps, talk to females."

Some participants preferred to spend time meeting friends and acquaintances at

bars, clubs, casinos, and gas stations and thought that meeting people at these places did

not expose them to any undue risk for further criminal sanctioning. Charlie, for example,

noted, "I go to the pool bar a lot, play pool" and Ray discussed time spent at a gas station:

> So I've just lately been hanging out at the gas station at [grocery store] over by
> [city], it's real close. So I go up there and hangout and just kind of, it was weird
> for the first couple times hanging out there. These two female ladies I've met,
> they're friends, are helping clean and hangout at the gas station. Play the quarter
> machine, the slot machine. Hang out up there, win a lot, lose a lot.

When Spencer was queried about how he meets people, he described, "Honestly, smoke

weed, drive around, go to the casino a lot." Cindy noted how she met her husband when

she said, "I met him at a club. We were out dancing" and Ella discussed about her fiancé

"I met him back at a party a long time ago." Multiple participants discussed they liked to

play pool to meet supportive friends. Neil met friends playing pool at a local bar:

> Primarily, billiards is the biggest one. I play pool three times a week. Two of the
> nights are with the [team name], but the third night is also a team, but it's really
> more of a double team. There's only two other individuals on the team. Whereas
> the other two nights, the teams are comprised eight people. So there's a number of
> friendships that I've developed through that.

The friends Neil met playing pool were able to provide him emotional and instrumental

support. Desmond similarly discussed how he liked to play pool to meet other people at

bars:

> I like to shoot pool and stuff, but I ain't in no pool players. So I don't know. I be
> just, I go over to my partner and them people's houses and all of us get together.
> We probably BBQ. They drink beers. I don't drink. I don't drink. I used to drink,
> but I don't drink. I been stopped drinking. So I just be laid back. I be chilling. I
> smoke a little bit of weed. Other than that though, we just be chilling, talking,
> socializing.

At the same time, Desmond kept up with his friends by going to their houses and participating in barbecues.

Others felt that nightlife activities were too risky to engage in with a criminal conviction because of the potential for those activities to expose them to others who might implicate them in criminal activity (Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Raudenbush, 2016). Kevin denoted how he would often, "rather stay home" when it came to nightlife, but tried to participate in other activities to keep in touch with friends:

> We play basketball, I play basketball. We go eat, we watch the games together. I still hang out and do my activities. But as of going out to clubs, and even though that never was me, those stuff doesn't excite me. I would rather stay home.

Kevin explained his activities changed after he was incarcerated when he said, "I feel like that changed ever since I got out." In order to maintain relationships he thought would help him be successful on probation, Kevin focused his activities around sports and food.

A few participants discussed they met good friends and romantic partners when they were children and in school. Notably, these connections were made prior to any criminal convictions. Clayton, for instance, denoted how he knew his girlfriend when he stated, "I've known her since I was a kid" and Kevin highlighted about his friends, "We've been friends since high school." Cherrell also met her partner when she was school age, discussing, "So we like childhood friends, went to couple schools together and all that too" and Joanna explained how she met her boyfriend when she said, "Oh, I have known him for over 20 years and he was one of my friends from school's cousin. He used to go over to her house all the time." Along those lines, Isobel said she met her husband, "through a friend, actually" and Laura met a good friend through other people:

It's a very weird situation. Okay, so we were taking this prostitute to job, and it happened to be [friend]'s husband who she was going to see, and we were there, and [friend] came out and started throwing things and that's how [friend] and I met. Yeah, I don't know exactly how I ended up getting her phone number, but I was over there after that situation happened by myself, and she ended up letting me stay with her because I didn't have anywhere to stay just like to get away from my ex-boyfriend at the time, because he was abusive. And so, that's how I met [friend].

Laura explained the way she met her friend was pure happenstance, but this friend provided her with important instrumental support and sheltered her from an abusive relationship. Finally, Marie explained she met her partner, "at an old job. My favorite job, actually. It was Circle K." Participants met others in many different, unexpected ways and participated in an array of activities to maintain their contact with others depending on their comfort levels with the activities (Granovetter, 1974). Individual participants judged whether others could expose them to further criminal legal sanctioning and built and maintained relationships with people outside the family accordingly (Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Raudenbush, 2016). Many of these key relationships built outside the family were formed before criminal legal system contact. Given these relationships were rarer than family ties, families were exceptionally important sources of support. People without the family support or with limited family support had to piece together support from other informal sources and were at a structural disadvantage compared to persons with stable family support (Miller & Alexander, 2016).

Mandated Relationships With Probation Officers: "I'm still scared of her, but she... Because she's my probation officer, but she's literally the nicest person." – Marie

Each person in this study was mandated to have a probation or parole officer. Individuals in this study were required to check in with their probation and parole officers

at periodic intervals depending on their risk level, crime type, and their individual officer's perception about the resources needed. Individuals were mandated to maintain a relationship with their probation and parole officer via in-person visits to their respective probation and parole office, by talking over the phone, or sending emails. During the COVID-19 pandemic, probation and parole officers increased the number home visits or met the people they supervised in the community. Probation and parole officers also gained access to laptops, cellphones, and hotspots during the pandemic. Some probation and parole officers instituted texting the individuals they supervised during this time period which appeared to carry over when in-person activities returned. Quinn explained how his communication with his probation officer was flexible. He denoted, "All I've got to do is call her, text her, email her, and leave her a message and she gets back to me as soon as she can." Olivia also explained how multiple modes of communication were essential to staying in touch with her probation officer:

> And I can text her if I need to. It's not just the one way. It's not just one way to get ahold of her. With her personal number, I can text her if I need to. Any of that, because I know that at the end of the day they are busy, and they're not always going to be at their work phone. So I think it's kind of important to have another outlet to get ahold of them.

Participants often relayed their officers tried to respond to the participants' questions as soon as possible and by using different methods. Levi relayed his probation officer communicated frequently with him when he said, "She stays in really close communication. I don't feel like I'm being neglected at all. You know what I mean? I feel like I'm definitely being supervised, for sure." He further noted the times he could expect to be in contact with her when he described, "On the weekends, she usually doesn't get back to me, because I understand she has to have down time too" yet, "as soon as

Monday at 7:00 rolls around, you better believe I get a text message and an answer my question." Aside from these technological advancements, participants described they maintained relationships with their probation officers in two ways detailed in the following subsections – bonding about life outside supervision and in challenging ways when they were worried about violations (Miller, 2015). Women probation and parole officers were featured in the participants' narratives as especially caring and helpful, a gendered burden outlined by the incarceration literature (Condry & Minson, 2020).

Bonding About Life Outside Supervision. Individuals in this study were required to meet with their probation and parole officers anywhere from weekly to every few months. The participants sometimes felt uncomfortable communicating with their probation and parole officers because they were aware of the power differential in the relationship and what could happen if they did not communicate (e.g., violations), but talking about subjects other than supervision could foster these relationships. Individuals discussed they were able to bond over topics unrelated to probation, such as their hobbies, children, and health. People under community supervision formed closer relationships with their officers when they expressed concern about their well-being in addition to their compliance with community supervision (see also Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). These strategies allowed individuals to begin to trust their probation and parole officers and reach out to them for support when necessary. This theme was present for participants of varying backgrounds and appeared to depend on the individual probation and parole officer's approach to their job.

Participants explained the types of topics they discussed that helped them build relationships with their probation and parole officers. Sara, for instance, discussed how her probation officer made her feel comfortable to communicate her needs:

> She kind of makes it more comfortable to do that because she'll allow you to talk about other things. Like I sent her a picture of my son's first time at the pumpkin patch and she was like, "Oh, these are adorable!" but she's like still professional and talking about "you need to get a job and do this" and she's helping me get a job. She makes sure it is very comfortable to talk to her about anything.

Though Sara maintained a mostly professional relationship with her probation officer, she was able to talk to her about her child and felt comfortable discussing her issues with employment. Isobel additionally relayed her probation officer asked her about her relationships with her children when she stated, "We do talk about how my kids are doing. Or if I were having a problem, I needed help with skills or something, she would lead in the right direction." Isobel maintained a relationship with her probation officer by talking about topics not necessarily under the purview of probation and also if she were having trouble meeting specific conditions of her sentence.

Some participants faced many challenges outside of probation and parole and built relationships with their probation and parole officers by talking about the concerns they had. Lawrence discussed how his probation officer checked in with him about his health, building their trust and making it easier to maintain a relationship:

> Some people may feel like they don't want to come here to see her, but I'm relieved to come talk to my probation officer, because it's not that she's just my probation officer. She's someone that I talk to let her know what's really going on with me health-wise. Because I got a lot going on besides just probation.

Lawrence's probation officer played a bigger role in his life as a social support person, rather than just a supervisor. John relayed a similar feeling about his probation officer that took the time to check in with him about how he felt:

> I finally got a new PO, and then my new PO she actually takes me into her office talks to me [to] try to figure out how I'm feeling? How's my day going? How's the week going? And a lot like, she actually helps me I believe.

John's probation officer checked in with him about his needs aside from whether he was in compliance with his probation conditions and he described he found their conversations, "very useful because she's helping, well she tries to help me find jobs, a lot." Ken explained he and his probation officer chatted about his personal goals and accomplishments:

> We talk about my accomplishments, and what I have to do to get to the next step. Mostly about how I feel, and what I'm doing, stuff like that, over the week, or over the month, or over another period of time, from the last time I met him.

Ken's probation officer's attitude made the maintenance of their relationship easy. He described, "he's cool, calm, and collected" and "I'm very cool, calm, and collected, myself, so our vibes are concurrent."

Participants made comparisons between past probation and parole officers to illustrate how building and maintaining a relationship could differ depending on individual probation and parole officer view of their purpose. Like Phelps and Ruhland (2022), participants explained the officers that expressed "care" over law enforcement were people with whom they wanted to maintain relationships. Hannah discussed how individual officer attitude changed the way she maintained a relationship with them. She described:

> Really in my experience with POs and the justice system, it really it really matters like how much they care about their client, you know? Like if there's, if they if they come in with an attitude like you're destined to like, you're just a screw up and you're not going to go anywhere, and you're destined to fail they don't really give you a lot of hope so you end up using the rope that they give you to hang yourself with it. But when you have like a PO who kind of supports you and you know, is there to actually be like what they're supposed to be: support and reform,

it makes it a lot easier to not be so scared to be like, "Hey listen, you know I messed up and I need help and I don't know where else to go to get it."

Hannah noted she was willing to share more with her probation officer about her struggles if she could tell they were not going to impose additional sanctions on her. She highlighted how her current probation officer's attitude changed the way she interacted with her officer:

It wasn't like, "Oh well, you need to do X, Y and Z to appease me and appease you know, everybody else." She's like, "As long as it's for your recovery and you're doing okay, and you feel safe." Like it's been [a] completely different situation with this officer.

In comparison to past probation officers, Hannah's new probation officer built trust that she could independently make the right decisions for herself. Dennis denoted how his officer built trust, "She actually cares and she makes a point of knowing aspects of my life, I guess. Keeping me out of trouble. She actually wants me to succeed."

Components of a motivational interview strategy were also implicit in these descriptions of probation and parole officers. Probation and parole officers who were accepting and compassionate appeared to build positive relationships with the participants (Armstrong et al., 2016). Roy, for instance, denoted his probation officer was understanding and not overbearing, which made him want to share more about his life:

They was understanding. Let me see if, I'm trying to see how I would say this. They just made me feel more comfortable, they made me feel comfortable like it was it was kind of like this energy. Like there was no right or wrong, there was no right or wrong, it was just where I was in my life.

Roy highlighted he had trouble trusting others and relied heavily on the support he received from his probation officer instead:

One of my biggest supporters, is my PO. Yeah, you definitely need a support team, you know I have serious trust issues so like it ain't just easy for me to just go out and create a whole new support team.

Roy felt like he could easily talk to his probation officer about his concerns because his probation officer emphasized meeting him where he was at. Probation and parole officers built and maintained these trusting relationships when they interacted with supervised people in a compassionate way and with the intention that probation and parole is designed for rehabilitation (Miller, 2015). Scott discussed how his probation officer's perception of their purpose affected the way they interacted, "So I think that instilling that into you like we're here to help you, we're here to assist you if you're having issues, tell us. We're not going to revoke you." Scott's probation officer was more proactive in trying to get him to discuss the things he was struggling with before they became an issue that could lead to revocation. Erin pointed to the caring and compassionate nature of her probation officer:

> My probation officer is more concerned about me successfully completing the program and being a successful member of society than she is anything else. This probation officer, and this is the first – I've been through a lot of probation officers, okay? And this is the first one that has been caring and compassionate.

Erin's probation officer's attitude changed the frequency of her interaction and the types of things she communicated with her about:

> I converse with her on a regular basis, without it being my report time. You know I email her with major changes in my life and stuff like that you know what I'm saying? So I have a great relationship with my PO now.

Participants generally discussed that their probation officers were responsive, but the probation officers who expressed care and concern about their lives outside of probation and held a positive attitude towards their success on probation were the officers with whom participants communicated on a regular basis. These officers who emphasized a

motivational, strengths-based approach as opposed to a risk management and enforcement approach were characterized positively (Armstrong et al., 2016).

Challenging Relationships with Probation and Parole Officers. At other times, participants maintained these relationships out of fear for additional sanctioning and by limiting the amount of information they shared with their probation and parole officer. Some participants felt they needed to be tactful about the information they shared with their officer given the power imbalance in the relationship. Participants' choice of strategy depended on whether the individual felt the probation officer would be understanding or impose additional sanctions upon them when they expressed they needed help meeting the conditions of compliance. Probation and parole officers' attitudes and demeanor helped determine the way in which the relationship was maintained. Some participants explained they yearned to develop more personal relationships with their probation officers, but the nature of the relationship was such that this was not always possible. Prior literature has suggested community supervision officers tend to adopt a blend of law enforcement and social worker roles, with the law enforcement attitude focused on maintaining compliance over providing support and services (Whetzel et al., 2011). In the cases where participants viewed their officers as coercive over caring (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022), they shared less information about their lives. It is also possible that the type of professional relationship participants had with officers made them view these relationships as less supportive than other informal relationships (e.g., with family or friends) and therefore kept more of a distance (Williamson & Clark, 1989).

Participants pointed to the professional nature of the relationship to explain their

limited communication with probation and parole officers. Desmond, for example,

discussed how he wanted to be closer with his probation officer, but understood his

probation officer maintained a professional relationship during business hours only:

> Sometimes because I discuss certain things with him, like our relationship is
> different from any other relationship I had with any other PO. Like he
> understands, but what I mean by can't reach him when you want to, like I wish I
> could call him up in times like not just at the office time, like time like yeah, like
> a sponsor. Something like that, you know what I'm saying? Because he's very
> understanding.

Desmond's probation officer was not overbearing in a punitive sense, but maintained

separation from him. Neil explained his contact with his probation officer was few and

far between because he felt the purpose of her job was risk management (Phelps, 2018):

> We just text each other. And I haven't been traveling so that I really haven't had a
> need to get any kind of authorization or permits from her. When we were seeing
> each other and meeting more often, just first year or the end of last year, she was
> doing her due diligence to stay on top of confirming that things are well with me
> and that I'm not exposed to potential risks or temptations to do something that's
> going to get me into more trouble.

Neil felt his probation officer's primary concern was making sure he remained compliant

rather than strengthening their bond. He explained she tried to keep a distance from him:

> I think she does a good job at keeping the relationship at a distance. There have
> been times when I wanted to confide and be friendly and expect a friendship from
> her side. And she manages that well to keep any kind of conversation or dialogue
> professional and at a distance.

Participants often mentioned they desired friendships, but recognized probation and

parole as an inappropriate setting to meet these kind of emotional needs. Kaden

additionally compared his current probation officer to those he had in the past. Depending

on the perceived role of the probation officer, Kaden felt building or maintaining a

relationship was easier or more difficult. He noted:

> I feel like sometimes past POs that I've had, I could identify with, but my current one, no. I just kind of look at them as just almost like an authority figure to where there's really no empathy on their end. I just have to do what I need to do.

Without empathy from his probation officer, Kaden felt like there was a clear delineation of his probation officer's authority over him rather than someone with whom he desired to maintain a friendly relationship.

Participants occasionally contended their probation and parole officers were not very good at getting back to them when they called and extant scholarship discusses community supervision officers rarely have the time to invest in people on supervision (Lutze, 2013). Kelly was frustrated with the lack of communication from her probation officer. She discussed, "she's not good at calling back" and "usually I just have to keep calling" to get in contact with her. Kelly noted how it was difficult to talk to her probation officer when she was required when she said, "Yeah, I have a hard time opening up to my probation officer. I don't feel like I can really talk to her." Participants suggested probation and parole officers who inquired solely about compliance were not helpful nor people with whom they wanted to build and maintain relationships. For example, instead of inquiring about her life outside of probation, Kelly's meetings with her probation officer were short:

> It's kind of just the in and out thing she just wants to make sure I didn't have no contact with the police and wants to know what if I have a job and then that's pretty much it. A drug test here and there.

Kelly's probation officer primarily discussed her employment situation, contact with the police, and drug tested her as opposed to taking the time to get to know her. Rachel also mentioned the limited time spent with her probation officer stating, "they ask you, have you had any contact with the police? You just fill out a paper that's asking you the same

questions every time you go in and they usually make it pretty fast." Angela similarly

explained why she felt her meetings with her probation officer were not helpful. She

discussed:

> It's kind of just like, "Hey, how are you doing? What's been going on?" And then they drug test you or whatever, if you have a violation to sign, you sign it and that's it. In terms of what can I do to help you or here's some resources, I've never come across that.

Angela and others perceived their probation officers did not care to offer them assistance

with issues in their lives they found pertinent to their success.

In some cases, this limited communication and focus on a law enforcing role

damaged the maintenance of participant relationships with probation and parole officers

(Miller, 2015). Joanna noted she kept her conversations with her probation officer to a

minimum because she felt her officer did not understand her concerns. She discussed, "I

don't really say too much because she is just that she seems... I don't know. I just feel like

she comes off ignorant to me all the time." Joanna further explained, "they [probation and

parole] seem like they're more against you than they are to help you" because "if I go ask

[for] help and then… Or I tell her things and then she ends up violating me for doing it or

makes me come in even more when I'm already struggling coming in every two weeks."

Joanna had difficulty making it to her probation appointments, and instead of asking her

what she could do to help, her probation officer imposed violations upon her and

increased the frequency she needed to report.

While participants primarily discussed they tried to maintain a positive

relationship with their probation and parole officers by discussing their needs openly and

talking about issues aside from compliance, Timmy's discussion deviated from the group

in that he preferred to have less of a connection to his probation officer. He explained the difference in supervision styles between the two probation officers he had:

> The first one was sort of more, I guess I'll say, hands off compared to the second one. As long as I was employed, passing drug tests, not breaking the law they were totally cool. But then the second one is like far more involved in the different aspects of my life.

