THE EFFECTS OF PROBATION OR PAROLE AGENT RELATIONSHIP STYLE AND WOMEN OFFENDERS’ CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS ON OFFENDERS’ RESPONSES TO SUPERVISION INTERACTIONS

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Although prior research revealed that in noncorrectional and correctional settings, staff relationship style affects client outcomes, there has been little study of this effect for women offenders. The present study investigated effects of two dimensions of relationship style (probation or parole agent–reported supportiveness and punitiveness) on female clients’ reports of responding to interactions with their agents with anxiety, reactance, and a sense of self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle. Results of a longitudinal study of 330 women on probation or parole revealed that agent supportiveness elicited lower anxiety and reactance and higher crime-avoidance self-efficacy. Agent punitiveness elicited greater anxiety and crime-avoidance self-efficacy. Moderation effect analysis showed that punitive style was most related to anxiety and reactance for women at lowest risk for reoffending. In contrast, supportiveness was most related to positive outcomes for the highest risk women. The research findings suggest areas for future theory development and approaches to effective correctional practice.

Keywords: probation; parole; dual-role relationship; women; moderation analysis

Women on probation and parole constitute an increasingly important correctional population for the study of the effects of interventions on recidivism. In recent decades, the number of women under correctional control and supervision has increased at a substantially faster rate than the number of men (Carson & Sabol, 2012; Glaze & Bonczar, 2009; Glaze & Parks, 2012; Minton, 2012), and most individuals under correctional supervision are in the community on probation or parole (Glaze & Parks, 2012). As a result, by 2012, 93,683 women in the United States were on parole and 955,461 women were on probation. As such, women constituted 11% of the parole population and 24% of the probation population (Maruschak & Bonczar, 2013). Not only are large numbers of women under

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supervision but also women present different recidivism-related needs than male offenders (Van Voorhis, 2012). Compared with men, they have higher rates of substance abuse dependencies and addictions, mental health problems, and histories of childhood and adult abuse (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; James & Glaze, 2006; Maidment, 2006; Morash, 2010; Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009; Steadman, Osher, Robbins, Case, & Samuels, 2009). In addition, low self-efficacy contributes to their recidivism (Bloom, Owen, Covington, & Raeder, 2003; Rumgay, 2004; Salisbury, Van Voorhis, & Spiropoulis, 2009; Wright, Van Voorhis, Bauman, & Salisbury, 2008). Given the many women under community supervision and their multiple needs, it is essential to understand the effects of this population’s relationships with probation and parole officers, who deliver the most frequently used correctional intervention.

Though not specific to women, there is evidence that offenders’ relationships with probation and parole agents affect recidivism outcomes. The empirically supported and widely applied Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) approach to corrections highlights the relevance of high-quality relationships—characterized by warmth, openness, empathy, respect for the client, and enthusiasm—to reducing crime-causing needs (Andrews, 2011; Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Also, a review of other studies that are not specific to women supports the conclusion that relationship quality predicts recidivism reduction (Taxman & Ainsworth, 2009; also see Skeem, Eno Louden, Polaschek, & Camp, 2007). The interpersonal style that probation and parole agents adopt plays a role in the success of community supervision; thus, it is a focus of the present study.

Women are also the focus of the present study not only because of their increased numbers in the justice system, but because their limited ties to prosocial supportive individuals make relationships with probation and parole agents especially important. The most common type of woman offender, the two thirds with substance abuse histories (Langan & Pelissier, 2001; Morash, 2010), is most likely to lack positive relationships. Specifically, compared with male substance users and women offenders not using drugs, women with histories of substance abuse have smaller prosocial support networks (Langan & Pelissier, 2001; Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008; Pelissier, Camp, Gaes, Saylor, & Rhodes, 2003). One reason is that family members do not provide a prosocial network, because they often include individuals who break the law or who abused the women as children or intimate partners (Leverentz, 2006; Morash, 2010; O’Brien, 2001). Moreover, women on probation and parole frequently live in neighborhoods with limited prosocial networks to start with, and then neighborhood social networks tend to further marginalize women offenders (Owen & Bloom, 1995; Richie, 2001). Providing empirical support for the inadequacies of women offenders’ networks, Skeem, Eno Louden, Manchak, Vidal, and Haddad (2009) found offenders with substance abuse problems and mental illness (problems shared by many women offenders) had extremely small social support networks. Studies also show that more than men, some women count supervising agents as helpful social network members (Bloom et al., 2003; Bui & Morash, 2010; Maidment, 2006; Morash, 2010; Skeem et al., 2009). Thus, especially for women with substance abuse involvement, an effective relationship with the supervising agent may have essential recidivism-reducing effects.

Despite the potential importance of women offenders’ relationships with supervising agents, there is almost no research specific to probation and parole agent relationships with women. One of the few exceptions (Green et al., 2013) points to the need for this type of research. The study found that a strong working alliance (i.e., agreement on goals, openness
to negotiate, and trust) between parole officers and parolees led to less risky sex behaviors for women, but not men. The researchers conjectured that positive relationships increased women’s self-efficacy to avoid risky sex, but were unable to provide empirical support for this idea with their data because they could not test for effects of relationship quality on self-efficacy. Understanding short-term effects of relationship style would, in a sense, begin to fill the “black box” connecting relationship style to women offenders’ long-term outcomes. It would specify possible short-term effects that could not only be significant in themselves but also might explain why the nature of the probation or parole officer (PO)–offender relationship influences long-term outcomes, such as substance abuse or other illegal behavior. Findings along these lines would make a contribution by showing that some types of professional relationships promote short-term effects that, in turn, lead to desired outcomes.

Another needed extension of existing correctional research is examination of whether client characteristics moderate the effects of PO relationship style on clients. In contrast to correctional researchers who have neglected this topic, mental health and substance abuse treatment experts recommend and carry out this type of research with the aim of determining the client characteristics that alter their responses to therapies (Carroll, 2005). For example, a study of clients in psychotherapy for depression found that relationships characterized by a strong working alliance predict a positive outcome only for clients with few prior depressive episodes (Lorenzo-Luaces, DeRubeis, & Webb, 2014). Another study revealed that an individual’s typical pattern of relating to other people moderates the connection of a working alliance to psychotherapy outcomes (Piper, Ögrodniczuk, & Joyce, 2004). Finally, substance abuse treatment participants with low self-efficacy benefit most from a strong working alliance (Ilgen, McKellar, Moos, & Finney, 2006; Ilgen, Tiet, Finney, & Moos, 2006). Findings such as these suggest that women’s characteristics could alter the effects of the PO’s style of relationship. If women most likely to recidivate in the first place are most negatively affected by certain PO relationship styles, those relationship styles would be highly contraindicated.

To fill gaps in prior research, the present study focuses on the short-term effects of PO relationship styles on women offenders. The specific effects examined are suggested by the literature review that follows (in the section “Short-Term Effects of Relationship Style”). They include anxiety, rejection of directives and behavior contrary to the directives (i.e., reactance), and self-efficacy to avoid drug and crime involvement. The study also considers whether these effects of relationship style differ for women varying in key areas of risk and need known to predict recidivism. Some relationship styles may have especially negative effects, and thus be inappropriate for certain subgroups of women, or alternatively may have especially positive effects, and thus may be most useful for other subgroups.

Research on community corrections settings informed the identification and measurement of PO–client relationship dimensions and was the basis for expectations of how relationship dimensions affect outcomes. However, because research specific to provider–client relationships in correctional settings is limited (Marshall & Serran, 2004), the literature review also considers a broader base of studies on relationships with providers of therapeutic, substance abuse, and social services. In therapeutic and social services settings, relationships with staff have been found to be as influential on outcomes as specific techniques of intervention or client characteristics (Castonguay & Beutler, 2005; Lambert & Bergin, 1994; Marsh, Angell, Andrews, & Curry, 2012; Norcross, 2002). These findings provide further reason to examine the effects of relationship style on women offenders.
VARIATION IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OFFENDERS