Timmy characterized this second probation officer as, "a little micromanagey honestly, but I'll deal with it. It's better than jail so." The maintenance of participants' relationships with their officers differed vastly depending on the individual probation and parole officer and their approach to community supervision. The building and maintenance of such relationships was conditioned by participants' perceptions of the purpose of community supervision. Probation and parole officers' ability to violate the participants for noncompliance hung over some participants' heads. When supervising officers did not express care and concern over the participants' lives outside compliance it was more difficult for participants to build and maintain these relationships (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Participants' experiences were highly variable depending on their individual probation and parole officer's management style (Huebner et al., 2023), underscoring the importance of informal supports in the participants' lives (Cullen, 1994).

Severing Relationships

Participants' access to social support exchanges were shaped by how they ended relationships with others. Participants in this study ended or had their relationships severed by others in three main ways. First, participants engaged in purposeful avoidance of and isolation from some informal supports because they feared others might implicate them in more criminal activity or further expose them to the criminal legal system (Raudenbush, 2016). Next, some informal relationships were severed by the support

person instead of the person on community supervision. Informal supports ostracized and stigmatized the participants in certain cases given their criminal legal involvement (Huebner et al., 2019). Last, probation officer turnover during the COVID-19 pandemic was mentioned by multiple participants, severing these formal relationships and sometimes damaging the provision of social support (Huebner et al., 2023).

Purposeful Avoidance and Isolation of People Outside Family: "It could be better just cause I'm on probation. I don't really do much. I try not to, at least." – Charlie

Building all types of informal relationships could be difficult for many participants and their discussions of these relationships were exceptionally complex. Instead of discussing particular strategies they used to meet new people, many described how they actively avoided meeting new friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners or participating in their communities because of the perceived ability for those individuals to deepen their entrenchment in the criminal legal system (Martinez & Abrams, 2013). Prior literature speaks to the potential for abuse and violence to occur in the family home (Braman & Wood, 2003; Grieb et al., 2014; Miller, 2021; Travis et al., 2001), but the participants rarely discussed they avoided or isolated from family. A handful of participants explained they did not have any support from people in their lives, but participants more commonly described they curtailed interactions with particular people. Though these comments about informal sources of support might appear as if they conflict with the narratives above about building and maintaining relationships, this theme closely mirrors Raudenbush's (2016) concept of selective solidarity. Participants were wary of individuals who they deemed a threat to their livelihood, sometimes

simultaneously exchanging support with people they considered safe. Family was typically considered "safe" or "safe enough" while friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners were more often considered "unsafe" and avoidable. Participants talked about how their lives on community supervision were incompatible with the way their old friends lived their lives, prompting them to choose to stay away from people they felt could compromise their ability to complete supervision (Giordano et al., 2002). Their experiences with incarceration and fear of violating their probation or parole shaped these strategies.

When participants were queried about their social lives, a common response was that they did not have friends or purposely tried to stay away from others (Leverentz, 2020). Some tried to eliminate social contact with people outside their family entirely and stay away from certain places or activities (Giuffre & Huebner, 2023). When asked about his social life, Anthony succinctly mentioned, "Don't have friends. I stayed with myself" and Charlie stated, "It's not bad. It could be better just cause I'm on probation. I don't really do much. I try not to, at least." Likewise, when Quinn was asked about his social life, he discussed, "I like to go fishing a lot and play with my dog, but other than that, I just try to stick to myself. I don't particularly care for people." Moreover, Kelly mentioned, "I kind of just stay at home and look for a job or try to stay out of trouble" and when probed about whether her social life had changed since being on probation discussed, "I think it's changed because I just, I really had to change the people that I hang out with." Kevin's mother and probation officer encouraged him to be wary of making friends and were his main sources of support. He noted, "My mom always tell me, watch your friends, everybody's not your friends" and his probation officer told him:

> If they don't make sense, there's no point of hanging around them. And if we are not making sense, we [are] going to end up doing something stupid. So she just tell me to stay away from that, stay away from the people that got me in there.

Lily was asked if she participates in activities to meet new people and stated, "not really anymore, because that just causes trouble" and Clayton was asked if he spends time with friends, to which he replied, "Not recently, but I used to" because he, "just started changing the group of friends I'm around."

Participants highlighted they stayed away from certain locations and activities—bars, clubs, concerts, protests—they felt could expose them to the criminal legal system (Giuffre & Huebner, 2023). Timmy explained how he avoided particular activities, "I didn't go to concerts, I wouldn't go I didn't go to any of the protests, I wouldn't – nothing that would remotely you know, put me in any kind of you know, legal danger like that." Timmy perceived congregating in crowds could expose him to police. Timmy denoted he also severed relationships with specific friends:

> Yeah, I honestly don't have a lot of friends right now. I really only talked to two friends, because I had to put everyone in my life that I used to struggle with sort of out of the way.

Timmy disclosed he used to use illicit substances with many of his friends, so he removed them from his life in order to complete probation.

Some participants mentioned they avoided activities such as "partying" or visiting clubs and bars. When Kaden was asked if he participated in any activities to try and meet new people, he shared, "I have a little bit of a social life, but I've actually had to cut back because a lot of the friends that I've made are still living the lifestyle that I don't want to be around." Kaden purposely avoided old friends and acquaintances because he felt they would disrupt his ability to complete probation. He explained that it was harder to form

friendships with new people when he said, "I don't think it's hard for me to meet people, but I think it's hard for me to make friends with those people." Kaden attributed this difficulty to the difference in activities between individuals he used to hang out with versus individuals that he felt would be a positive influence:

> I know the things that I used to want to do when I was getting into trouble involve partying and stuff like that. So a lot of the good influences that I've met recently that I would like to make friends with, they have activities that make me uncomfortable, but it's just because I'm not used to it.

Kaden's new acquaintances were difficult to make inroads with, but at the same time, his relationships with old friends were no longer sustainable because of his goal to complete probation, prompting him to sever those existing ties. Kaden described he had to learn how to participate in activities without using drugs or alcohol, which could be a challenge for him. Frank highlighted the change in the type of activities he participates in since being sentenced to probation:

> I can't be out too late for recreation right now. I'm just getting into this probation, so it's like I can't be hanging out anyway, if I wanted to, like at clubs and stuff like I would used to. I like to go out by myself or with maybe a couple of people, go to certain clubs, and maybe them areas ain't the safest, but I've always been good wherever I go. Yeah. Then, hanging around maybe certain people wouldn't be a good thing if I know it was going to be... you know what I'm saying? But, I don't fall for peer pressure, though.

In the past, Frank relied on nightlife to meet other individuals, but felt his probation term prevented that type of activity for fear he would pick up a new case hanging out in "unsafe" areas. When Frank was asked to provide an example of the kinds of activities that would make him nervous to be around, he noted:

> Maybe people smoking. Smoking weed is a big thing. I used to do it before I got locked up, but now I can't. So, if I know somebody want to smoke, then I'm not going to be going to hang around them because I know that people that do that, they want you to do it with them.

Prior to his conviction, Frank smoked marijuana and maintained relationships with people who did the same, but after he was incarcerated in jail and put on probation, severed those relationships.

Others explicitly discussed they severed relationships with people who could expose them to drugs and alcohol. These participants expressed their lifestyles as sober or clean people were incompatible with the lives their old friends outside of twelve-step programs led (see also Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001). For instance, when Mike was released from prison he changed his activities to limit contact with friends he felt might compromise his recovery:

> My family. My brother, my sister, nieces, nephew, everybody that I know it seems like is my support group. If I want to go rub elbows with a bunch of [gang name] or [gang name] or stuff like that, like the groups I used to hang out with, I can go get in trouble at any point in time in my life. But for the most part, it's… I don't want to anymore. It's redundant to me now.

Before serving time in prison, Mike was actively involved in motorcycle gangs and then chose to remove himself from those activities post-conviction. When Mike was asked about the types of social activities he participated in, he noted he would no longer meet friends at bars because he felt they might expose him to drugs and alcohol:

> I work, go to NA, hang out with my family, friends, stuff like that. That's about all I do now. Literally, I went from having the partier's life to, "Hey, what are you doing?" "Getting ready for tomorrow," "It's 6:00 at night," "Yeah I know. I got to be up at like 4:00 in the morning. What are you doing?" "I'm thinking about going out to the bars," "Well, have fun."

Mike purposely avoided his old friends and instead focused his time on building relationships with those in NA, family, and friends who did not pose a risk to staying clean (Maruna, 2001). Erin also selectively associated with individuals from her NA group for fear they would impact her recovery. She explained, "I will not tolerate any

type of drugs around me or around my family. I will not have it. I don't tolerate alcohol either." Erin provided an example of an individual in NA she would actively maintain contact with versus a person with whom she limited her interactions. Erin provided emotional support to a woman she met in NA who was able to get her children back from state custody and was in the final stages of drug court. However, Erin had to limit her interactions with another woman from NA who she perceived would pose a risk to her sobriety discussing, "I have one who has failed, miserably. She's gone straight back into active addiction. Am I still there for her? Absolutely. But do I allow her to bring me down? No." Erin noted that, "in the past I didn't have clear boundaries so that's a big step for me." Erin's boundaries were instituted after her last period of incarceration, which she considered a major hook for change (Giordano et al., 2002). She discussed:

> So for real that last 13 months in DOC probably saved my life. I mean for real, it probably did save my life. That treatment, that behavioral modification, sat me down and opened my eyes, my mind, my heart, my soul, to where what the hell I was doing and how I was how I could stop it.

Erin attributed her success with recovery to her ability to selectively associate with trusted family and institute boundaries as an NA sponsor (Raudenbush, 2016).

On occasion, participants explained they felt their convictions stemmed from relationships with other people, causing them to sever most social ties. Haley, for instance, brought up how she, "lost trust for people completely" since her conviction. Though she did not disclose her conviction to interviewers, she explained she firmly believed her crime was caused by:

> Hanging out with the wrong people at the wrong time. It was somebody I grew up with that I didn't even really care about. I didn't know he had the intentions he had, otherwise I definitely wouldn't have partook in it.

Haley explained she did not try to meet new friends nor acquaintances when she said,

"Not anymore because I don't associate with anyone. I literally go to work and come

home now, so not anymore. But it still just makes me really want to isolate myself."

When asked if she thought her reservations about meeting new people would get better

she relayed:

> It's going to take time to get used to just getting to know people. I don't know. I have issues trying to meet people now because I just feel like everyone has ulterior motives, everyone, they mean no good. So I think eventually, but not right now.

Haley felt she might eventually feel comfortable meeting new people, yet at the time of

her interview was wary of interacting with anyone due to the circumstances of her crime.

For the most part, participants seemed highly wary of people outside their families and

relayed they tried to purposefully cut off individuals they viewed may be detrimental to

their completion of probation or parole. Participants were selective in their

characterization of people, activities, and places who they felt might compromise their

ability to remain in the community (Raudenbush, 2016), sometimes viewing others as

incompatible with the new lives they built after their convictions (Giordano et al., 2002).

Ostracism: "There's been times where I've reached out to ask for help and then people just kind of shame me for even doing that." – Angela

Participants lost relationships with informal sources of support. Individuals'

family and friends ostracized them when they could not remain crime free and asked for a

great amount of social support without reciprocating. Reciprocation is highlighted in the

literature as key for emotional well-being (Gleason et al., 2003). Participants' informal

supports were sometimes characterized as burning out from the sheer amount of support

they provided and time sacrificed helping participants over the years (Comfort, 2016).

Informal social support was conditional and tied to participants' compliance, much alike Phelps and Ruhland's (2022) concept of "carceral care." The participants' informal social supports sometimes also did not want to associate with them given the stigma of their criminal convictions. A similar finding has been observed in the incarceration scholarship, where families of incarcerated people express concern about being stigmatized due to their relatives' system contact (Codd, 2008; Condry, 2007).

Participants pointed to the stigmatization and shame they experienced when asking for help. Cycles of jail incarceration likely posed intense hardships for family members of the participants, burning bridges with family members who at one time may have been willing to provide support (Comfort, 2016). Comfort (2016, p. 1017) explains the cycle of jail incarceration, "undermines efforts to stabilize a troubled individual: appointments are missed, paperwork and belongings are lost, medications are skipped, and housing is jeopardized." Consequently, families are often tasked with coordinating resources for their system-impacted relative or continue the cycle of incarceration. Participants in this study explained how their families burned out from helping them. Charlie mentioned his family members put him down for his past behavior and noted, "They just kind of single you out to be a criminal when you're really not." Instead of relying on family for help, Charlie instead utilized his probation officer and girlfriend as resources because, "they don't talk down on me like everybody else does and make me feel less important." Angela explained, "there's been times where I've reached out to ask for help and then people just kind of shame me for even doing that. So it kind of shuts me down." Angela's past probation violations broke trust with her family. She explained multiple periods of jail incarceration, "definitely affected my family. They don't really

want nothing to do with me. And work, I lost my job. It affected getting other jobs. It's really affected a lot in my life, honestly." Because Angela did not have family to rely upon, she discussed she exchanged social support with, "more like acquaintances and sometimes it's just random people that I just run across also" to "couch surf" and for transportation to her required outpatient treatment and meetings with her probation officer.

Participants described the struggle to convince their informal social support people they would not engage in future criminal activity. People with substance abuse problems discussed ostracism when they had a difficult time remaining clean or sober (Barry et al., 2014). Natalie discussed, for instance, that her family had not completely cut her out of their lives, but her relationship with them was limited. She denoted, "I have people that support me from afar, and then I also have some people that support me close up, if that makes sense. My family supports me if I'm doing good, but they don't help me out any." Natalie had been incarcerated as a juvenile for, "skipping school and that's when I started drinking really heavily. And so I was in juvie, in DYS, for minor in possession, truancy, fighting, stuff like that" and then spent time in adult prison. At the time of her interview she had been on probation for seven years, which was prolonged because of drug and residence violations. As a precondition to receiving help, Natalie's family told her she would have to try and remain clean from drugs. She described how her family would no longer let her live with them, but sometimes provided her with transportation:

> I know that my sister has let me stay there before. My mom's just kind of over it, so she is... It's just kind of there. It's not like they've cut me out of their lives because of this. If I really need a ride somewhere, and they're able to, they'll help me out. But other than that I'm pretty by myself.

While Natalie's relationship with her family was not completely severed, they chose to maintain a distance from her due to her drug use (see also Miller, 2021). Natalie discussed how it was difficult to meet new people like friends and acquaintances, in part due to the potential to receive violations of association, but also because the interactions did not feel natural since she would have to disclose that she was also on probation. Natalie was afraid others might judge her for her criminal convictions given her tense relationships with family members whom she felt judged her for her inability to be independent. She explained, "It's just like, 'Oh hey, my name is so and so. By the way, are you on probation at all?' It's like, 'I can't talk to you.' That's just not how conversations go, for a start."

Dennis likewise explained how he was ostracized by his ex-wife and friends after his conviction. He noted:

> Me and my ex-wife separated and she pretty much took all my friends. And now, because I was on drugs, and it's kind of awkward when I go out socializing again. I just have anxiety attacks, so it's not the same.

Dennis felt he had a hard time communicating with other people in his recovery and since losing his existing friends during a divorce, had limited interactions with others. Consequently, Dennis stated he only exchanged social support with his parents. At the time of his interview, Dennis was living with them and explained they regularly asked how he was doing.

Participants convicted of sexual offenses felt even more ostracized than the participants with other felony convictions (Huebner et al., 2019). Alex mentioned when he disclosed his sexual offense conviction to others they shunned him or "ghosted" him, meaning they quit responding to his attempts to reach out:

Because the last few times I tried and bring it up and try talking to people, it just didn't go well. They immediately shun you. They ghost you. I'm at the point where, as far as attachment goes, I got hurt so much trying to get attached to people, I just stopped. I'm now at the point of where, "Oh yeah, we'll be friends." Then all of a sudden, especially with new people at work, I tell them almost immediately, "Oh, you can love me or hate me, but I have to work with you. If you don't want to talk to me, whatever." But as far as my personal life goes, I just don't see myself being attached or being in a relationship with anybody.

In addition to purposely keeping a distance from potential new friends or romantic partners, Alex felt he was ostracized by others given his conviction type. Reginald was also convicted of a sexual offense and discussed the resulting changes in his relationships:

Intensely, there are rifts especially in my wife's family. I have lost my relationship with my stepdaughter who was 12. She's a victim of the trauma that was, she's not a victim of sexual abuse, but she was traumatized by the sudden change that came along, when I was arrested and her response was I should say, their response was really intense and it was intensely treated in their other household. So, they are someone I love very much and I have not seen them, since my arrest. I don't believe I've seen them since my arrest, I certainly haven't talked with them and I didn't get permission I didn't even seek permission from the judge to have contact without you know. I did with my six-year-old, and it was awarded that my, my biological child and I have two older children and it has been a strain on you know, on our, my whole family and I've lost or imagine I've lost a lot of friendships.

Not only did his conviction provoke ostracism on the part of family, but Reginald's friends severed their relationships with him because they did not want to associate with someone convicted of a sexual offense. Andrew additionally denoted he lost relationships with his grandchildren due to his conviction and because his daughter's husband was leery of his being around their family. He discussed, "and I hope someday my daughter can be a supervisor so I can just visit, but I think her husband's wary of me." Andrew explained his daughter would be able to take a course to become certified to supervise

him around her children, yet he believed the stigma of the conviction was really what severed their relationship.

Tyler, who was likewise convicted of a sexual offense, discussed the potential for stigmatization when engaging in activities in the community:

> I want so bad to go to church and be a part of a church. But the church I was part of had a lot of my students in it. And when I was arrested, I know that people on my Facebook were contacted, just because I got some friends that told me they got weird stuff. So I am afraid to actually go back to that church, just because of the scrutiny that I might face.

Before his conviction, Tyler was a teacher and felt that the publicity surrounding his sexual offense conviction prevented his ability to participate in social activities like church. Tyler noted his probation officer tried to encourage him to meet people in the community, but he felt he had to be careful about how much information he divulged about himself, otherwise they might learn about his criminal history and react to him in a stigmatizing way:

> But when you start talking to somebody new, you kind of start talking about yourself and you either have to be vigilant about how you answer questions, so that you don't alert them to anything or you have to just avoid certain topics.

Tyler provided an example of the difficulty he faced trying to meet new friends at a bar. Tyler was worried the server would look up his name online after she charged his card when he said:

> And one of the servers asked me some questions and we talked and that didn't turn out great. But I think she looked up my information. I think after she ran my card, she looked up my information, and it freaked her out. I think she found out I was arrested, but I don't know that.

Though Tyler did not know for sure whether the server had looked up his information and found out about his conviction, he felt he was at risk for judgment if he attempted to engage in emotional social support exchanges with people in the community. Participants

generally had a difficult time convincing others they would not engage in future criminal behavior, limiting the social supports upon which they could draw. Nelson and Trone (2000) discuss families of system-impacted people may feel betrayal when the system-impacted person is unable to engage in prosocial behavior and extant scholarship points to the deep distrust and harm criminal behavior can cause within families (Grieb et al., 2014).