Early research on probation supervision identified three styles of relationship with clients: one emphasizing surveillance, a second treatment, and a third a hybrid (Klockars, 1972; Skeem, Manchak, Johnson, & Gillig, 2008). Soon after, researchers (Andrews & Kiessling, 1980) identified correctional staff skills and characteristics (e.g., empathy, firm-but-fair attitude, frequent reinforcement) related to desired offender outcomes. Following these initial studies, although practice manuals and theoretical work based in this research considered the practitioner-client relationship, relatively more attention was given to the importance of targeting the crime-promoting needs of offenders and concentrating services on those at highest risk for recidivism. There has, however, been a fairly recent resurgence of interest in refining the conceptualization and measurement of dimensions of relationships between correctional professionals and offenders, and in testing for connections between these dimensions and both short- and long-term offender outcomes.

Most relevant to the present study, Skeem et al. (2007) carried out considerable research on dual-role relationships involving professionals, including POs, who both control and help clients. They identified two broad styles of interactions: one characterized by caring and fairness on the part of the professional and trust on the part of the client, the other characterized by toughness on the part of the professional. Consistent with dual-role relationship theory, contemporary experts in correctional practice recommend the use of relationship styles that support both helping clients and monitoring their behavior (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Lowenkamp, Holsinger, Robinson, & Cullen, 2012; Trotter, 2006).

Another relevant line of research applies theory supported by research on the therapist-client working alliance to correctional staff-offender relationships (Taxman & Ainsworth, 2009). Before this application in correctional settings, the initial research on the working alliance (also called alliance, therapeutic alliance, helping alliance, and therapeutic relationship) revealed that, regardless of intervention techniques used, the relationship of therapist to client influenced treatment outcomes (Bordin, 1979). One component of a strong working alliance is client-therapist agreement that specific therapy tasks will produce desired changes. Other components are client-therapist trust and the client’s ability to negotiate with the therapist (Bordin, 1979). Though indicators of working alliance do not capture the control dimension inherent in dual-role relationships, measures of working alliance between professionals and offenders are highly correlated with and partly overlap with dimensions of dual-role relationships (Green et al., 2013; Skeem et al., 2007). In fact, measures of dual-role relationships incorporate components of working alliance measures, making studies of the alliance relevant to dual-role relationships.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIP STYLE

Regardless of how relationship dimensions are conceptualized or the type of offenders studied, research generally supports the connection of the quality of offender-staff relationships to offender outcomes. In general, relationships that engender trust and motivate offenders to please supervising POs and comply with requirements and requests combine control with support for offenders’ active participation in problem solving (Cullen, Eck, & Lowenkamp, 2002; Skeem & Petrila, 2004; Taxman, 2002). In the dual-role relationship framework, for probationers with co-occurring disorders (substance abuse and mental
illness), relationships characterized by trust and caring/fairness lead to positive outcomes (e.g., compliance with rules, no violations of conditions), and those characterized by toughness result in negative outcomes (e.g., arrests; Skeem et al., 2007; Skeem, Encandela, & Eno Louden, 2003). Also for offenders with co-occurring disorders, toughness worsens probationers’ mental state and makes it difficult for them to stop using drugs and comply with requirements (Skeem et al., 2007). In the same pattern, for parolees without mental illness, firm, fair, and caring relationships reduce rearrest, even after accounting for preexisting personality traits and recidivism risk (Kennealy, Skeem, Manchak, & Louden, 2012). In the working alliance framework, a literature review demonstrated similar positive effects of a strong alliance on desired outcomes in correctional settings (Taxman & Ainsworth, 2009).

**SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIP STYLE**

Limited research shows the short-term effects of offender–PO relationships. In dual-role relationships, probation officers’ sole reliance on a surveillance orientation to restrict and control clients appears to promote reactance to directives (Skeem et al., 2003). Reactance occurs when a person feels that his or her freedoms and choices are being limited, and it can lead to attitudes and actions contrary to directives (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981). For example, for addiction counselors, direct confrontations, accusing clients of “being in denial,” and being argumentative increase reactance and drug use (Miller & Rollnick, 1991). As an additional negative effect of low-trust, high-control relationships, probation officer threats of negative consequences (such as going to jail) result in clients’ increased anxiety (Skeem et al., 2003). Substance abuse treatment is generally based on the view that anxiety and other indicators of psychological distress are undesirable and thus are targets for reduction (e.g., Gossop, Marsden, & Stewart, 2006). In this view, client relationships with professionals that increase anxiety (especially for individuals with substance abuse and/or mental health problems) are counterproductive.

Relationship style is expected to have positive long-term effects on clients if it supports feelings of self-efficacy. Consistent with Bandura’s (1977) conclusion that increased self-efficacy (i.e., a belief in being able to achieve one’s personal desired outcomes) mediates the connection of interventions with positive outcomes, systematic literature reviews document the effects of increased self-efficacy on the achievement of goals relevant to establishing and maintaining a prosocial lifestyle. For instance, self-efficacy is positively related to substance use treatment participation and desistance from drug use (Adamson, Sellman, & Frampton, 2009; Kadden & Litt, 2011). Across multiple studies of nonoffender samples, self-efficacy is related to mental illness recovery (Schrank, Bird, Rudnick, & Slade, 2012). As substance abuse and mental illness are key risk factors for recidivism for many women, self-efficacy would be a desirable short-term outcome of PO–client interactions.

Most of the research on the qualities of provider–client relationships that promote client self-efficacy comes from outside the corrections literature. Urbanoski, Kelly, Hoepnner, and Slaymaker’s (2012) review of the literature showed that a stronger provider–client working alliance during substance use disorder treatment led to improvements in self-efficacy to avoid drug use. Similarly, in medical settings, a strong patient–doctor working alliance was associated with high self-efficacy to follow through with recommended treatment, which in turn influenced adherence to recommendations and treatment regimes (Fuertes
et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2006). In mental health settings, evidence of a working alliance and other indicators of positive relationships are connected to better psychological outcomes (Horvath, Del Re, Fluckinger, & Symonds, 2011; Schnur & Montgomery, 2010; Thomas, Bracken, & Timimi, 2012). Finally, a systematic review (Marsh et al., 2012) of substance abuse, mental health, and child welfare services for persistently mentally ill individuals found that the nature of provider–client relationships (measured differently in the various studies) is consistently related to continued participation in social services and, to a lesser extent, the ultimate outcomes of less substance use, improvement in clinical symptoms, and increased social functioning.

OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS THAT PREDISPOSE THEM TO POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO RELATIONSHIP STYLE

Neither theory nor research has identified characteristics of women that influence their responses to supportive or punitive dimensions of a PO’s style of relationship. To initiate this line of research, we identified known predictors of women’s recidivism that would logically be expected to also elicit anxiety, reactance, or self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle in response to interactions with the PO. We relied on Van Voorhis’s (2012) research to identify the known predictors of women’s recidivism. From the recidivism risk factors she identified, we chose several individual characteristics as potentially predisposing factors influencing women to have high levels of anxiety and/or reactance, or to have low self-efficacy to avoid criminality. These are symptoms of anxiety and depression, substance abuse history, antisocial friends, an antisocial attitude (also called criminal thinking), anger/hostility, and a general measure of self-efficacy (i.e., a measure of general rather than any specific behavior). These potential influences might directly affect the short-term results of PO relationship styles, or they might alter the intensity or statistical significance of effects of relationship styles on the women.

RESEARCH FOCUS AND CONTRIBUTION

Because women constitute a substantial number of probationers and parolees and they have some unique needs related to recidivism, it is essential to focus attention on this population. However, as a minority of offenders, they are often underrepresented in or even omitted from correctional research (e.g., see Green et al., 2013; Kennealy et al., 2012). This omission is problematic because relationships with POs may be especially important to women due to their small social support networks. These realities led us to focus the present study on women. We additionally focused on the most typical subgroup, those who misuse drugs or alcohol. We tested the hypotheses from dual-role relationship theory:

**Hypothesis 1:** A punitive relationship style is positively related to client anxiety and reactance, and negatively related to self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle.