Probation Officer Turnover: "Well, this time around, they switched my officer four different times." – Adam

Though probation and parole officers were sometimes participants' only source of social support, they were subject to frequent probation and parole officer turnover. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated staffing issues through many offices in the St. Louis area. For instance, probation and parole offices had a difficult time hiring and retaining staff given the working conditions of the job. Probation and parole officers' regular meetings with the people they supervise potentially exposed them to COVID-19 and budgetary constraints have limited officer pay. Probation and parole officers can be key members of individuals' support systems (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022), yet the current starting salary for probation and parole officers in Missouri is $33,912 and typically requires a bachelor's degree (see Missouri Office of Administration, 2023). Even though probation and parole officers gained access to additional modes of communication such as texting and could meet clients in the community (Huebner et al., 2023), the effect of the pandemic on officer turnover cannot be understated. Adam, for example, highlighted, "Well, this time around, they switched my officer four different times" and thus, "I feel

like there's kind of a break in communication." Cherrell relayed similar concerns about

not being able to bond with her probation officers over the two years she was supervised:

> In them years I had three different probation officers. So it's like I never got to really bond with none of them. Because, well, one of them, the one I just had, I had him the longest. Because I had the first lady I had, I had her for two months and then all the rest of the time I had him and then now I got her. So, she been my probation officer, I think, about a month.

Cherrell's meetings with her probation officers were sometimes only every one or two

months, limiting the amount of interaction she had with them. Cherrell explained how she

kept in contact with her current probation officer when she said, "We text on regular

basis. It could be a Sunday, we will text or something if we got something to say to each

other. I don't have problems getting in contact with them." However, it was the officer

turnover, not the ability of individual officers to respond that impacted her relationships.

Jaden explained the potential ramifications of probation officer turnover when he

described how he was having difficulty communicating with a new officer:

> Yeah, we still getting a feel for each other, but it's definitely getting better because I had a different probation officer at first, and then I got introduced to a second one. And then, some of the stuff, the information or something got tied up and... It is getting better. It started off rocky, but it's getting there.

Over time, Jaden's relationship with his probation officer improved, but at first his

probation officer was not up to speed on the details of his case. Jaden explained how he

thought he might have to do additional probation time and be more punitive than the last:

> I thought she was probably going to, I don't know, give me a hard time. And then, it's kind of what it seemed like in the beginning because my probation officer that I had in the beginning was telling me that every time I do good time, I get time off of my probation, which means I get a earlier off versus what's on paper. And I've been doing good, but when I got her, she said, "That's nonexistent with the nature of my case, that is null and void for me." And I'm like, "What are you talking about? He was showing me the status of my good time and everything like that." But she ended up looking into it and everything. And like I said, we've been getting a feel for each other. It's been working out.

Jaden was hopeful that he would be able to build a relationship with the new probation officer, but the end of his relationship with the previous officer had potentially disastrous consequences. Not only did participants have a difficult time filling in new probation and parole officers about the statuses of their good time and general compliance, but the constant turnover could affect some participants' ability to maintain caring relationships they had with certain officers (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). For individuals with little or less informal support, probation officer turnover could be particularly destabilizing in that it disrupted sources of emotional and interactional support. Participants who had access to family support were at a considerable advantage when compared to those with more sporadic support from people outside the family. Participants without access to family or other informal sources were the most disadvantaged, relying on the formal relationships with probation and parole officers often characterized by the punitive environment in which services were provided (Miller & Stuart, 2017).

Chapter V. Strategies of Social Support Exchange

Participants relied on many strategies to get the support they needed. The individuals in this study received social support in the three broad categories delineated by extant literature – emotional, interactional, and instrumental (Mowen et al., 2019), but also pointed to particular aspects of the support they received to explain how they received it. The participants highlighted their need for others to express their emotional support by sticking by their side in hard times and expressing their availability to help them in times of need. Prior literature has demonstrated the availability of emotional support is often the most important for individuals in crisis (Jacobson, 1986) and for health outcomes (Grieb et al., 2014). Participants also received interactional support, or information and guidance, from all types of individuals. The way this support was exchanged depended on the level of control and coercion others had over their lives, however. The consequences of not taking probation and parole officers' advice, for example, were potentially greater than not taking family and friends' advice (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022; Sampson & Laub, 1990). Participants did not exchange instrumental support with their probation and parole officers and family members typically tended to play a greater role in providing this type of support than other support people such as friends or acquaintances, potentially out of a sense of duty or obligation (Lubbers et al., 2020). Participants also behaved in particular ways in exchange for help. For example, in order to reciprocate the social support, participants focused on providing emotional support to others and displaying "good" behavior when they did not have many resources to draw upon (Comfort, 2008). The least discussed type of reciprocation included paying others back with instrumental goods and participants sometimes reciprocated instead

using domestic and informal labor (Giuffre, forthcoming). Finally, a few women in the study discussed how they reciprocated social support using sex (Miller & Schwartz, 1995). This chapter is structured in two main parts, with a section detailing the ways participants received social support and then explains the ways they provided it to others.

Receiving Social Support

Participants generally explained how they received support from others using the three constructs delineated in prior literature – emotional, interactional, and instrumental (Mowen et al., 2019). Within these categories, participants explained what types of support mattered most to them and how these categories varied by relationship type. First, the availability of emotional support was often characterized as paramount to participant success, which comports with the social psychology literature suggesting perceived availability of emotional support is most important for health outcomes (e.g., Uchino, 2004, 2009). The participants wanted to feel seen and heard by all the people in their lives. Next, interactional support, or the guidance and information received from others, was provided on a coercive continuum and characterized as less important when compared to emotional or instrumental support. Probation officers, for example, could institute further sanctioning for asking for help with things like housing (Klingele, 2013), but family and some friends provided "tough love" about what participants should do. This "tough love" was not always well received by the participants and they expressed preference for the informal connections they made with others who were not judgmental about the choices they made. The psychological literature explains individuals may be less willing to accept guidance or advice from family because advice from an "expert" or professional source may be perceived as more helpful (Helgeson, 2003). Last, family was

the most constant source of support with respect to instrumental resources, but more sporadic instrumental support from people outside the family also played an important role in the participants' lives (Granovetter, 1974).

Availability of Emotional Support: "I think just what helps me the most is letting them know that they're there for me if I need." – Scott

Participants stated they relied on family, friends, romantic partners, and occasionally probation officers for emotional support, but often had a hard time articulating how that support was provided to them. Instead, participants pointed to these support people "just being there" as an important component of emotional support. Participants focused on the availability of other persons to listen to their concerns and wanted their support people to witness their concerns and challenges while they were under community supervision even if they did not necessarily reach out for help from people. This perceived available support is strongly related to health (e.g., Uchino, 2004, 2009). In this way, emotional support was more about feeling like they could trust others to provide a stable level of encouragement to finish their community supervision term and feel like they belonged or were accepted (Rutter, 1987). Participants described the emotional connections they built with people over a long period of time and those who they could expect to be around for them in the future as most helpful. In comparison, the individuals in this study sometimes expressed worry they would be abandoned by probation officers due to retirement or turnover.

Participants discussed the words of encouragement they received as a component of this emotional support, and sometimes this form of social support was depicted as the most important part of the support they received. Support from informal sources was

described as key to making it through community supervision (Miller & Stuart, 2017).

Support from family was characterized as especially key and those without it were at a

serious disadvantage because there were not state sponsored resources available.

Evidently, the conditions of probation and parole could reproduce inequalities for people

who did not already have these support networks built (Miller & Stuart, 2017).

Participants explained how their families helped them emotionally. Nick, for instance,

explained, "But my family, they've emotionally and physically and mentally, all of it"

and noted the most important piece of his family's support was, "whenever I just need

someone to talk to. At least they're always there to answer the phone." Dave similarly

noted about his aunt, "You know she tried to help me stay focused and calm me down" so

that he could finish probation. Anthony discussed how his friends reminded him his

probation term would come to an end:

> Most of my friends know about it. I mean, they're supportive, they're telling me
> it's going to be all right, nothing to worry about, time is going to heal. I mean, in
> no time I'll be done. I only have a year left.

Emotional support for Anthony was about providing him with the belief he could

successfully complete probation. Laura, in comparison, explained her mother and her

grandmother were available to talk with her and provide encouragement to finish her

supervision term successfully:

> I mean just emotional and mental support really. Just somebody to talk to if I need
> to talk to somebody. You know, just reminding me that I got this, that you know
> just to take it day by day and then things are going to get better.

An important piece of her family's support was being available to talk when she needed it

in addition to telling her she was capable of getting off community supervision. Marie

also said about her partner, "he helps. He literally helps me with everything, just

everything." Her partner's attitude was positive about her probation term and that they could complete it together, "It's hard, but he really does love and care about me, so he was like, 'Heck yeah, we're going to do this together.'" Participants expressed their support people helped them with statements that made them feel like they could achieve their goal to complete supervision.

Others highlighted how their support systems showed they were there or could be there for them in times of need. Clayton relayed about his girlfriend, "She's definitely a person I can talk to, and kind of rely on when I need someone to talk. I'll call and she's always there." Scott additionally described the most important piece of his parents' and fiancée's support when he said, "I think just what helps me the most is letting them know that they're there for me if I need." Informal support people who stuck by the participants' side during before and after their conviction could be important sources of social support. Alex discussed how he only trusted two people in his life to provide emotional support. He noted, "I trust my older sister… she got me through all of that. As far as the other person I trust, it's someone [at] work." Alex described how his older sister stuck by his side when he was convicted of a sexual offense:

> I'm allowed to talk to her and she's family and she helped me get through some stuff. As you can imagine, being arrested and being charged with a sex offender offense, especially at that young age, it traumatizes you a little bit.

Alex compared his experiences with his sister and close friend to that of his probation officer. The difference between the probation officer and others' emotional support was that trust had been built over a period of time and Alex felt he would not be abandoned by his sister nor friend. Comparatively, he felt he had no choice but to trust his probation officer.

Participants also relayed support people who they expected to provide future support were helpful emotionally. Reginald explained he had emotionally relevant friendships with people he felt he could trust to continue providing support. He noted his conviction, "has been a strain on you know, on our, my whole family and I've lost or imagine I've lost a lot of friendships. I have had other friendships that have sustained throughout and have been really wonderful." Reginald discussed friends who provided him emotional support over a sustained period of time and reached out after his conviction:

> I have really good friends, I had a music teacher friend that I was teaching with at the time, and she sent a letter that got to my house within a day or two, and it was very brief. How'd that go? But then I got another letter within another day, and it was like, "Call me." You know she was insistent and I, I couldn't look at I mean I couldn't look at the original letter, even though it said beautiful things in a very small, just like card, but that's from her and her husband and I receive a lot of support in that way.

Small gestures of support, such as a card or a call, and relationships that sustained post-conviction made participants feel like they were part of a community and belonged. Tyler discussed how he met friends through a support group for divorced people and those relationships had carried over after his conviction:

> The friends I'm referring to mostly when I talk about my friends are people I met through [support group]. When I got separated from my wife in 2011, I started attending a divorce and separated support group, which is just peer support. And we would meet, we would talk about different topics, we'd pray, and then we'd go out to eat. And that was like a weekly thing. And that has been a part of my life since 2011. And then, when I got arrested in 2016, they did not turn on me. Some just couldn't deal with it, but they've been there for me.

Tyler relied on one friend in particular to provide him with reassurance that he would be able to complete particular conditions of his probation, such as a polygraph test:

> She listens to me when I'm having one of those anxiety days. Last week we met on Tuesday and I was having an anxiety day about something. It wasn't a bad day

for me, it was just, there was some kind of... Oh, my lie detector test was coming up. That was last Thursday, I think. And so, I talked to her about that. Or else it was a week after that. Anyway, we talked about that, so it was good. She's been able to be there for me and I've been able to be there for her.

Participants' general feelings were that emotional support was contingent on the ability of other individuals to just be around for them and try to get them through their community supervision term.

The Coercive Continuum of Interactional Support: "She holds me accountable for my actions. I guess you can call it tough love." – Isobel

Interactional support (i.e., the information and guidance received from family, friends, acquaintances, romantic partners and probation officers) was provided on a coercive continuum. Family, friends, acquaintances and romantic partners provided guidance to the individuals on probation, but their support was typically characterized as "tough love" or making the participants stay out of trouble that grew increasingly coercive as the support provided increased (Comfort, 2008). These interactions with informal sources of support could be characterized as informal social control because participants would be shamed or lose their support if they did not listen (Sampson & Laub, 1990). Probation and parole officers provided guidance in the form of formal social control and with the understanding that additional sanctions could possibly be imposed for not following such guidance (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Probation and parole officer interactional support was typically focused on how individuals should complete their probation successfully and its reception depended on whether participants felt officers were meeting their needs (Maisel & Gable, 2009). Friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, and probation officers as opposed to family members, also provided interactional support in the traditional sense of valuable information about employment

and helpful resources. However, these interactions often did not come with the expectation participants would behave in prosocial ways.

Participants described their family members were the toughest on them out of the informal support people when providing interactional guidance. Lawrence's comments about his cousin exemplified the "tough love" the participants typically received from their informal supports like family, friends, and romantic partners:

> My cousin don't hold any punches with me. He's going to tell me if I'm right or if I'm wrong. No candy coating. My cousin's not going to lie to me. He's going to tell me exactly what's going on. So that's the most important.

Lawrence felt his cousin was his most important supporter, but at the same time, he was honest about when he felt Lawrence was not acting appropriately. Dennis joked about his parents, "They give me a curfew or don't come home that night. No, they make sure I'm all right" alluding to the control they had over his activities (Sampson & Laub, 1990). Brandon's mother similarly focused her efforts on making sure he had all the proper information ready to meet his probation conditions. He described, "She makes sure that everything I get going, like, I have, you know, all my paperwork ready and all that stuff." Likewise, Clayton said, "My sister just slaps job applications in front of my face, so that's about that" to keep him motivated. Isobel also relayed how her mother held her accountable:

> She's more emotionally and mentally supportive. She holds me accountable for my actions. I guess you can call it tough love, whatever. It's hard, and it pisses me off sometimes. But she's doing what she has to do, and it also helps me. I might not admit that to her, but…

Though Isobel did not like her mother's "tough love" at times, she believed it was a necessary component of interactional social support to keep her out of jail. Isobel further denoted, "She calls me out on my shit if she thinks I'm going back to my old ways, call

me out on it." Cindy believed her family was helpful in the sense that they also got her out of trouble. She explained, "I keep my crowd small. So basically, I have a couple of scattered friends here and there, but I usually just stick with my family. You know? They get me out of trouble." Participants commented they needed the interactional guidance to be successful, but also that hearing the criticism from family could be difficult.

Romantic partners appeared less "tough" than family when providing constructive criticism and also focused their efforts on providing information to their partners about employment opportunities (see also Berg & Huebner, 2011). The women in participants' lives featured prominently in these narratives, providing informal social control (Comfort, 2008) and acting as role models for prosocial behavior (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Charlie said his girlfriend, "Definitely motivates me and keeps me on the right track and doesn't let me veer off of it." His girlfriend made sure he was looking for jobs and suggested he stay away from certain individuals who she believed were likely to influence him to engage in criminal behavior when he discussed, "Make sure that I'm looking for jobs, all that kind of stuff. Make sure I'm not going out and doing stupid shit." When asked if she discourages him from hanging out with particular people, he discussed, "I mean, kind of, but not really" because, "You got to make your own choices in life, but she tries to help as much as she can." Zack also highlighted how his girlfriend tried to connect him with employment and kept him motivated when he relayed she, "Keeps me out of trouble and helps me try to find jobs and all that. Keeps me on track." Other participants such as Isobel pointed to the constructive criticism their partners provided:

Just like, "You got it babe." Or he helps me give ... He helps me with the ideas. If I come to him with an idea, he won't just be like, "Yeah, that's good." If he doesn't agree with it, he will tell me that. And I appreciate his constructive criticism.

Isobel appreciated her husband's honesty about the types of activities she should engage in. Cindy also relayed her husband helped keep her out of trouble by connecting her to informal work when she noted, "He does a lot of side work, so I'll go with him and help him with side work to make extra money, stuff like that to keep me busy." Compared to family members, romantic partners were less tough on the participants and also provided them with certain connections to employment they might not have had otherwise.

Interactional support from friends and acquaintances focused primarily on providing the participants with resources such as connections to jobs, but included the occasional reminder to stay out of trouble. John, for example, noted, "I used to work at jiffy lube, friend got me on up there." Tyler also noted how a person from his support group found him a job:

Right prior to my arrest, one of my friends did connect me with a job, one of my friends that I met through divorce network we have it, we have a support group that centers on lost, and it was divorced and widowed people and one of them found me a job before my arrest, but I lost that job once I was arrested.

Though Tyler ended up losing the job after his arrest, his friend was at one time able to provide him with guidance regarding employment. Adam's friends were also able to help him find work until he could locate a more lucrative position. He explained:

In that last time period, I retained employment at my friend's body shop and kind of just coasted that out until the restaurant opened back up and I ended up finding another restaurant that was opening up that paid a little more.

Mark was also able to get information about where to find resources to obtain an ID through a friend. He relayed, "My problem was I didn't have an ID, and I went through this church that's downtown, that provided me birth certificate, and take me for an ID,

and they got me [an] ID yesterday." Mark also received information to participate in the study from the same friend who provided him with the ID information, discussing, "That actually came from the same person who gave me the information about you guys." Natalie relayed how information about nonprofit organizations such as bail funds came from acquaintances she met while incarcerated. She highlighted, "A lot of inmates just talk about it. So that's how... I've heard of them [the bail fund] before." Scott's situation was unique in that he had met professors whom he considered friends that provided guidance about employment and careers. He described, "I have these professors who I can call on a whim, I have their personal phone number to call, too, you know, and they're, they are there to help mentor me." Scott also noted how he met an individual while incarcerated with whom he hoped to start a business:

> And he's been out of, he actually went to prison, and he's out, wants to start his business up again and this guy had a business for 30 years, him and his father did, and they had million dollar homes and all the toys going along with it, and this individual, we knew each other incarcerated and saying the path, we tried to surround yourself with like-minded people.

Scott's "like-minded" friend had similar goals and could potentially connect him with business opportunities. Spencer additionally denoted how his friends had been through similar experiences with the criminal legal system, and thus were able to provide interactional support in terms of guidance about how to successfully complete probation. He explained:

> Yeah, when I've been on probation, a lot of them have been through what I've been through. So if I go to ask them for advice, they know what I'm going through, they know what I should do and what I shouldn't do, so.

Scott's friends helped him consider the kinds of activities that might be more likely to get

him in trouble with his probation officer. Relatedly, Nick discussed, "Just keep me out ...

well, my friend keeps me out of trouble."

Probation and parole officer support was the most coercive given they could

institute further sanctions if the individuals in the study did not comply with the terms of

their supervision (Klingele, 2013). Probation and parole officers' roles included

providing information about resources that might be helpful to the participants, but they

frequently reminded the people they supervised they needed to abide by the rules and

regulations of probation and parole or potentially face consequences. Scott explained how

his officer provided interactional support, but the interactional support was overshadowed

by the level of compliance required:

> Yeah I think that that my parole officer instills in me that you do what you're
> supposed to do and you, you earn yourself not being on such intensive probation
> to just living your normal life, and it's like an appointment you got to go to. The,
> the reverse of that is your parole officer calling you in every week dropping on
> you, keeping it, asking you what you're doing, you have to go more than once a
> month or whatever the case is.

Interactional support in terms of guidance about appropriate behaviors from the

supervising officer was intended to decrease the level of supervision required. When

individuals did not take the guidance their officers provided, they might be subject to

more control such as frequent calls and drug testing (i.e., "dropping"). Marie discussed

how she followed her probation officer's guidance about finishing classes related to her

probation. She explained how her probation officer provided this guidance when she

noted:

> She said, "Hey, I'm going to give you until this day, because we have court soon.
> You need to get your classes done so we can get you done with court," because

until ... For me, I'm on a compliance docket until I get my anger management classes done.

For Marie, the consequence of not finishing her classes would be additional sanctioning from the court. Alex also discussed about his probation officer, "She's definitely laid down what you can and can't do. I might have questions. She finds out for them. She finds out answers." Kaden explained he found his meetings with his probation officer useful because, "it reminds me of what I'm supposed to be doing, so every time I meet with her, I have an idea or just a reminder of what she expects from me." Josiah described his probation officer as helpful because, "I feel like the information that he be giving me is the right information, that he's leading me down the right path." Probation and parole officer interactional support was at the extreme end of the control continuum in that it focused on providing individuals with advice and resources about how to complete supervision. If participants did not comply, they could be subject to additional sanctioning. The consequences for not following the guidance of informal supports were potentially less serious. For example, family could withdraw their support if they felt participants were not taking their advice.

Sustained by Instrumental Support: "I lost everything being incarcerated." – Erin

Many participants heavily relied on family for instrumental support. Participants did not typically have the social connections with others outside the family for this kind of support. Family members were usually most willing to provide this type of support, potentially overlooking the stigma of their system-impacted relatives' convictions to do so (Braithewaite, 1989; Ekland-Olson et al., 1983; Lofland, 1969; Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Participants rarely discussed instrumental support from their

romantic partners except when they lived with them and instead pointed to their

emotional support. Approximately 19.4% of participants, or 12 people, relayed they lived

with romantic partners. Marie discussed, "I live with my fiancé, [name], and then I live

with his son, [name]" and Cindy denoted, "I live with my husband and my daughter."

When Miranda was asked if her boyfriend helps her any, she replied with a simple, "no."

Generally, participants relied on friends for smaller things like transportation

rather than housing, money, or basic needs for which family typically filled the gap. Erin

explained her lack of support when she cycled in and out of prison and jail:

> I lost everything being incarcerated. I did, I came, I had nothing. I had no roof
> over [my head], nothing. Nobody no roof over my head nothing. So each time I
> was released, with the exception of the last time. Each time I was being released, I
> was just shoved onto the streets and I had nothing, for real. You know I didn't do,
> there was nothing, there was no support. And that also was probably part of that
> fell on me, because I went straight back to the streets and to active addiction
> again. You know I would be clean and sober whatever when I was incarcerated,
> when I hit the streets, as soon as I hit the streets, I was getting high again, except
> for the last time.

Erin's addiction prevented her from finding housing and promoted the cycles of

incarceration. The last time she went to prison, she explained she rebuilt her relationship

with her son, leading to a shared housing arrangement:

> And I chose to - I didn't want to come out and start back into that same situation
> again, and my son and I while - during incarceration my son and I gained some of
> our relationship. So when I came out he provided a home plan for me, a safe and
> secure home plan; didn't put me back in the same people, places, and things where
> I was, which was exactly what I needed, you know? I needed to be removed from
> that area, that situation. He gave me the opportunity to come out and be
> successful.

Erin felt her son was able to change her trajectory by providing her with instrumental

support. Many participants (45.2%) were living with family members at the time of their

interviews. Hannah noted how her mother and stepfather allowed her to live with them:

They've let me come back home, so that way I'm not spending so much money living into, living in a sober living. That way I can save my money and you know actually make it on my own, so they've been pretty helpful through all of it.

Hannah's parents' support was twofold in that it provided her with a safe place to live and with an opportunity to save money. Tyler also denoted, "Well, I already told you my mom pays my rent every month" and Alex explained, "Yeah. I don't pay rent, but I pay my car insurance" because he lived with his mother and stepfather. Timmy additionally highlighted, "Well, like I'm lucky that I was able to get a job and I'm lucky that I'm able - my parents were able to let me live at home with them for probation."

Family members provided a great deal of transportation as well. Frank's mother paid for his extended stay hotel while he looked for an apartment and also provided transportation when he did not have access to his car. He relayed she was supportive, "Paying for the room and being there to give me a ride when I needed to." Cherrell also discussed, that she typically made it to her probation officer appointments using her own vehicle, "but it got towed a couple days ago. So my brother brought me here." When asked how he gets around, Isaiah explained, "Bus. Or sometimes if a chauffer or family member, if I call on, they'll either take me or something like that, but family have their own things going on at times" and Kevin relayed, "I get a ride. My mom take me."

Family members chose to provide the participants money in some cases. Cal's aunts were helpful in that they gave him, "a ride or they basically get set up the appointments and stuff for me also" and let him borrow, "Probably like 50, 60 bucks maybe once a month, if that." John estimated that he owed his mother, "over $1,000 so far. Like bills and trying to get the car fixed, stuff like that, its over $1,000 that I owe her,

I know." Ray discussed many family members pitched in with instrumental assistance when he was released from prison:

> When I first got out, they all tried to help a little bit. They tried to give me that one thing to help. I had some uncles from Cincinnati, they gave me a $500 gift card to Target. My uncles, father, they gave him money to help. But he didn't do much. He gave me a car, he was supposed to give me, but it was like pulling hair to get it. So he tried to help, but he didn't do much. My uncles helped for a little bit, my brother, my older brother helped, my mom.

Participants family members provided them with all sorts of instrumental goods such as places to live, transportation, money.

Instrumental support from friends and acquaintances was considerably more sporadic. Participants could find themselves constantly asking for instrumental help and from many different persons when they lacked the family support others had. Others' generosity in these cases dictated the level of support participants received (Miller & Stuart, 2017). Neil, for instance, explained how his friends occasionally provided transportation, but that he could not always rely on them. He discussed:

> There's an occasional time when I might have a friend that will take me grocery shopping or maybe even a haircut. My last haircut, I got a ride with a friend. Other than that, I spend a fair amount on Uber rides.

Neil's family connections were limited since he was retired and lived far away from his brothers. Thus, he ended up spending money on rideshare services during the times friends could not provide him transportation. Laura explained how her closest friend was helpful because, "if I need a ride somewhere she takes me so I don't have to ride the bus" and, "If I need cigarettes, she will buy me cigarettes sometimes. Sometimes she buys me lunch. Yeah, she just she helps as much as she can." Spencer also denoted, "I don't have a car at the moment, so I ask my friends for rides all the time" and Harold relayed he

sometimes relied on friends for transportation when he noted, "I usually have a friend of mine that she'll take and drive me there, but most of the time I catch the bus."

About 6.5% of participants, or four people, lived with a friend or roommate, as opposed to almost half the sample who lived with family and one fifth who lived with a romantic partner. More participants were unhoused (11.3%) or living alone (14.5%) than living with friends. Mike explained his, "Living situation right now is living with a friend of mine" and Lily discussed, "Right now I'm kind of staying with friends" while Ian denoted, "I have a roommate and she's been really great through this whole process." Participants friends and acquaintances might occasionally give them rides or buy lunch, but the amount of instrumental support and frequency at which it was provided was less than family or the occasional romantic partner.

Reciprocating Social Support

This dissertation attended to the ways people on community supervision provided support to others – a topic largely unexplored by existing literature. Literature on the broader population indicates reciprocating social support is an important part of social support exchange, predicting health and well-being (Gleason et al., 2003). The way participants reciprocated support did not fit neatly into the three categories (i.e., emotional, interactional, instrumental) system-impacted people typically receive support that are delineated by prior literature (Mowen et al., 2019). Participants reciprocated the support they received in five ways. First, in the absence of instrumental resources or the ability to provide interactional support to others, participants provided emotional support in that they listened to others' problems and made space for them to discuss their worries (Blazer, 1982). Second, and related to the coercive continuum upon which interactional

support was provided, participants reciprocated the support they received from others through "good" behavior (Comfort, 2008; Sampson & Laub, 1990). Primarily used with family members, this reciprocation strategy convinced support people that the participants were worthy of help. Participants who had access to instrumental resources were sometimes able to pay others back directly, but participants also reciprocated via domestic work and informal labor (Giuffre, 2023). Finally, some women in the sample reciprocated the help they received from people they characterized as friends and acquaintances through sex (Miller & Schwartz, 1995).

Reciprocation by Making Space to Talk: "Get the energy you put out, get the energy you receive." – Kevin

Participants explained how they reciprocated all types of exchanges (i.e., emotional, interactional, and instrumental) by giving emotional support to friends and acquaintances who helped them. Given the limited economic resources of the participants – nearly half the sample was unemployed – reciprocating instrumental support or providing others with interactional type resources was less feasible. Participants also referenced how they knew this support was valuable given their own emotional needs (Rutter, 1987). Kevin explained how he tried to be supportive for friends who had provided him emotional support:

> I learn from them so I know how to be that supportive type, the supportive cast, or just being a ear or a shoulder for somebody to cry on, because they did it for me. And I know I needed it in the worst way. So if a person, one of my friends, come to me and just needs a shoulder to cry on, just to talk, I'm all ears because I know that's how I was. And get the energy you put out, get the energy you receive.

Kevin's experiences with others providing a shoulder to cry on or space to talk led to his wanting to provide that same experience back. Haley also discussed her experiences

while incarcerated and how she tried to reciprocate the care she received from others at

that point in her life in an emotional sense:

> I try to. I try to encourage people. I try to help them see the light in the dark tunnels because I've been there. Once you're there, you're already at rock bottom. So you both find the light in the darkness at that point. I just try to be strong for people that's still in there.

Haley maintained contact with her incarcerated friends to make sure they received the

same support she did.

The manner in which participants reciprocated emotional support echoed their

sentiments about how it was important to "just be there" for others in times of need

especially because they desired to receive this kind of support in return. Emotional

support could carry instrumental weight and instrumental support could convey

emotional meaning (Semmer et al., 2008). Charlie noted, "I always definitely lend a

helping hand whenever they need it. And I'm always there, answer their phone call if they

need to talk to me or anything like that." Zack also explained how he was, "Definitely

there when someone needs someone to talk to and help out as much as I can." Moreover,

Olivia relayed her support was not contingent on how close she was with another person.

She highlighted, "I just try to be there for somebody regardless of how close we are. Or

even if I just have to listen, that's what I'll do." Olivia was intent on providing emotional

support to both friends and acquaintances. Tyler also discussed how he tried to

reciprocate the support of his friends:

> And so, when I called her about today, not knowing that was going on, she told me. And I was able to pray with her. I prayed with her on the phone and I said, "I'm here for you all day, if you need to talk to me." After I got off the phone with her, I sent her two Bible verses. One was an article and one was a Bible verse, like meme, a fake picture.

For participants who received support from their friends and acquaintances, one way to reciprocate was making themselves available and giving space for others to talk with them about their emotional needs.

Reciprocation Through "Good" Behavior: "They know that I'm a good man in just a bad situation." – John

Participants often noted the reason they thought others, and especially family and romantic partners, would provide them with all types of support was that they were serious about finishing community supervision successfully and staying sober or clean (Sampson & Laub, 1990). Sometimes sources of support withheld their assistance from the participants if they relapsed or received violations, but at other times just the threat of withholding assistance would prompt participants to reciprocate the support they received by acting "good." Paradoxically, there is research to suggest individuals on community supervision may have difficulty completing their supervision term without support from others (Miller, 2021). This theme closely resembles Comfort's (2008) depiction of romantic partners of incarcerated men. Women in Comfort's (2008) study provided men support under the condition they exhibit "good" behavior. On occasion, participants also denoted they would only be willing to provide support to others if they exacted "good" behavior, like Dennis who relayed, "I don't mind it [helping others], as long as they're helping themselves." Sara denoted her family was willing to help her when she said, "My entire family if I were to need something would probably come through for me" but qualified her statement with, "Yeah, as long as I'm doing good, they're willing to help." When asked to explain what "doing good" meant, she discussed:

> Staying clean that's the number one thing, my sobriety. They don't want to see me going down that way at all again and just being good like trying to get a job,

taking care of my son being a good mother and a good person in general. As long as I'm trying they're willing to help.

In the event Sara had relapsed or experienced more criminal legal sanctioning, her family was likely to distance themselves from her and withdraw some of their support. Rachel, likewise, explained about her mother, "The only thing she asks for in return is just to try our best and get better." Kaden also highlighted how his family was willing to provide transportation once they perceived he was following the conditions of his supervision:

> Well, I live with family and they've been really supportive since they've seen me finally doing really good as I've gotten older and they know that I'm not really as young as I used to be and I'm not just blowing it off, so I always have transportation when I need to see them.

Kaden's family was only willing to support him when he was "doing really good." Joseph additionally mentioned about his fiancée, "So, the person that you spend most time with, which is just significant other, she always wants you to strive to do what you need to do so you can get done with this." Joseph's fiancée provided him with transportation because she perceived he would be completing his probation in return. Ken discussed that his family, and particularly the aunt he lived with, were, "happy to see me day-to-day, me taking steps to put my life back in order." Cindy mentioned about her family, "They just want to me do well and stay out of jail" when asked if her family expects anything in return for providing support.

Participants pointed to the way in which their support people wanted them to meet particular conditions of their probation. Frank explained how he was on probation for a child endangerment charge because he had removed his child from his apartment and had a weapon in the vehicle after he and his wife had a dispute. In consequence, Frank's mother lectured him about, "not getting caught up in a situation like this again." His

mother helped him pay for an extended stay apartment but was living with him at the time of his interview to make sure he did not have any additional criminal legal system involvement. Frank explained:

> It is cool. I mean, you know how grown man staying with his mom, it's kind of... But, I mean, I'm grateful for her to be here to help. It's just temporary. But, she's been lecturing me on stuff and giving me a lot of advice and let me vent to her when I need to. So, it's cool.

Though Frank explained he did not mind his mother living with him, the support she provided was in exchange to make sure he did not have future system contact. Hannah explained a similar situation as she was living with her mother and stepfather. She discussed about her mother, "I've got her support by being shown how to be professional and how to manage money, and you know actually live as an adult woman so." For some participants, the help of their family and partners could be contingent on their ability to remain clean, sober, or free from additional criminal legal sanctioning.

Instrumental Reciprocation: "My family would also help if I asked, but it all has to be paid back." – Sara

When participants were able, they sometimes repaid their relatives, friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners for instrumental support with instrumental resources. However, examples of this type of reciprocation were few. For example, Pat denoted, "I help my sister out sometimes, my little brother when he needs shoes and stuff. I just help out when I can." Pat's family provided emotional support in terms of motivating him to complete probation and he offered to help with basic needs items when he was able. Josiah explained he tried not to accept help from others, but if he did he would pay them back:

But I guess me being denied it so much, it'd be hard for me to accept it. And it's a rejection thing. I have been rejected so much though, when people do try to offer it, I just tell them no. So If I do get they help, I would actually pay them because I don't like to just have nobody doing nothing for me for free.

Josiah felt it was important to repay others because, "I'm not a user and I don't like when people use me." Sara also discussed about her family, "My family would also help if I asked, but it all has to be paid back. My family does not like lending out money unless they're 100% getting paid back." Andrew also denoted his family helped him with bail money, but he repaid them:

When I needed bail I didn't have any money and I had my family step in, it was $3,000. They split it up, $1,000 each, to fund my getting out of jail. So that was exciting, I paid them back.

Jaden also discussed he did not ask for help unless he was able to make some kind of incentive for the person through repayment. He noted, "But if I ask, I guess I try to make it some kind of incentive for them, like you help me, I can help you or pay you back, like that." While repayment in a monetary sense was most commonly done with family members, Joseph noted his fiancée might occasionally ask for gas money for driving him places. He described she, "Might probably ask for gas money or whatever else, but I don't think it would be anything else besides that." Lily asked acquaintances she met at outpatient treatment for help with transportation sometimes and discussed that in return those individuals asked for, "maybe gas money" in return.

Reciprocation Through Informal and Domestic Work: "It's not actually borrowing because I actually done do work for him and he pay me." – Josiah

Because many of the participants were underpaid, did not have access to work, or were unable to work in the formal economy given felony records (Uggen et al., 2004), difficulty managing community supervision conditions, or disabilities, they relied on

alternative means to repay others in their lives. Individuals utilized this strategy with their informal supports like family, friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners. Family, friends, and acquaintances were more often repaid using informal work they referred to as "odd jobs" or "side jobs" while romantic partners and family were sometimes repaid through domestic work like childcare (Giuffre, forthcoming). John had been looking for work since his conviction, but was unemployed at the time of the interview. He noted his probation officer tried to help him find a job to no avail by giving him information about, "job fairs where you can you can go to, they have a lot of them. And she [probation officer] sends them to me about twice, two times, three times a week to my email." He discussed how probation was stressful given his lack of financial resources:

> I've been paying my restitution as much as I can but I'm behind on my restitution and I'm behind on court cost fees, and I don't have a job currently. That's why like I'm hoping I get this job with Amazon but it's it's it's been stressful.

Though John was hopeful about an upcoming interview he had at an Amazon warehouse, he explained his fiancée was, "working to take care of the bills and the house while I take care of the kids" in the meantime. Cherrell worked at a fast food restaurant and had aspirations to get her GED and start her own restaurant business. She discussed how working the minimum wage job was not enough money to meet her needs, so she was, "trying to look for another job, an overnight job." Cherrell explained she had a car, "but it got towed a couple days ago. So my brother brought me" to her interview. Cherrell noted about her siblings, "I basically raised them. My mom been passed years back. So I been raising them. But now they're becoming grown. I don't worry about them no more. I kick in when necessary." Cherrell's siblings occasionally provided her with transportation and

her other siblings regularly called her to makes sure she was emotionally supported. In the past, she helped raise them so they would be able to return her support years later.

The individuals in this study relayed their strategies to find informal labor in order to pay others back. Josiah noted how he borrowed money from his grandfather, but, "it's not actually borrowing because I actually done do work for him and he pay me. I cut his yard sometimes, he'll pay me." Nick discussed how he did, "shit around the yard for them or whatever I have to. Odd jobs." He felt like he needed to provide others with this labor because:

> Probably sometimes when you got to ask for ride and all that kind of stuff. Or you got to get money or something together, that you got to go all the way, take Uber or something all the way. So that costs money and people probably just get pissed off after so many times of that.

Nick felt like he would not be able to get transportation or borrow cash unless he was able to do odd jobs. When Dave was on parole, he noted he was restricted from staying in a hotel, so he relied on friends for housing:

> So I really had nowhere to stay and a friend of mine let me move into one of his mother's property. But the whole time they wanted me to pitch this property up and get the house livable without me knowing.