**Hypothesis 2:** A relationship style characterized by support and trust is negatively related to client anxiety and reactance, and positively related to self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle.

The research also explores the direct and moderating effects of anxiety/depression, antisocial friends, antisocial attitudes, substance abuse history, and general self-efficacy on anxiety, reactance, and specific self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle.
Based on the research literature, two key steps were taken to strengthen the research design. First, prior research on community supervision indicates that including the control dimension in the PO–offender relationship measure provides the best explanation of outcomes (Skeem et al., 2007). This finding led us to use a measure that taps the control dimension. Second, recognizing considerable evidence of the link between a needs-focused approach to supervision and low recidivism (Andrews et al., 1990; Dowden & Andrews, 1999; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996; Luong & Wormith, 2011; Schram, Koons-Witt, Williams, & McShane, 2006), the analysis controls for whether multiple needs are addressed during PO–client interactions.

### METHOD

#### OVERVIEW

Data described in this article are from the first two waves of an ongoing longitudinal study of 402 women offenders on probation and/or parole. Women were first interviewed approximately 3 months after supervision began. At the initial interview, offenders completed measures of their criminogenic needs. Approximately 3 months later, POs reported on their specific interaction styles with each woman in the study, and women reported on their perceptions of the PO’s interaction styles. To avoid the problem of common method variance that results in inflated correlations between variables that share a common bias, for example, negative affectivity of one person responding to items for two scales (Watson, Pennebaker, & Folger, 1987), the supervising PO’s report of relationship style is used in the analysis.

Also, during the second interview, offenders reported on their affective and behavioral responses to supervision interactions. Results reported below are based on 330 women who completed both waves of data collection with the same PO. Reliability coefficients for all scales are included on the diagonal of Table 1.

### TABLE 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Anxiety after meetings (T2)</th>
<th>2. SE avoid criminal BPD (T2)</th>
<th>3. Psychological reactance (T2)</th>
<th>4. PO supportive style</th>
<th>5. PO punitive style</th>
<th>6. No. of issues discussed (T1 + T2)</th>
<th>7. Depression/anxiety (T1)</th>
<th>8. Anger/hostility (T1)</th>
<th>9. Self-efficacy (T1)</th>
<th>10. Antisocial attitude (T1)</th>
<th>11. Antisocial friends (T1)</th>
<th>12. Substance abuse history (T1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>330</td>
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Note. Values on the diagonal are Cronbach’s alphas. T1 = assessed at Time 1 within 3 months of the beginning of supervision. T2 = assessed at Time 2, 3 months after Time 1. SE avoid criminal BPD = self-efficacy in avoiding crime-related behavior, people, and drugs. No. of issues discussed = average number of issues discussed in supervision meetings, averaging over T1 and T2. PO = probation or parole officer. *p < .01.
PARTICIPANTS

Offenders

Of the 330 women in the sample, 251 were on probation, 76 were on parole, and 3 were on both. The women’s ages ranged from 18 to 60 with a mean of 33.79 ($SD = 10.41$). The sample was ethnically and racially diverse and included 176 White women (12 of whom were Hispanic), 124 Black women (9 Hispanic), 1 Pacific Islander, and 6 Native Americans (2 Hispanic). Seventeen additional women identified multiple racial group memberships, 2 reported “Other” racial groups, 1 refused to answer, 1 did not know, and 2 had missing data.

In terms of criminal history, the average age at first arrest for the sample was $M = 22.55$ ($SD = 8.33$). This was the first felony conviction for 182 of the women, 62 women reported having one or two other felony convictions, and 74 women reported having three or more prior felonies. The number of prior misdemeanors ranged from 0 to 38 with a mean of $M = 3.10$, $SD = 5.15$. Finally, 60 of the women were currently on probation or parole for a violent offense.