In exchange for letting him stay at the house, the friends intended for him to help work on the property, but did not make their intentions known until he moved in. Dave felt deceived by the interactions he had with the property owners and then had to find a new place to live. Dave had luckily been able to move in with his aunt and was, "doing odd jobs" for, "a couple of people I've met since I've been out" of jail to try and make ends meet. Rachel additionally highlighted that in exchange for transportation, she completed side jobs she found through acquaintances on social media and with friends:

Because I don't have any reliable transportation, I do side jobs. I'll look for side jobs on different apps and Facebook, just little... I clean a lot of houses with my friends and I mean, I even rehab some houses with a friend of mine as well. So just anything I can do, I do it.

Rachel noted her lack of instrumental resources caused her to locate informal work.

Participants sometimes watched pets in order to receive support. Scott helped take care of his parents' dog in exchange for emotional support, discussing, "they had a dog and we was helping them take care of the dog." Tyler, likewise, discussed how he helped his friend take care of her dog in exchange for money:

She has several times and even today, asked me to come dog sit for her so I actually stay overnight at her house, while she's away and take care of the dog.

The ability to complete informal work like cleaning up a yard or house and watching pets afforded the participants with the ability to exchange different types of support. Natalie explained some of the issues with informal work, however. She explained, "That doesn't count for employment with probation because it's under-the-table. You don't have like a page, or stub, or no proof, unless that person just says, 'Yeah, she did my windows,' or something." Still, individuals in this study were reliant on others for this type of reciprocation in order to keep receiving the things they needed.

Reciprocation Through Sexual Acts: "Being a girl is a lot more difficult because a lot of people are still willing to help you out, but they want something in return." – Natalie

It should be noted that three women in the sample mentioned they reciprocated housing and transportation from people they described as friends and acquaintances through sex (see also Miller & Schwartz, 1995). Natalie described she tried to find transportation from friends but if she could not, she relied on people she was staying

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with, discussing, "I usually just try to find a ride from a friend or something. But yeah, usually it's somebody I'm staying with that gives me a ride." She described she did not always know the individuals who provided her housing very well when she discussed, "some of them I meet through the friends that I've known for a long time." Natalie alluded to the danger a woman could face for relying on individuals she did not know well for housing:

> I guess it just depends who the person is. Being a girl is a lot more difficult because a lot of people are still willing to help you out, but they want something in return so it's not really helping you. And then, being in the situation, sometimes we feel like we have to do something in return just so we're not on the streets and not in certain situations.

Other women were more forthcoming about the specific dangers they faced as unhoused people. Angela explained how her living situation was unstable when she said, "It honestly just depends. Sometimes I literally am on the streets and sometimes I stay on people's couches or it just depends, like I said." When asked if the people she reaches out to for help ask her for anything in return, she noted, "yeah, most people" and elaborated, "mostly sexual stuff" and, "sometimes it's just things like help keep this house clean or rent, which is more appropriate." When Rachel was queried about the things acquaintances would ask for in return for housing, she explained:

> Guys is mainly like sexual favors and girls it's more, or they just like... I had a lot of my stuff stolen from me or just... If I do have something that they want, it's like, "oh, well I'm letting you stay here, so you just should give it to me." Like any money I have goes straight to them.

She denoted the difficulty that being unhoused posed, "it also makes me feel like that if I didn't have them to help me, then I would be in a worse situation. So it's kind of like, sometimes I feel like I don't have a choice." Though these women were able to sometimes find transportation and a place to temporarily stay, it came at a high cost.

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Participants' depictions of the ways they reciprocated support were much broader than

current literature describes. Further, the amount of resources to which the participants had

access shaped their strategies of reciprocation and often minimized the amount of

instrumental support reciprocated (Lubbers et al., 2020). Instead, participants focused on

reciprocating important emotional support to others (Gleason et al., 2003) or had to find

ways to balance the support by altering their behavior (Comfort, 2008) and engaging in

the informal economy (Giuffre, 2023), sometime exposing them to danger (Miller &

Schwartz, 1995).

Chapter VI. Perceptions of Social Support Exchange

This study explored how people on community supervision felt about social support exchanges. Examining the ways in which people on probation and parole think about social support exchange is important for both theoretical and policy purposes. The following section addresses some of the theoretical mechanisms within social support exchanges that may be responsible for reductions or increases in criminal behavior (Mowen et al., 2019). Simultaneously, knowing these mechanisms can aid in the development of policy that supports social support exchanges that are perceived as helpful and minimize those that are not (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011). Participants perceived their social support exchanges through three lenses. First, participants viewed their social support exchanges as risky endeavors, partly because the conditions of their compliance with community supervision left them at risk for violations. For example, a stable residence is a condition of probation and parole in Missouri (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017). If participants asked for help from their probation and parole officers with housing, their officers could violate them for exposing they were not living at their preapproved place of residence. Participants also denoted they feared violations of association, which could occur when they forged and maintained relationships with other system-impacted people. Fear of receiving violations led some participants, mostly women, to unsafe situations because they would rather rely on individuals in the community than their probation and parole officer for help. Social support exchanges were also risky because informal sources of support could potentially damage their ability to recover from substance use or remain in the community (Ruhland, 2020).

Second, the social support exchanges the participants engaged in were described as unbalanced. Typically, people in participants' social networks provided an immense amount of support both in terms of the type of support and how often they provided the support (see also Boches et al., 2022; Comfort, 2016), leading participants to feel, "like a burden." When participants felt they burdened others with their need for support, they sometimes felt they needed to overcompensate with non-material support such as emotional support. This subset of participants discussed their social support exchanges as prohibiting independence given their intense reliance on others for assistance (Pleggenkuhle, 2018). Prior literature has demonstrated people have the need to feel they reciprocate exchanges such as these appropriately, or their health may suffer (Gleason et al., 2003). Participants also used this strategy of overcompensation to try to hide their conviction from others and to derive meaning or purpose from their criminal conviction (Maruna, 2001).

Third, some participants characterized their social support exchanges as humanizing and community building and these exchanges were described as motivating and positive. Participants relayed that humanizing exchanges provided them with the hope that others could look past their convictions and community building experiences depended on the ability of others to understand their experiences. In particular, community building exchanges were typically fostered by others who could relate to participants' experiences with the criminal legal system and sometimes built on twelve-step programming (Maruna, 2001).

Managing Risk in Exchange: "Certain things I got to second guess." – Spencer

In combination with the obligations participants commonly had to navigate while on probation (e.g., meeting with their probation officers, treatment and classes, monetary sanctions, maintaining employment and housing) (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017), they each engaged in an exhausting behavioral calculus about what they should do to get the support that they needed from the people in their lives. The participants felt exchanging support with all types of people could be risky for a few reasons. Participants felt social support exchanges were risky because they could potentially expose them to new crimes or damage their recovery from substance and/or alcohol abuse and induce violations of association or residence violations. These perceptions of risk sometimes sparked avoidance behaviors among the participants. Some participants avoided reaching out to their probation and parole officers for fear of sanctioning (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022) and more informal sources of support for fear they would expose them to further sanctioning or stigma (Clear et al., 2001; Ruhland, 2020).

Involvement in New Crimes or Damage to Recovery. Participants felt social support exchanges were risky because they perceived interacting with others could lead to the commission of a new crime or would damage their ability to remain clean and/or sober from substances (Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Raudenbush, 2016). At the time of his interview, Spencer was waiting to find out about the outcome of an arrest. Spencer explained his trepidation about exchanging support with others in the context of this police encounter:

> I was giving someone a ride. They walked outside. And they told me they needed a ride to get something from Walmart and to just get a phone. And they came running out after I've already showed my face on camera, because I just thought she was literally getting a ride for a phone. I already went inside Walmart and everything and had my face on camera. And she come running out and gets in the

car, then all of a sudden I pull away from the parking lot and the police put the lights on me.

In consequence for providing instrumental support in the form of transportation, Spencer was pulled over because the person he had given a ride stole something from Walmart. After the encounter with police, he was required to explain his side of the story to his probation officer, but was unsure if he would be charged with a crime for helping another person out with a ride.

Harold provided an example of this type of risk for involvement in new crimes related to social support exchange when he talked about his girlfriend who was actively using drugs. Harold was deeply worried about whether maintaining a relationship with his girlfriend and exchanging emotional support would open him up to additional sanctioning and prevent his recovery from drug addiction. He noted:

I'm dealing with that now. I got a female that I like a whole lot, I have feelings for her. But she going down the same path. She ain't been in prison yet, but she's into using, and she's OD'd at least five or six times, but she still... I don't understand. She's dealing with a drug that's far worse than cocaine. Far worse. I know you heard of them people using fentanyl.

Harold explained he would rather limit his interactions with his girlfriend given his past experiences with ex-girlfriends who he felt played a role in his drug use. He described, "I was into heavy drug use. I was doing drugs every day, nonstop. Not only me, my lady friend, she was doing [it] too. Both of us were into drug use." He attributed his getting clean to incarceration, denoting, "In a sense, this may sound insane to you, but I was glad that I was caught and sent to prison, because that way that would've made it safe for my son" and felt emotional reliance on his current girlfriend could jeopardize his freedom.

In his interview, Timmy discussed, "I honestly don't have a lot of friends right now" because he realized he needed to cut friends out of his life that posed a risk in terms

of recovery from drug addiction and commission of new crimes (Giordano et al., 2002).

He stated:

> Sure there were a few people that were just like drug buddies that like if there were no drugs, I would never have any reason of talking to them, but quite a few people were like really good friends and like it really hurt to have to sort of sever those ties, but I knew I had to: One so that - for my own recovery, and also two just the risk factor. I can't be around someone you know, in the same car with them if they have you know drugs on them that's it's just too risky for me.

While Timmy knew that he should sever contact with some of his friends due to their drug use, he lost contact with others that were at one time able to exchange emotional support with him. Timmy also pointed to the risk that exchanging instrumental support could pose, particularly in terms of transportation. Participants like Timmy and Spencer explained how the risk of giving others instrumental support such as a ride could put them at risk for police contact and potentially extend their community supervision term.

Violations of Association. The potential to receive probation and parole violations were also at the forefront of participants' discussions about who they chose to interact with and shaped their views of social support exchanges. In Missouri, probation and parole officers have the discretion to make a formal report about any violation, whether that be an extension of a supervision term, prison, or end of a supervision term (Huebner et al., 2023). Participants were keenly aware that reaching out to people they did not already know (e.g., new acquaintances) and sometimes existing sources of support (e.g., family, romantic partners, friends) could put them at risk to receive a violation of association. Participants were not always sure who they were allowed to interact with which could add to the perception that social support exchanges were risky. Individuals under community supervision by the Missouri Department of Corrections are required to obtain advance permission from their probation or parole officer before

associating with anyone convicted of a felony or misdemeanor or anyone also currently under community supervision (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017). In this way, reaching out to others for social support and maintaining relationships were highlighted as risky by the participants because they sometimes did not know who was also under community supervision or they knew that others were and chose to accept the risk because they needed others' social support. Spencer, for instance, explained, "I'm not supposed to be around anybody that's on probation. So certain things I got to second guess, like, 'Is it really worth that? Is it worth the risk?'" Spencer perceived emotional social support exchanges with friends as risky for their ability to expose him to people he knew were on community supervision.

Lily discussed how she often needed to rely on others for instrumental support to meet the conditions of her probation, yet she had received a violation of association in the past for reaching out to a person she did not know was also under community supervision at the time. She explained:

> I didn't know very much about the association thing, because I didn't know this person was on parole, and I had met him at outpatient and needed a ride... They want us to go to outpatient, but if you don't have a ride and somebody offers up a ride that goes there, then we get in trouble for it. I don't think it's fair.

Lily was mandated to attend outpatient treatment related to her drug conviction, but had trouble making it to treatment because she did not, "have transportation, and my family works. They don't have time to take me. And I also don't have a job, so I don't have money for the bus to there." In the absence of instrumental support from family members, it was necessary for Lily to rely on others for support. Probation and parole do not facilitate transportation to and from the required classes and treatment and her felony criminal record made it difficult to find employment, leaving her at the behest of people

she met while trying to comply with her probation conditions (Miller, 2021). Natalie had similar feelings that social support exchange could induce risk for violations of association. Natalie's supervision conditions required her to attend outpatient treatment and she spoke to the potential to come into contact with others on community supervision at outpatient treatment and transitional living places. She discussed how the conditions of probation made it such that individuals on probation and parole were, "surrounding ourselves with people that are on papers by going to like outpatients and sending us to places like certain transitional livings." The individuals in this study sometimes colloquially referred to others who were under community supervision as, "on papers."

Multiple participants denoted they had received violations of association or were at risk of violations of association for maintaining a relationship with a romantic partner, though this theme was predominantly discussed by women. These participants typically explained they exchanged emotional support with their partners and the exchange was so important to them they risked violations of association to be with their partners. Ella, for example, highlighted she received violations for a, "dirty drop and also association involved with my fiancé." Ella had been with her fiancé for, "seven years now" and, "met him at a party a long time ago. He was on papers already, but I wasn't." When asked if she stays away from her fiancé due to the potential for a violation, she stated, "At first, I tried to do my thing, but now it's just I'm ignoring." Ella tried to communicate with her probation officer about how her fiancé was not someone she wished to forego emotional support from, but, "they just weren't budging with it" and she relayed, "I don't think it's fair that you can't be with this person or that person because they've been in trouble before."

Cindy discussed how violations of association were dependent on individual cases and probation and parole officers (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). She had been in a relationship with her husband for twenty years, but was waiting to hear whether probation would allow her to maintain a relationship with him. She noted:

> They gave us permission to be together most of the time we're on probation. But then when we got a charge together is when they told us that we couldn't be around each other. But then he got off paper and I got off paper so they couldn't stop us. And now we're waiting until they're going to have to tell us they have to approve it.

Though Cindy was aware that she might receive a violation for maintaining a relationship with her husband she was hopeful her probation officer would be lenient with her because, "his PO's okay with it." At the same time, Cindy denoted that no matter what probation decided about her marriage, she was, "not going to leave my husband because they said so" given that she had, "been with him way longer than probation or anything like that." The emotional support Cindy shared with her husband was too great a benefit to discontinue the relationship even if probation prohibited it.

Hannah explained how she exchanged emotional support with her partner. Hannah had not disclosed she was in a relationship with another person under community supervision and had opted to manage the risk of a violation by keeping the relationship secret. She discussed:

> My boyfriend kind of has helped emotionally. He deals with the probation and parole system as well which is another thing that kind of sucks, because technically we're not supposed to be in a relationship, when you're on parole and probation you're not supposed to date other people on parole and probation which makes things kind of difficult, especially when you've been together with someone as long as he and I've been together, you know? It's like I'm not going to stop seeing him just because you know, a paper says that I can't so.

Though Hannah knew she was at risk to receive a probation violation for maintaining

contact with her boyfriend, the emotional support she received was more important to her

than the risk. The support from her boyfriend impacted her in such a positive way she

noted:

> The support that I get from my boyfriend has kind of changed my perception on
> myself, because I never thought, you know, five years ago, I never thought that I
> would be like an actual successful contributing member to society.

Hannah explained she felt the support from her boyfriend allowed her to, "think about

myself worth in a different light" as someone who was worthy of another person's help

(Giordano et al., 2002; Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Along the same lines, Joanna relayed how she received a violation of association

for being around her boyfriend of twenty years. Joanna's probation officer put a warrant

out for her arrest for nonpayment of restitution and her boyfriend helped her turn herself

in on the warrant, resulting in an additional violation of association:

> Yeah, she violated me for being around my boyfriend. So the day that I got
> arrested, he took me up there and she violated me for being on him. But we've
> been together for over 20 years. I'm like, how can they tell me who I can date and
> who I can't date?

Though she had received a violation for associating with her boyfriend in the past, Joanna

discussed she ignored this condition because she had been dating him since she was in

middle school and did not believe probation and parole had the authority to tell her who

she could and could not see. Each of the women mentioned the length of time they had

been in relationships with men who were also "on papers." The men in their lives had

continuously provided them with social support over a period of years that made it

unfeasible to discontinue their relationships based upon the advice of probation and

parole. Instead, the women felt the risk of the violation of association was worth it to continue receiving valuable social support from these individuals.

In a deviant case, Levi was the sole participant who stated he ended his marriage over community supervision conditions. Levi denoted he was in the process of divorcing his wife of four years, which he blamed partly on probation. He stated, "The court made me not even have any talking communication contact with her for a freaking year." When Levi was asked why he was barred from seeing his wife, he explained, "we can't be together because we're toxic" but did not elaborate further. Levi discussed that the lack of communication with his wife made a difference in their relationship when he said, "I think if I could have been talking to her in person and tell her how I feel, maybe I could have saved my relationship with her, but I think it's too far gone now." He highlighted it has been difficult without his wife's emotional support, "we'd love to see each other and make each other happy when we're around each other. It's been hell without her." For Levi, reaching out for emotional support from his wife was too great a risk when compared to the additional sanctions he could receive for a violation of association.

Residence Violations. The potential to receive residence violations informed some of the participants' thoughts about social support exchange with their probation and parole officers. Many individuals in this study feared going to prison or having their supervision term extended for failure to inform their officer about changes in their residence and thus some avoided reaching out to their probation and parole officers for help. Individuals on probation and parole in Missouri are required to inform their officer about any changes to their residence (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017) so being honest about their struggles with housing to officers could initiate further

sanctioning. Rachel explained how she had difficulty finding housing having been only recently employed and with limited ability to find work that paid well given her felony conviction:

> Right now I am currently homeless. I am trying to find resources to get into a place or somewhere that might help me. At the hotel for a week until I can get my first paycheck or something. And it's just been really hard to find any of that. So I've just been kind of bouncing around, sleeping on couches or in cars.

Rachel discussed she would rather violate probation and sleep at other persons' houses than talk to her probation officer about finding a safe place to live. She noted that in the past, "When they [probation] found out I wasn't staying where I had said I was, they wrote me for residency. And then I kind of stopped reporting because I was scared that they were going to lock me up." Natalie had similar issues with housing and noted she had difficulty finding housing when she got out of jail because her conviction had limited her ability to find a job:

> I tried to get into sober livings and I got denied because I didn't have a job right away. So, I literally try every day to look up resources and get help and it's not as easy as people make it seem. A lot of... And if you don't live at a place, they send you back. I actually recently just got a violation for my probation officer, my old one, telling me that I needed to find a different home plan. So I did, and I told that probation officer what it was, and he wrote me a violation for that.

When Natalie was asked how she feels about probation, Natalie denoted the interactions with probation officers were highly dependent on the individual officer (Huebner et al., 2023):

> It depends who your probation officer is... I don't think a lot of people want to reach out to their probation officer unless they actually need something. A lot of people feel... I know I felt, a lot of times, I don't even want to see my probation officer, so why would I want to call if I need help? That's how they make you feel.

The unpredictability of individual officer reactions to potential violations led some like

Natalie to avoid social support exchanges with probation and parole officers for

information about housing. Natalie did not have a job, transportation, nor housing so she

had trouble making it to her probation appointments on time. This strained Natalie's

relationship with her probation officer, yet she did not feel comfortable reaching out for

help because it would expose her to the risk of a residence violation:

> So, I'm late a lot of times and she does tell me that's an issue, which I understand
> because she has other clients. But I also can't tell her, "Well it's because I'm
> homeless," because then that's a violation.

For these two women, the potential additional sanctions brought on by a residence

violation, such as jail, were enough for them to deem reaching out for social support from

their officer too risky to attempt. In these cases, the conditions of probation and parole

that stipulated where individuals were allowed to live and with whom they could

associate shaped how individuals felt about the social support exchanges.

Social Support Exchanges as Unbalanced: "I just don't really like asking for help

much. I feel like a burden." – Lily

Many of the participants' social support exchanges were perceived as unbalanced,

often due to lack of participant financial resources and time. A select few participants

also noted that the depth of emotional support provided by their loved ones could never

be repaid. Because the participants were often relying on others for housing,

transportation, and basic needs like food, they felt they burdened informal supports in

their lives like family, romantic partners, and friends (deVuono-Powell et al., 2015).

Outpatient treatment, in particular, took up a great deal of time for many of the

participants, limiting their ability to secure gainful employment. Participants also

struggled to find housing and employment due to their felony records (Lageson, 2020)

and precarious economic situation (Western et al., 2015). Participants sometimes

discussed they did not have savings or good credit, and instead were forced to rely on

others to get housing. Participants tended to have difficulty finding housing on their own

because they had approved residences with family members which probation and parole

officers perceived to be more stable. Many of the participants discussed they wanted to

be economically self-sufficient, but their conviction and supervision conditions prevented

them from that, which in turn prevented them from having more balanced interactions

with prosocial others. To try to prevent these feelings of unbalance about social support

exchange, some participants tried to overcompensate with other types of support, such as

emotional or interactional, for which they had the resources to provide. The purpose of

this overcompensation served two other purposes. First, overcompensation was

sometimes in an effort minimize the visibility of their criminal conviction when they met

new people. Participants felt it helped eliminate the possibility others would guess or

learn they had a felony conviction or were on supervision. Next, participants used

overcompensation to derive meaning or purpose from their convictions (Maruna, 2001).

Feeling Like a Burden. Social support exchanges for the majority of participants

were perceived as unbalanced because such exchanges made them feel as though they

burdened their social supports with their needs (deVuono-Powell et al., 2015). Scott and

Ian, for instance, described they felt they would not ever be able to repay others in their

lives for the amount of support provided to them when navigating the criminal legal

system. Scott explained he felt the exchanges he had with his parents and fiancée could

not ever be repaid because:

I know that the people in my life have bent over backwards for me, sometimes it seemed like that they wanted it more than I. And I, I think that I was blessed with the people in my life, and these people went above and beyond, and I, I could never even asked them what they did, do for me, to do that, for them to do that for me.

In his interview, Scott started to cry when he discussed how grateful he was for the emotional support he had received while incarcerated and now on community supervision. Though Scott felt the exchanges were unbalanced with his support system, he noted the emotional support was necessary to make it through supervision successfully. He discussed how he was reluctant to accept help given the unbalanced nature of the exchanges:

I didn't lean on those that I love. I would keep things from them, I would try to just do everything myself and today I'm, I do ask for that help, but I let them be part of my life and I, and I didn't before. So knowing that I'm maintaining my relationships healthy like that means that I'm not struggling.

At the time of his interview, Scott accepted help from his support system, but reflected that they had made a great effort while he was incarcerated and on community supervision to make sure he had what he needed. Ian's roommate helped him in many different ways when he was convicted of a drug related offense:

She can help with anything. Like literally, she could help with anything. Whether it was reassurance like you said, or emotional support, or to you know, "Have you contacted this person?", "Have you done this?", Like just kind of checking in on me to make sure that I'm doing what I need to do. She actually even helped out with some of my legal fees at first, so yeah, she's been very supportive.

When Ian was asked what he does to support his roommate, he explained he tried to be there for her, but felt the exchange would always be somewhat unbalanced:

I feel like there's nothing I could do to pay her back, because she's really supported me through some difficult times, you know. She's a really strong individual. Yeah, I try to be -, I try to be there for her, you know it's kind of like a give and take, but I'm still going to have the feeling like she's always done more.

Both Ian and Scott discussed the sheer amount and types of support they received made it difficult to ever repay their support networks.

Other individuals mentioned it was specifically the financial piece of others' support that made them feel like the exchanges were burdensome for others (Boches et al., 2022). John, for example, discussed how he was unemployed and relied on his mother to loan him money to pay his bills. He noted, "It's not a lot of jobs that's hiring for felons." When asked if he was worried about his ability to meet his probation conditions and whether he was stressed, John replied:

> Yes it has, Especially since I have to pay my monthly restitution fees and then I have to pay court cost fees and all that stuff and it's been about a year since all of it, I was supposed to pay it. I've been paying my restitution as much as I can but I'm behind on my restitution and I'm behind on court cost fees, and I don't have a job currently. That why like I'm hoping I get this job with Amazon but it's it's it's been stressful. My moms, like I said, she's helping out as much as she can, but like it's not her deal so she can't get to do everything on her own, you know?

John explained he could not cover his monetary sanctions on his own and was, "supposed to pay $30 a month, for the restitution I owe maybe $130 maybe more than that for the restitution. Court costs are probably about $500 and the fees all together are about $500-$600." John described how he felt, "like I'm a burden" for owing his mother to cover his expenses on probation when he said, "Like, the way that my mom she looked at me she be lookin' at me with disgust sometimes because I would ask her for money right after I just asked for money or something like that." When asked how much money he borrowed from his mother, John relayed, "So to be serious, over $1,000 so far. Like bills and trying to get the car fixed, stuff like that, it's over $1,000 that I owe her, I know." John's fiancé was also, "working to take care of the bills and the house" while he took care of their three children, but her income alone was not enough to cover all of their expenses. John

believed that, "borrowing of money, and not being able to pay back right away" weakened his relationships.

Marie attributed her feeling like a burden to the conditions of her probation and felony record. Marie's inability to pay for cost of living expenses led her to rely on her fiancé heavily while on probation and hurt their relationship because she felt she could not contribute to their household equally. Marie's fiancé had supported her instrumentally when, "He got the attorney for me, and then also paid my way to get on house arrest, which was $300 for the ankle monitor." Marie highlighted that her conviction and electronic monitoring prevented her from getting a job (Uggen et al., 2004). She discussed, "whenever it comes to finances and stuff, it's crazy because no one wants to hire someone who has an ankle monitor on." Marie had been to "at least seven interviews" and was looking for a work at the time of her interview. She discussed the strain that asking for help from her fiancé without being able to reciprocate put on their relationship, "It was hard, because it's hard saying, 'Hey, I don't have a job right now. Can you pay for me to live here? Can you pay for me to stay out of jail? Can you pay for this?'" Marie's fiancé was a clear source of motivation for her to get through probation, yet the financial imbalances were her main source of stress. Marie stated her main goals for the next five years were to, "be at a job for a while, and be financially stable to the point of where my car is taken care of, my house and my kids are taken care of" so that she would not have to burden others with her expenses.

Other participants discussed they felt like a burden when they could not repay others for their help. This led some to avoid asking for help because they did not want to feel guilty for this unbalance (Offer, 2012). These participants were generally concerned

they would not be able to reciprocate instrumental social support in accordance with the dominant cultural norms about repayment (Lubbers et al., 2020). When Anthony was asked whether he borrowed money from anyone, he said, "No. Try not to" and when prompted about why he tried not to, he explained, "Just having to owe somebody and I don't like people owing me money, so I just try to work harder to have it myself. That's really what makes me work hard, just not trying to ask nobody for nothing." Cal also highlighted that it would be acceptable to exchange instrumental social support, but under the condition that the exchange is reciprocal in nature when he said, "If somebody asked to borrow some money or something, then that's cool as long as they pay it back." Isaiah additionally noted, "I'm that type of person where it's going to be its kind of hard for me to ask people for things." When asked why this was the case, he discussed, "I grew up in a society where some people bring up stuff that they did for one another" alluding to how an unbalanced social support exchange could cause relational difficulties. When Charlie was asked how he feels when someone offers to provide support, he replied, "I definitely feel good about it, but then at the same time, it makes me feel like I owe them, even though they say I don't, just because they're offering it and I didn't even ask them."

Individuals' feelings about social support exchange being burdensome were sometimes linked to their ideas about what it meant to be a productive member of society (Soss et al., 2011). Some men in the study were conscious about how others perceived them "as a man" when they had to ask for assistance. Jaden, in particular, explained how probation was challenging because:

> It's like you are a second citizen within the society, you know what I'm saying? You're free, but you're being supervised and you're being looked at as a criminal, kind of, in a sense. It's invasive and they in all of your business. Yeah, like that. That's how I look at it.

In combination with, "the loss of your privacy, just personal information, your family, they want to know everything" Jaden felt reluctant to ask for help and noted:

> I like it to be my final source of resolution if I have an issue. But if I ask, I guess I try to make it some kind of incentive for them, like you help me, I can help you or pay you back, like that.

He discussed he would rather give help to others or be able to pay them back right away, otherwise he felt emasculated, "As a man, you know what I'm saying? Because we supposed to provide. Family, friends, it's in our nature to go out and go get. So that's why, even when I need help, I'm reluctant to ask for help." Jaden's belief that he should be able to provide for others as a man contributed to his feelings that relying on others for help without being able to pay it back was burdensome.

Others noted they felt social support exchanges could be burdensome because they felt a personal responsibility to deal with the consequences of their conviction independently (Pleggenkuhle, 2018). When Clayton was asked how he would ask for support from other people, he discussed, "I really don't. I don't like to at least" because "I don't want to be a burden on other people. What I did, I did it to myself, so I got to pay the consequences." Mike's depiction of not wanting to ask for help resembled Clayton's. Mike had been in prison in the past and was asked whether people were visiting him or sending him instrumental goods while he was incarcerated. However, he said he told his family not to visit nor send him anything during that time. He explained he told his family, "If you all put money on the books, I'm going to send it right back. I'm not going to even spend any of that money." When Mike was asked about the reasoning behind rejecting his family's support, he described, "It was more or less that they didn't do the crime, why should I take out of their mouths? The last prison that I did, why should I take

anything from them when they didn't do nothing wrong?" Mike and Clayton felt they should not burden others with the consequences of their convictions.

Some individuals felt like they should be more independent rather than asking and relying on others for social support. Social support exchanges in some cases made participants feel like they were unable to live life on their own terms. Participants who felt this way often pointed to the lack of choice they had in relying on others and the necessity of participating in the "economy of favors" to meet the conditions of their supervision as well as meet basic human needs (Miller, 2021). However, this feeling was typically accompanied by feeling unable to appropriately reciprocate the support, which provoked negative emotions (Bowlby, 1982; Deci et al., 2006; Williamson & Clark, 1989). For example, Sara discussed about her mother:

> I definitely don't like having to rely on her especially being 23 I feel like I should have left the nest a long time ago, and that is not her job anymore. Knowing my mom, and my mom is the most kind giving person I've ever met in my life and she's like that with all of her kids, I don't think my mom will ever stop being a provider for us, no matter how old we get. It doesn't strain our relationship, but I just wish that I didn't have to ask.

Though Sara did not feel asking for support strained her relationship with her mother, she felt like asking hindered her own growth as an adult. Rachel also discussed how receiving support contributed to her poor self-esteem:

> It just makes me feel like hopeless and bad about myself. Because I should be independent and I should be in a totally different spot by now. And I'm not still. And it also makes me feel like that if I didn't have them to help me, then I would be in a worse situation. So it's kind of like, sometimes I feel like I don't have a choice.

Rachel explained she was "hopeless" because she felt like she could not choose to opt out of social support exchanges. Rachel was homeless and sometimes traded sexual acts for a

place to sleep, but recognized if she did not participate in these exchanges she might be sleeping on the street.

Zack explained how he had a lack of choice relying on family members for instrumental support in the form of housing and financial assistance due to his felony conviction. He further denoted how he felt like receiving support made him feel down about himself and that his criminal conviction was more noticeable when he described:

> Well, I mean kind of makes me feel like it's noticeable, and I try not to make it as noticeable. So I think it makes me feel a little bit down, but it is what it is. Whenever you're in a spot like that, you have no choice.

For Zack and others, receiving support could make them feel like they did not have control over their own lives. Along those lines, Mark mentioned, "Lack of control of my life is how it makes me feel" about receiving social support. Tyler referenced how his "codependency" with his mother who paid his rent was a problem and "I should be able to support myself."

Some participants specifically used the word "independent" to describe themselves and explained how social support exchanges prevented them from realizing this characteristic. For example, Cherrell described herself as independent and discussed her reluctance to ask for help. She explained, "Yeah. I got supportive family. But I'm the person that won't pick up the phone and call and ask for help if I need it. I'll go without, before I ask." When asked why she would rather go without than ask, she noted:

> Just I'm independent. That's me. I work for everything I got. So that's me. And by me not talking to them on an everyday basis, how would that sound, me calling them? I don't want to disturb nobody life, not knowing what they got going on in theirs, with my problems. Because I can fix the problems that I put myself in. So, I just look at it like, "I got this."

Cherrell was embarrassed to ask for help and thought she should be able to address her own problems without the help of others. Ken was also self-described as independent. He explained how he did not like living with his aunt, but had no choice given his financial situation. He explained, "I've always, actually, been independent." Relatedly, Wes attributed his difficulties asking for help to his pride and independent personality. He relayed, "I don't like to ask for nothing" and when asked why he said, "I just don't. I guess it's a pride thing" and further denoted "I always try to be independent, you know?" Another participant, Roy reflected that he perceived independence was a part of his identity. He explained he thought his feelings about independence came from his experiences growing up:

> Like I said, as a child I started selling drugs so I never had to depend on anyone, I never had to depend on anyone, I just always had the money at my leisure. And so the image I created for myself is like yeah you're supposed to always have some money, some type of money, and sometimes that ain't the case in real life.

Roy thought because he grew up in an environment where he did not depend on others to meet his needs, this belief system carried over into adulthood even though it was not always feasible.

Though Ian discussed how his roommate went to great lengths to support him emotionally, provided guidance, and paid some of his legal fees, he was reluctant to discuss that he relied on anyone for help. He explained:

> I don't feel like I have to rely on anybody. But do I maybe need some assistance or I don't know, maybe some help with things? But as far as using the term like relying on someone, I feel like you have to, I don't know, that's like a really strong word. I don't really feel like I have to rely on anyone, because I'm pretty independent. But I would say, giving assistance, yeah I definitely get that.

Ian and others accepted help from their support networks, yet characterized themselves as independent or that independence was a major goal in life for them. When others

provided them with support, it damaged how they felt about themselves given these strongly held beliefs about independence.

Kaden's thoughts diverged somewhat from the other participants about independence in that he believed he would be unable to complete probation successfully without being independent. He described how he needed to be open to change (Giordano et al., 2002):

> I feel like independence and me doing it for myself was the key to actually doing good on probation because I've tried doing it for family before. I've tried doing it for other things before, and it never really worked until I finally just wanted it for myself.

Kaden thought that internal motivation was more necessary to completing probation rather than relying on other individuals to exchange support.

Overcompensation. At times, participants perceived they overcompensated providing others with social support because they felt indebted to them, overcompensation could obfuscate their criminal conviction and help them build supportive relationships, or that exchanging social support in this way could help them derive meaning or purpose from their conviction (see also Maruna, 2001). Prior literature primarily paints reciprocation in a positive light, for example increasing social connection (Inagaki & Eisenberger, 2012), but the participants who overcompensated primarily did so because they did not want to jeopardize the support they had received from others or being especially deferential or nice could help them gain access to support in the economy of favors (Miller & Stuart, 2017). Levi felt indebted to his mother and stated, "Thank God I have an awesome mother because that is the nicest lady on the planet. She got me this apartment somehow." He then relayed:

> It's not a problem, but I fucking dread asking my mom for money. Do you have any idea what that woman's done for me? I told my mom, "The day you feel like you don't want to walk up them goddamn steps, you call me and I'll be right on ASAP, taking care of them damn steps." I owe my mom everything. I'll take care of her until the day she wants to die. You know what I mean?

Levi's mother's financial support was especially motivating in the sense that he wanted to take care of his mother in retirement.

In comparison, participants such as Alex and Charlie believed they should be providing social support for others because it would help them have a positive sense of self (Maruna, 2001). Providing social support in this sense could serve an instrumental purpose for the participants (Semmer et al., 2008). Alex felt he needed to be, "extremely nice" to others in his life because he felt like others would not accept him for his sexual offense conviction. He explained, "I like doing nice things for people. I feel, though, I actually overcompensate with that though. I'm at the point where I actually, this is just saying, you set yourself on fire to keep people warm." Alex noted when helping others he was concerned about whether providing the support would benefit him:

> My thought process is like, "How will this benefit me? If I do this for them I know they'll like me more." I always seem to almost have ulterior motives. I honestly think I can remember only one time in this past couple years, maybe two times, where I just genuinely helped them out just to make them be happy. I'm like, "Oh this feels really cool." But even then there might have been some ulterior motives involved.

Charlie additionally denoted, "I always do more for others than I do for myself" because he was worried about having access to social support in the future. He discussed, "because one day, if I ever got into a situation where I needed help, I would hope that somebody would be there for me like I am for them."

In a similar vein, Mike talked about how his experiences as an NA sponsor shaped how he felt about social support exchange. Mike explained providing support to the people he sponsored:

> Makes me feel good, but at the exact same time it feels like I'm being selfish because at the exact same time I'm providing support for them, it's not only about them. Mainly it's like okay, what can I do for them that's going to teach me something on my own path to learn who I am? Does that make any sense?"

Mike went so far as to invite individuals who he met in NA to work for him as a subcontractor, though he could risk the quality of his work by doing so:

> I guess you could say I'm the type of subcontractor that's going to look at a person that I can see is struggling with drugs, grab them, pull them over, because me being a former drug addict I'm going to do my best to help them out. And hopefully it goes good, but at the same time I'm not going to look at them if they're nodding over here on a job or tweaking out on a job, I'm not going to put up with that. I'll give them two times, and if they don't want to help themselves, "You can't be here bud."

Though this type of exchange potentially posed a risk to Mike's livelihood, he felt communication with sponsees, "gets me out of my head just as well as it gets them out of their head." Mike felt he overcompensated in social support exchanges to learn more about himself.

In somewhat of a deviant case, Haley provided a great deal of emotional social support to women she met while incarcerated. However, she discussed she felt called to keep in touch with women she met in prison to prevent them from committing suicide:

> I watched a lot of women commit suicide in prison, so I take it very serious, because I would hate for someone to get that phone call that their family member passed away or for me to get a phone call that someone I cared about in there passed away. So yeah, I take that very serious.

Haley's experiences with incarceration led her to feel she needed to be there for the women because they were not getting proper support or care. Haley discussed that she

kept in contact with many of the women while under community supervision because she

knew:

> …what it's like not having nobody send you anything or people not answering the
> phone for you. That stuff really matters when you're in there, because you could
> really be going through something and you just want to call someone and talk to
> someone outside of those walls, and for someone not to answer, sometimes it's
> really heart aching.

Haley did her best to, "be strong for people that's still in there" even though she was still

dealing with her own struggles adjusting to life in reentry. She discussed reentry and said,

"they make it out to be like it's going to be so easy, that you're going to have help and

they're going to support you, and they don't. They literally throw you out to fall on your

face." Haley's deep interactions with the women provided her with motivation to

continue pursuing her goals in the community:

> So I just feel like if I don't want to live for myself, I could at least live for them,
> because they're not going to be able to do anything in life behind them bars. So it
> just really makes me value my life and other people's way more.

Ultimately, for some of the participants overcompensating by providing social support

gave them external motivation to succeed or served a generative purpose (Maruna, 2001).

Social Support Exchanges as Humanizing: "I feel like that makes you closer, I guess

you could say, more relatable." – Pat

Some participants perceived social support exchanges helped them build

community and humanized them. Participants reported the social support exchanges that

were humanizing were the most influential in terms of preventing future criminal

behavior. Humanization occurred on multiple levels. Participants felt social support

exchanges humanized them when other people in their lives focused on who they were as

a person rather than their conviction, in terms of their identity as a unique individual, and

someone with personal goals. Participants felt social support exchanges built community

when others displayed an understanding of the person on probation or parole's

experiences, but prior criminal legal system experience on the part of the support person

was particularly helpful in creating a community building atmosphere around the

exchange (Maruna, 2001).

Participants perceived their social support exchanges were humanizing when

others focused on positive aspects of their identity rather than their conviction.

Humanizing exchanges occurred among many types of relationships, including

relationships with probation and parole officers and more informal sources of support like

friends or romantic partners. Kevin compared his probation officer to a friend when he

discussed:

> She likes sports, so we talking about the game a lot. The playoffs are happening
> now. So she just try to really touch bases with me to get that type of bond. She
> just made me very comfortable. She's like one of my great friends that want to see
> me do great. That's how our bond is. She just really want me to stay on the right
> track and do great.

Kevin was able to bond with his probation officer over sports and communicate with her

informally. This informal relationship allowed their bond to grow such that he trusted her

judgment and guidance.

Reginald also perceived his social support exchanges with his probation officer as

humanizing because she treated him as "Reginald" as opposed to focusing on his

conviction and encouraged him to participate in social activities. When asked what he

found most helpful in terms of social support exchanges, Reginald replied:

> Anything that I experienced that is humanizing as opposed to something that puts
> that label first. You know? So anybody who just says, "You know what I'm glad
> we got together and had lunch, you're just Reginald I know you," you know, like I
> know and then, "We've had this tough conversation about what happened, let's

move forward." You know so that kind of stuff has been the most humanizing. I would say that has been what was so good about [Probation Officer's] approach as a PO. We're working on we're working from that point and my goal is to get you to a place where you are succeeding, you know. She's like, "I want my guys to go to places and be pro social, I want them to go to places like ballpark village or wherever and meet people." and you know you know, "You just got to follow the rules, don't break these rules!" You know, and she has more rules, you know, than what I have to live with when I come off, but that's part of probation. But yeah it's to me it's the kind of the human dignity stuff.

Reginald felt he could trust his probation officer because she was not, "gunning for like the most punitive mindset." Instead, Reginald's probation officer told him she would rather have an open line of communication with him so he could ensure he would complete probation successfully. Pat felt social support exchanges with his family made him, "feel like people actually care, because people don't have to do that." Pat further clarified:

> I feel like that makes you closer, I guess you could say, more relatable. You know what I'm saying? You know, that you got somebody that helped you just like to help them. So it makes it... builds a closer bond.

Exchanging support for Pat helped him feel like he could relate to others about his struggles while on probation, thereby humanizing him.

Participants like Frank perceived social support exchanges as humanizing when others were able to help them envision a life after their conviction (see also Giordano et al., 2002). Frank's mother traveled to St. Louis to stay with him while he started probation and located a new apartment. His mother was able to provide guidance that Frank's identity did not hinge on his domestic violence conviction. He explained:

> You know how mothers is, but she want to make sure I'm on top of my appointments that I need to take care of and the next steps I need to take care of to get back on top and give me encouragement about, "You know, this ain't the end of the world" type of thing.

Frank's mother was able to provide him with the motivation to look past his own criminal record and move on with life.

Everyday social support exchanges with acquaintances in the community also provided humanizing experiences in that they promoted solidarity with a larger group (Rutter, 1987). For example, Neil developed friendships over time with others in his community who played pool. He described the interactions with those individuals contributed to his positive sense of self:

> I just know that at 68 years old, in order to avoid mental and emotional problems, you do have to have some kind of social contact and some kind of positive input. So that's why pool is very, very important to get out and have some fun, meet some people, get challenged a little bit with the game itself, and to try and compete. Those are essential to good mental health and emotional health.

Neil had limited contact with his family members because he was no longer allowed to have a driver's license due to his DUI conviction. Instead, the friends he made were able to, "come and pick me up and take me back home after pool" and provide leisure time in a setting where Neil could relate to other people.

These community building exchanges also motivated some participants to pay forward the help they had received from others (Maruna, 2001). Kevin relayed that the social support exchanges he had with individuals who motivated him increased his wanting to help others in the community:

> Yeah, it just motivate me to keep doing better, keep staying positive. Somebody gave me a chance, so I should give somebody a chance, or I should help somebody because somebody helped me. Yeah, I just want to keep that going.

Receiving support made the participants want to connect with community members. Despite the potential for social support exchanges to introduce risk into the participants' lives, most had a natural inclination to foster connections with others, fill emotional

needs, and feel like they were a part of the world (Cullen, 1994). Social support

exchanges could provide powerful feelings of solidarity and communicate the

participants would not have to face challenges of supervision alone (Rutter, 1987). The

benefits of engaging in these social support exchanges could outweigh any risks when the

exchanges communicated these emotional meanings to the participants, aside from any

instrumental exchanges (Semmer et al., 2008).

Chapter VII. Discussion and Conclusions

This dissertation sought to add to the wealth of literature detailing system-impacted persons' social support systems. Past research has highlighted the difficulties incarcerated individuals can face getting the support they need from others and typically assumes relationships with family members are positive forces in incarcerated persons' lives (Condry & Minson, 2020). Within this body of research, women romantic partners of system-impacted men have been studied at a more detailed level than other social supports (see e.g., Comfort, 2008; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Community supervised individuals have also received less scholarly attention than incarcerated persons (Phelps, 2013). The existing literature exploring social support exchange in the context of community supervision often highlights the role that family members can play to provide their relatives on community supervision with important resources such as emotional support (Taylor, 2016), housing (Western et al., 2015), financial help (Boches et al., 2022), and connections to employment (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Some research suggests social support for persons on community supervision can also come from persons outside the family (Heidemann et al., 2014) and that people on probation and parole provide important support to others in their lives (Giordano et al., 2007). Even so, this literature lacks attention to how individuals on community supervision gain access to this support, the mechanisms for exchange, and how individuals on community supervision think and feel about these exchanges. As such, the literature exploring social support exchange for system-impacted persons requires greater and more nuanced exploration of the process for people on probation and parole.

This dissertation filled some of these gaps in the literature through the analysis of interviews from people on community supervision in the St. Louis, Missouri area. Specifically, this dissertation explored how people on community supervision built and maintained relationships with people that can act as social supports. This dissertation broadened the current understanding of how people on community supervision approach relationships with many types of persons, such as family, friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, and probation and parole officers. This study also documented how individuals on probation and parole exchanged support with others, discussing the types of support provided by social support people and the ways in which the participants on community supervision reciprocated such support. Finally, the dissertation synthesized how this group of individuals on community supervision perceived these exchanges.

One of the main contributions of this study is it demonstrates how the conditions of community supervision combined with the felony conviction can severely hamper individuals' ability to make connections with other people besides their family and probation and parole officers. Probation and parole officer contact was officially sanctioned because participants were required to meet with them periodically and participants' most often approved place of residence was with family members. In turn, this may limit their social interaction with potentially helpful friends and acquaintances who can form the "weak" ties we know can be important sources of social support (Granovetter, 1974). Furthermore, over two thirds of the sample did not have a romantic partner and few who had a romantic partner pointed to their social support as major components of their lives. Around two thirds of the participants in this study instead expressed their women family members, and especially their mothers, went to great

lengths to support them. This particular finding has important implications for criminological theory. The participants in this study were unlikely to have access to quality, committed romantic relationships at all, let alone be married. Though marriage and romantic partnerships are of the most frequently cited predictors of desistance (Skardhamar et al., 2015), criminologists must consider how the social landscape in general and people with felony convictions have changed over time. This is particularly important given the globe is still reckoning with a global pandemic that public health scholars argue altered social ties (see for example Birditt et al., 2021). Many were unemployed, required to social distance from informal sources of support, and were concerned about their and others' well-being given the potentially severe health effects of COVID-19 (National Opinion Research Center, 2020). Broader population trends likely shaped these outcomes. For example, the U.S. population growth has steadily declined over the last few decades, while the number of multigenerational households has increased (Fry et al., 2021). The U.S. marriage rate has also fallen (Schweizer, 2020) and divorce and remarriage has declined (Reynolds, 2021). Further, the amount of adults who never get married is growing (Wang & Parker, 2014). Together, these trends point to broader social shifts that criminological scholars must take into account if the field wishes theory development to progress.

The findings from this study also suggest two important things about the way the "economy of favors" operates for people under community supervision. People under community supervision are argued to participate in this informal economy which is dependent on others' willingness to help them (Miller & Stuart, 2017). First, the findings replicate earlier work demonstrating gender disparities in social support provision and

reiterate the control work emphasizing the importance of women as social supports in the desistance process (e.g., Laub & Sampson, 2003). Among the informal supports, women family members may shoulder a large portion of caregiving responsibilities and have a greater stake in the "economy of favors" for both men and women who are on community supervision. This finding complements the incarceration literature showing criminal legal system contact can disproportionately affect women who take on these caregiving roles (Condry & Minson, 2020).

Next, this work reveals new information that probation and parole officers can play as much or more of a role in the economy of favors than other informal supports, differentially shaping the level and types of support someone on community supervision receives. Individual officer behavior can have immense impacts on the interactional guidance and emotional support a person on probation or parole receives (see also Huebner et al., 2023). Individual officer attitude and demeanor can dictate whether individuals on community supervision felt comfortable enough to exchange emotional support. Probation and parole officers' perception of their role appeared to influence whether they provided interactional support to the participants. Participants sometimes expressed apprehension about exchanging support with probation and parole officers because they recognized the law enforcement role of their officer as opposed to a social work role (Ruhland, 2020). These relationships were sometimes challenging for the participants to navigate given the level of formal social control (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022) and participants were stressed about meeting the many conditions of their supervision (Petersilia, 2011).

The second research question explored how individuals on community supervision exchanged support with others. Many needed substantial resources from others to navigate the challenges of community supervision, but sometimes there were hidden costs to participating in these exchanges. Participants relied on others for a wide variety of instrumental goods, advice and guidance, and important emotional support (Mowen et al., 2019). Perceived available emotional support was described as essential (Uchino, 2004, 2009) and some participants had access to loving, stable relationships that helped motivate and guide them through community supervision (Giordano et al., 2007). Though the participants received many types of support and sometimes a lot of it, some were not able to reciprocate the support very easily. Tension arose when many expressed they wanted to pay others back for their help which was likely influenced by dominant cultural norms surrounding reciprocation (Offer, 2012). Existing scholarship demonstrates the psychological need for people to provide social support to others (Deci et al., 2006) and providing social support can increase feelings of connection with other people in certain cases (Inagaki & Eisenberger, 2012). Some participants were able to pay others back for their instrumental support, but most others took on domestic and informal labor (Giuffre, 2023) and some women in the study exchanged sex for assistance with housing, exposing them to danger (Miller & Schwartz, 1995).

The findings of this study additionally demonstrate how the economy of favors can introduce risk into community supervised persons' lives. Miller (2021) describes how this informal economy is unpredictable in that it depends on others' willingness to help (see also Desmond, 2012) and the current study elucidates some of the situations where participating in the economy of favors can be dangerous. Criminological scholars have

suggested the provision of social support to system-impacted persons can promote social control and exact "good" behavior (Comfort, 2008; Sampson & Laub, 1990), but the individuals in this study sometimes suppressed their emotions and dealt with violence in order to meet residence requirements (Grieb et al., 2014). Probation and parole often required participants to live with family members – persons with whom they may have volatile relationships and had played a role in their past offending behavior (Braman & Wood, 2003; Miller, 2021; Travis et al., 2001). Socioeconomic status also shaped how the participants exchanged social support. Access to stable, safe housing was immensely difficult for people with fewer economic means and as an added layer of challenge, many discussed they could not be honest with their probation and parole officers about these issues given the potential to receive residence or association violations (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017). In turn, some participants without the means to move out of the family home could be stuck in place (Pleggenkuhle, 2018). Participants relayed they felt like others in their life belittled them when they treated them like they did not know how to move forward from their convictions and manage daily life. Multiple women pointed to the danger that exchanging sex with others for housing could also pose. Though this subtheme was not present for the men in the sample, prior literature has pointed to the ways in which men who seek social support are exposed to gang violence (Decker et al., 2013).

This dissertation additionally examined how individuals on probation and parole thought about the social support exchanges they had with others. The conditions of probation and parole seemed to add to the hypervigilance typically associated with police contact (Smith et al., 2019). Scholars find police brutality exacerbates anxiety and

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depression (Alang et al., 2017), but Black persons are disproportionately impacted (Edwards et al., 2019). The findings of this study suggest participants' perceptions about social support exchange were partly informed by their hypervigilance about future system contact. Participants often discussed they worried about associating with their old friends or romantic partners due to the potential to receive violations and thus focused on developing their relationships with family. Sometimes these relationships with family also provoked feelings of a lack of independence, which was especially prevalent when the participants lived with a parent or their parents. The perceived helpfulness of participants' social networks was also limited because they were not allowed to associate with anyone else currently under supervision or with a criminal conviction (Missouri Department of Corrections, 2017). The participants were only allowed to associate with others who had criminal legal system contact through officially sanctioned means like twelve-step programs. Many participants relayed the connections they were able to make with people in these programs were invaluable because those informal supports could guide them about the proper steps to take to rebuild their lives after criminal legal system contact and provide much needed emotional support throughout the process (Maruna, 2001).

The major takeaway from this work is that community supervision constrains certain social support exchanges while fostering others. Many exchanges were driven by instrumental needs and a need to feel acceptance and belonging (Rutter, 1987; Western et al., 2015). While relationships with family and probation and parole officers are emphasized and encouraged, other potentially helpful relationships (such as those with friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners) are pushed to the wayside. Consequently,

women family members often shoulder much of the informal social support exchanges while probation and parole officers can play a large role in connecting individuals with support and occasionally providing emotional support (Condry & Minson, 2020; Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). These two relationship types also open up people on community supervision to other risks. People on community supervision may have tenuous relationships with probation and parole officers because seeking support can expose them to future sanctioning (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). Relationships with informal supports may also be difficult to navigate as some may try to exert control over individuals' activities (Comfort, 2008) or expose system-impacted people to violence (Grieb et al., 2014).

Policy Implications

Many policy implications follow from the findings in this study and stem from comments made by the participants as well as existing research. This section focuses on four broad areas in which the participants made recommendations for reform that could lessen some of the burdens they face in terms of social support exchange. First, participants focused a great deal on the instrumental barriers to their success on probation and parole that simultaneously increased their need to rely on others and potentially caused strain on their relationships. Next, policymakers should also consider ways to reduce the number of people on community supervision by reducing the entry points onto probation and parole. Community supervision policymakers ought also to reevaluate the role they play in dictating informal relationships that could potentially help individuals on probation and parole. Finally, improving access to mental health resources for people on

community supervision may reduce some of the emotional and interactional support needs and lessen the burden of care probation and parole officers currently face.

Decrease Instrumental Barriers. As financial stress caused individuals to lean on others heavily for instrumental support, we might consider policies that could reduce some of this stress. Participants' narratives frequently featured language about personal responsibility and financial independence, which shaped how they approached social support. Some participants curtailed their interactions with others upon expectations they would be shamed for not being more financially stable or have their own housing. Others felt it was necessary to rely on others for help with many instrumental needs, which sometimes caused stress over their lack of ability to reciprocate and also conflict with others who perceived they should have more control over the participants' affairs for helping them. Housing was also a concern in terms of violations, where participants sometimes refused to discuss their struggles with probation and parole officers out of fear of further sanctioning. Angela summed up the need for instrumental resources when she said she wished probation and parole would provide, "More housing services, services that will help people once they get out get clothes and hygiene and bus tickets."

One possible way forward would be to provide more housing resources to individuals on probation and parole in the region. Extant scholarship demonstrates that a lack of stable housing and being unhoused during probation can increase the risk for recidivism (Jacobs & Gottlieb, 2020). Women participants, for example, relayed they do not have any state sponsored transitional housing in the region and are instead left to rely on informal supports or seek out nonprofit organizations in the area for help. At the same time, probation and parole should consider the implications of instituting residence

violations for unhoused people. Individuals on probation and parole should not be

punished with violations for asking for help finding housing. Natalie, for instance,

discussed:

> I don't think that not having somewhere to go should ever be an issue, especially
> if you're on papers and it could be a violation if you don't have somewhere to go. I
> think that should be a job that they help you find a place. You shouldn't be scared
> to tell them that, "Hey, I don't have anywhere to go," because you're scared that
> they're going to [revoke] you.

For Natalie and others, additional assistance to find housing and the ability to ask for help

without fear of revocation could improve community supervision outcomes. Similarly,

Clark (2016), found correctional-based housing and treatment facility placement can

increase the risk for community supervision revocations because the individuals in these

types of housing situations are monitored more closely. Housing solutions should be

carefully implemented so as not to increase the risk for technical violations.

"Inreach" programs can also help facilitate access to instrumental resources

before persons are released from jail and improve recidivism outcomes (Brown et al.,

2013). Frank noted it would have been helpful to get access to housing resources while in

jail:

> Well, when you transition out, and they know that you probably about to get out,
> they need to be getting you in contact with some place to go. I would have been
> under a bridge had not been for my mom.

Frank's narrative demonstrates the danger in not having access to informal instrumental

supports given the lack of appropriate housing resources available to people on

community supervision.

Assistance with transportation in the region, which is known for its lack of

reliable public transportation (Johnson, 2020), could also reduce some of the economic

burden associated with the required probation and parole meetings and class and treatment attendance. Lack of transportation can increase the likelihood that people on community supervision will be convicted of a new crime (Bohmert & DeMaris, 2018). If individuals had access to rideshare vouchers, for instance, they might not have to ask informal supports for transportation help. When Wes was asked what services might be helpful to him on probation, he stated, "Rides, like Uber rides or something? I know some people do that" and Isobel suggested, "maybe offer rides" to probation and parole appointments.

Policymakers might also consider continuing to utilize the expanded methods of communication instituted during the COVID-19 pandemic such as texting and video conferencing to reduce transportation burdens (see also Huebner et al., 2023). Participants in this study also reported meeting their probation and parole officers in the community or at home were helpful to reduce some of their transportation issues and foster connection with their probation and parole officers. Levi explained it was helpful to:

> Go out to Panera or meet at the library or just different meeting grounds, something different to get you of your either home element or office element to where you're in, I don't know, how should I say it? Equal land, I guess, where you feel more comfortable.

Meeting probation and parole officers at the office was a major hurdle for many participants, yet meeting with probation and parole officers in the community was highlighted as a potential way forward.

Other scholars have called for the elimination of legal-financial obligations (fines, fees, restitution, and surcharges associated with criminal convictions) for individuals without employment or who meet legal indigence guidelines (Boches et al., 2022;

Friedman et al., 2022). Nearly half of the sample was unemployed, making it impossible

to pay these sanctions without outside help. Participants pointed to the felony conviction

as a major barrier to employment and driving force of their reliance on others. Ken

denoted, "people with misdemeanors, they can get jobs" and Jaden suggested:

> Yeah, I would say they should probably help us find more jobs, better decent jobs. Because being that we are on probation and have a record where some employers wouldn't allow us to be there, they should have more resources for us to find better employment and [a] better working situation.

Job readiness training may also reduce the need for people on community supervision to

rely so heavily on informal supports for instrumental assistance and decrease the

likelihood of recidivism (Graffam et al., 2014). Adam explained how the current

resources for job readiness provided by probation and parole are insufficient:

> They're [probation and parole] not showing them how to fill out applications. They're not showing them how to get a job. They're not showing them how they need to show up for an interview or how to do an interview in the first place. You know? We had a guy that all he's done his whole life is sell drugs and rob houses. This guy doesn't know how to fill out an application. He doesn't even know where to go to look for a job, let alone get a job. I really feel like the state could provide other avenues, especially for somebody who's actually trying to be employed and work with these companies that hire felons and make it a little easier for them or at least lead them in the right direction.

What Adam's comment suggests is that probation and parole might help individuals with

the application process and interviewing in addition to connecting them with employment

resources. Relatedly, the participants in this study stated the conditions of their

supervision precluded their ability to keep regular employment (see also Phelps, 2020).

Cindy, for example, was mandated to treatment during the day. She described:

> I mean, I just needed to work and I wasn't able to do that. I think that hindered me a lot. That was my biggest deal with probation is I needed to work and they don't really let you if they got you in treatment. So it's really not fair because it's hurting my family too. You know?

Cindy's treatment interfered with her ability to work and thus she relied on her family to get by financially. Probation and parole might consider reevaluating the treatment recommendations such that individuals on community supervision do not need to rely so heavily on family for instrumental support.

Reduce the Number of People on Community Supervision. Scholars of community supervision suggest policymakers must also be reminded that probation and parole sentences begin with arrests and are court imposed (Phelps, 2019). In this way, it may be fruitful to consider in greater detail potential strategies to reduce the entry points onto probation and parole and lower the number of individuals on community supervision. Phelps (2019) explains how decriminalization and diversion could lower the number of individuals on community supervision. For instance, reducing arrest rates for "low level" offenses such as drug crimes or decriminalizing substance abuse can help decrease the number of individuals subjected to community supervision. Ian explained how incarcerating individuals for substance abuse poses an ethical issue as well:

> We have, you know, we have so many people that are in prison systems are in jails that are not hurting anything, but they're suffering addiction and they get busted over and over for like you know drug possession; those people aren't hurting people.

Alternative modes of sentencing, like restorative justice, may also help divert some individuals from community supervision. Participants such as Miranda pointed to the necessity of reducing the amount of persons on probation and parole when she said, "Maybe there shouldn't be so many people on probation for such a long period of time or you don't have to check in all the time if you can't help them." In some instances, participants perceived that the frequent probation and parole meetings they were subject to and for long periods of time hindered their ability to succeed.

Reevaluate the Role of Community Supervision Policy in Dictating Informal

Relationships. Policy must also be cognizant of the ways the conditions of probation and parole are most likely hindering individuals' ability to function independently of people who may have played a role in their initial offending behavior or may expose them to behavior which poses a risk for additional sanctioning. Past research identifies family members as sources of conflict and abuse for system-impacted persons (Braman & Wood, 2003) and the participants in this study sometimes reported conflict and violence at the hands of family. By poising social support from family members as a panacea for success and pitting romantic partners, friends, and acquaintances as the antithesis to success, probation and parole also limits people on community supervision from feeling connected to their communities (Inagaki & Eisenberger, 2012). Social psychologists have pointed to social support exchange among community members as a precursor to thriving (Canevello & Crocker, 2010). Instead of having blanket policy that prevents people on community supervision from interacting with anyone who has prior criminal legal system contact, policy developments in this area of research should try to better account for the nuances in these relationships and help individuals build appropriate supports. For example, some participants relayed their probation and parole officers tried to prevent them from seeing long-term romantic partners who had prior criminal legal contact, which could be destabilizing. Marie explained the benefit of associating with others who had prior criminal legal system contact when she discussed:

> I can't wait to talk to other people who are on probation, see what they are feeling, because I want to know if people, if it's just ungodly frustrating for some people, or what, because it's still very new. I haven't been on it for more than a year.

Given the potential for people with these experiences to share helpful information, community supervision providers should reevaluate whether it is meaningful or necessary for these types of potentially very supportive relationships to be officially proscribed in community supervision rules and regulations. Family counseling (Sullivan et al., 2002) and substance-free social activities (Brooner & Kidorf, 2002) can also help individuals build appropriate social connections.

Participants sometimes spoke to the importance of twelve-step groups as places where they could exchange emotional and interactional support that helped them build community (see also Maruna, 2001). Systematic reviews of these peer support groups have highlighted their effectiveness in treating substance abuse (Kelly et al., 2020). Adam highlighted the importance of meeting other individuals who were going through similar issues while on probation. He described he met:

> … People that are also in recovery that have gone through similar things that I have, and that are also changing their lifestyle, which helps out a lot. I've definitely cut a lot of ties with some of my friends that I had before I changed my lifestyle. The longer I'm doing it, the easier it gets, the more people I meet that are doing the same thing. It kind of comes full circle.

Adam was able to surround himself with other people who were in recovery from drug addiction through his NA meetings. His partner was also in recovery and able to provide a level of understanding that others without those similar experiences were not:

> It definitely helps having somebody that understands where you're at and supports you in that. Especially if they've been through it before. That was kind of something that I ran into because with getting back into the dating scene, people are kind of like... They're like, oh, "Why don't you drink? Why don't you do this?" They ask the questions that they really don't want to hear the answer to. They kind of get scared off. They don't want to deal with it. It's kind of hard, but it definitely helps having somebody that understands where you're coming from and supports you and it's definitely hard to find.

Adam characterized the social support exchanges he sought out in the community as helpful when he was able to find common ground with those individuals. Policy efforts should aim to foster these meaningful, informal connections among system-impacted persons even when people on community supervision do not have substance abuse issues. Existing literature has shown peer support programs, for instance, can foster success in reentry (Heidemann et al., 2014).

Improve Access to Mental Health Resources. Finally, many persons in this study relayed their probation and parole officers played a pivotal role in maintaining their emotional well-being. In the absence of other informal social support people, probation and parole officers can provide much needed support (Phelps & Ruhland, 2022). However, it is important to highlight the challenges of this approach. In a work environment already plagued with frequent turnover and many different, perhaps excessive, responsibilities (Ruhland, 2020), probation and parole officers should probably not also be taking on the role of a therapist. Scholars have pointed to the benefits of motivational interviewing techniques in probation and parole which can foster trust among officers and people on community supervision (Armstrong et al., 2016), yet mental health professionals are likely better poised to take on this emotional support role in a formal capacity (Lamberti, 2016).

Community supervision offices might consider ways to incorporate voluntary, individualized mental health services for people on probation and parole so they receive emotional and interactional support in a professional, non-coercive setting. Though people on community supervision often report high mental health needs, access to this care can be limited given insurance and economic barriers (Owens et al., 2011). Many

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individuals in this study similarly had access to group-based treatment services, but

lacked access to appropriate, individualized mental healthcare. Alex relayed he felt more

mental health resources could help people on probation and parole when he said:

> It's mostly mental health resources. That's what I think that needs to be fixed. I
> was aware of some of the stuff I had. Based on my circumstances, if we just got a
> lot more outreach when it comes to mental health, I think it'd be a lot better.

Other participants connected mental health and addiction in their statements about what

should be done to help people on probation and parole. Mark denoted:

> I need to know how to stay sober out here. Not in there. I mean, I've got to there,
> and it's just staying sober in there. That's relatively easy. It's when I'm out here is
> when I need to learn how to live sober when... as an example, when somebody
> dies, or when trauma happens out here, and you learn how to cope with them
> without using drugs. And when they do throw me in prison? It isn't the answer, I
> don't think. You know?

Mark's comments underscore the problems with utilizing traditional community

supervision that punishes individuals for substance abuse. The cycle of incarceration

brought on by substance violations can be further destabilizing for such individuals

(McNiel et al., 2005). Participants like Timmy proposed people with mental illnesses and

substance abuse issues should have increased access to treatment. He described:

> Treating addiction like drug offenses in it with a punitive stance even though it is
> sort of it's a mental illness and with any other kind of mental illness or sort of
> obsessive behavior disorder, they wouldn't be, you wouldn't be arrested for it and
> you wouldn't have to have this extended punishment of probation and people –
> Like if you had an eating disorder you wouldn't have an officer of the law
> checking and make sure that, like you're eating properly and then who can send
> you to jail if you're not, so that that's sort of a part of it that isn't fair.

For Timmy, drug addiction and mental illness were seen as health conditions worthy of

appropriate treatment instead of punitive reaction.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future studies could improve upon the analyses conducted in this dissertation. Given the study was conducted in a major metropolitan area in the Midwestern United States, future studies should attempt to ascertain whether the themes presented in this study hold for individuals living in rural areas and different geographical regions. Extant research suggests persons living in rural areas, in particular, may have different challenges with respect to stigma (Huebner et al., 2019), potentially limiting their access to social support exchanges. At the same time, the sample was primarily limited to white and Black individuals. Expanding the study to geographic locations with greater racial and ethnic diversity could improve criminologists' understanding of social support exchange in varying contexts. Moreover, it is unclear from this sample how the themes may or may not apply across sexualities and gender identities aside from women and men. Additional analyses may help uncover how LGBTQIA+ persons on probation and parole approach and think about social support exchange. Some evidence suggests LGBTQIA+ individuals form relationships with friends and acquaintances differently than heterosexual individuals and these relationships with "chosen family" may carry greater meaning for this group (Weston, 1997). Comparative and quantitative analyses which address the ways that individual characteristics may play a role in social support exchange could reveal important inequalities in access to social support exchange.

The cross-sectional approach of the current study leaves room for future improvement. This study captured social support exchange for people on probation and parole at one point in time. Some participants were asked if they felt like being on probation and parole affected their social support exchanges, yet more research is needed

to better capture any potential effects of community supervision. Longitudinal studies which follow people on probation and parole after they complete their sentences may be able to capture if there are lasting effects of community supervision on social support exchange. Life course history narrative data from people on probation and parole may also help researchers uncover the ways people on community supervision change their approaches to and perceptions of social support exchange over their lifetimes.

Moving forward, it may be fruitful to conduct interview-based studies which address how the social support persons of people on probation and parole feel about these exchanges. This study addressed this question from the perspective of people on probation and parole. Examining how these broader social networks conceive of the exchanges may help criminologists and policymakers get a sense of the depth of the effects of community supervision on people who are not system-impacted themselves (Boches et al., 2022). Analyses which address social support exchange from the perspective of the informal support providers for people on community supervision may also help policymakers uncover better ways to manage conflict among people on probation and parole and their support people.

Future analyses might also consider ways in which to reduce the potential harms caused by restricting people on probation and parole from associating with people who have similar experiences with the criminal legal system. Given that individuals in this study reported they felt people they met who had prior criminal legal system experience could be especially helpful to them in terms of emotional and interactional support exchange (Maruna, 2001), future analyses could attempt to address how probation and parole might foster this type of contact in a safe way. As of yet, twelve-step programs

were some of the only spaces where the participants discussed they could meet these helpful persons. People with convictions other than drug convictions might benefit from increased avenues to meet other people who have successfully navigated the conditions of their community supervision, but more research is necessary in this area to help determine best practices for these types of social groups.

Additional studies might also capture whether the dosage, types, and timing of social support exchanged influence recidivism. Future analyses may also examine whether the ratio of support received versus provided could influence recidivism. This study took an alternative focus by capturing how individuals on probation and parole accessed social support exchange, how they exchanged social support, and also how they felt about the process, but provides a jumping off point for analyses to potentially capture additional social support categories. This study also emphasized that social support is often exchanged rather than solely received (Williamson & Clark, 1989), potentially affecting recidivism outcomes. Existing research examining social support exchange's effects on recidivism do so with limited data (e.g., Taylor, 2016) and only capture one side of the exchange with particular attention to how support people provide emotional, interactional, and instrumental support to system-impacted persons (Mowen et al., 2019).

Conclusions

The goal of this work was to provide deeper understanding of social support exchange as it relates to persons under community supervision. The findings of this dissertation suggest social support exchange is complex and multifaceted – a concept not easily captured by current scholarly conceptualizations of the process. Therefore, theoretical explanations of social support exchange should be expanded to account for the

diversity in sources of support and the ways in which it is exchanged. The findings of this

dissertation also highlight the potential ways that social support exchange has likely

changed since a great deal of criminological theorizing occurred a few decades ago (e.g.,

Laub & Sampson, 2003). The participants in this study typically relied a great deal on

their family members, as opposed to romantic partners, and sometimes pieced together

support from many friends and acquaintances in the absence of this help. Probation and

parole officers also played a key role in connecting individuals with services and

sometimes providing emotional support, but their support was overshadowed by the fact

that they could implement sanctions if participants were honest about their struggles with

compliance. Policy efforts should be structured to support more equitable social service

distribution for persons on community supervision because their livelihood can depend

on the precarious and piecemeal support of informal relationships (Miller & Stuart, 2017)

as well as individual probation and parole officer approach to their work (Phelps &

Ruhland, 2022).

This work also highlighted the immense financial pressures that community

supervision exerts on people on probation and parole. Past research has spoken to the

ways that community supervision obligations like treatment, legal-financial obligations,

and the felony record prevent financial independence for system-impacted persons

(Phelps, 2013). Challenges like these are often what provoked participants' intense

reliance on others for support on community supervision. Participants relayed how their

inability to pay others back could lead to creative and sometimes dangerous methods of

reciprocation. Those who had difficulty reciprocating characterized their exchanges as

blocking independence (Pleggenkuhle, 2018). Social psychologists have pointed to the

necessity for persons to feel able to help others and reciprocate support (Deci et al., 2006), suggesting these feelings of a lack of independence brought on by the social support exchange could be detrimental to health and well-being. Future research should take into account these nuances of social support exchange in the community supervision context by reducing the financial burden of people on probation and parole.

Participants additionally described the need to feel connected to their fellow community members and particularly those who could understand their struggles as a person with a criminal conviction (Maruna, 2001). Participants chose to risk violations of association to maintain supportive relationships with other system-impacted people and a limited group of people with substance abuse issues were able to find support in twelve-step programs. Otherwise, finding acceptance and belonging could be difficult for many. Understanding the best ways to promote community reintegration after a felony conviction from a social, emotional point of view should be a chief concern for criminological researchers moving forward.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

1. *How do individuals under community supervision build, maintain, and sever relationships with sources of support (e.g., family, romantic partners, friends, acquaintances, probation/parole officers) and how do these strategies vary by relationship type?*

   - Can you describe your living situation?

     o Has your situation always been this way? Probe about changes

   - Who is the most important part of your life?

     o Who helps you the most?

     o What is your relationship like?

     o How do you maintain contact with them?

     o Have they always been the most important person to you?

   - Are you in contact with immediate family members? What about extended family like grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles?

     o What is your relationship like with family? Has it always been this way?

     o Probe about how they keep in contact

   - Can you describe your relationship status?

     o How is the relationship going? Has it always been this way?

     o If yes, how long have you been together?

     o If yes, how did you meet?

     o Probe about children

- What is your social life like?

    - Has it changed over the past few years or since you have been impacted by the criminal legal system?

    - Do you participate in any social activities (e.g., clubs, support groups like AA, church)

    - Probe about how they came to know any friends or acquaintances

    - If limited social activities, probe about why

- How is your relationship with your probation/parole officer?

    - What is your probation/parole officer like?

    - Do you get along with them? Has it always been this way?

    - Has your probation/parole officer encouraged you to seek out help from others (e.g., family, romantic partners, friends, acquaintances)?

    - Do you feel like you need to reach out for help from others to meet the conditions of your probation/parole?

2. *How do individuals under community supervision exchange support from their social networks and how do these strategies vary by relationship type?*

    - Do you ever ask for help from people in your life?

        - Probe about who they are asking

        - Probe about what they are asking for

        - Probe about how often they ask for help

        - Probe about whether they think the support is long-term and why

- o Probe about why they think others are willing to help or not willing to help

- o Probe about who is most helpful and why

- o Probe about how being on supervision and/or having a criminal record impacts how they ask

- How do you ask for help or support from others when you need it?

- o Can you give me an example of a time you asked for help?

- o Is it easy to ask others for help? Why or why not?

- Does your support network expect anything in return when you ask for help?

- o Have they always expected this of you?

- In what ways do you provide support for (or take care of) people in your life? Has it always been the same?

3. *How do individuals under community supervision perceive social support exchanges?*

- How does being on probation/parole make you feel about yourself? What are your general perceptions of probation/parole and your probation/parole officer?

- o Are you hopeful you will complete probation/parole successfully?

- How do you feel about the future?

- o What do you think your future will look like in the next five years? Has this changed since you had contact with the criminal legal system?
- o Has anyone in your life changed your perceptions?
- What do you want the next five years of your life to look like?
  - o Is this different from how you felt in the past? If so, how?
  - o Is anyone in your life motivating you or helping you meet these goals? If so, how? Do people serve as barriers to these goals? Do you feel you have what you need to achieve these goals – what is missing?
  - o What steps are you taking to meet your goals?
- How do you feel when someone in your life expresses they want to help you or offers support?
  - o Have you always felt this way? If not, how have your feelings changed?
  - o Probe about particular relationships that the participant expressed were meaningful to them
  - o Can you describe anything that you wish your social network would have done or offered to do to support you?
- How does it make you feel to ask for help or support from others?
  - o Have you always felt this way? If not, how have your feelings changed?

- o Probe about particular relationships that the participant expressed were meaningful to them

- How does it make you feel to offer or provide support to others?

  - o How does it make you feel when someone asks for something in return for their help or support?

  - o Have you always felt this way? If not, how have your feelings changed?

  - o Probe about particular relationships that the participant expressed were meaningful to them

- Does exchanging or receiving support impact your relationships in any way?

  - o Probe about particular relationships that the participant expressed were meaningful to them