POs

The sample of women was supervised by 69 POs, of whom 66 were women and 3 were men. Thirty-six POs were Black, 31 were White, 1 was Native American, and 1 identified her race as Middle Eastern. For education, 1 PO had a high school degree, 48 had college degrees, 19 had master’s degrees, and 1 had a doctoral degree.

PROCEDURE

Sampling

With probation and parole offices in every county, Michigan has a centralized statewide system of supervision for felony offenders and specialized caseloads for women. The initial sample of 402 women felons was obtained by first recruiting 73 POs with a specialized caseload for women. All but three POs were women, and this small proportion corresponded to the small proportion throughout the state. The proportion of POs recruited in each county corresponded to the proportions of women supervised in each of the 16 counties within a 90-min drive from the research office. These counties include 68.5% (6,759,961 of 9,876,187) of the 2011 state population, all major population centers (e.g., Detroit, Grand Rapids), and a mix of rural and suburban areas. To increase parolees to almost 25% of the total sample, parole officers were oversampled in relation to probation officers; the sample at the initial interview was comprised of 305 women on probation, 93 women on parole, and 4 women on both. A principal investigator reviewed the caseload list with each PO and assisted the PO in identifying eligible clients (i.e., women supervised for approximately 3 months, with substance involvement, and convicted of a felony). POs assisted in recruiting women by (a) giving eligible women a project contact card or flyer so that (if interested) they could arrange a time to hear about the study, (b) introducing women to on-site project interviewers, or (c) seeking permission to share women’s contact information with interviewers. Interviewers hired and trained by the research project recruited participants, who received a US$30 gift certificate for participating in the first wave of data collection and a US$50 gift certificate for participating in the second wave of data collection.
Time 1: Offender Reports of Criminogenic Needs, Demographics, and Number of Issues Discussed During Supervision Interactions

Interviewers met privately with each woman in a place convenient to her, such as the probation or parole office or a public venue (e.g., fast-food restaurant, public library). Data were collected during one-on-one structured interviews. The Time 1 interview focused primarily on measures of criminogenic needs as assessed by the Women’s Risk/Needs Assessment (WRNA; Van Voorhis, Wright, Salisbury, & Bauman, 2010). Relevant to the present analysis, the assessment instrument included measures of depression/anxiety symptoms, general self-efficacy, substance abuse history, antisocial friends, anger/hostility, and antisocial attitude. All of the just listed measures were derived from responses from the women except for the measure of antisocial attitude. After the conclusion of the Time 1 interview, the interviewer rated the woman on several dimensions that comprised a scale reflecting antisocial attitude. The Time 1 interview also included measures of demographic characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, education), criminal history (e.g., age at first arrest, prior felony convictions), and women’s report of the number of issues discussed during initial supervision interactions.

Time 2: Offender Reports of Reactions to Supervision Meetings and Number of Issues Discussed During Supervision Interactions in the Past 3 Months

Three months after the initial interviews, second interviews were completed at the probation or parole office or public venues. At this second interview, women completed measures of their emotional and psychological responses to interactions with their PO. These included measures of their anxiety and psychological reactance during and after recent interactions with the PO and the extent to which interactions affected their self-efficacy to avoid criminal people, behavior, and drug use (i.e., to avoid a criminal lifestyle). Finally, women reported on the number of risks and needs identified by the WRNA that were discussed with the PO since the prior interview.

Time 2: PO Client-Specific Style

At the time of each woman offender’s 3-month follow-up interview, client-specific online survey responses were requested from POs. Each PO received an email for the client, with a PO and a client project identification number. POs entered these numbers into the online survey and responded to questions about their specific style of relating to the particular client.

MEASURES

Independent Variables: The Revised Dual-Role Relationship Inventory

This measure was developed and validated by Skeem et al. (2007) to assess the nature of the relationships between POs and the offenders they supervise. It includes 30 items rated on 7-point scales ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always. In the present study, the POs rated their behavior with each participating offender on her or his caseload. Items were worded as “I want this client to feel free to discuss the things that worry her” and “I feel that it is sometimes necessary to punish this client.” Although Skeem et al. (2007) suggest that the scale is comprised of three subscales, factor analyses indicated two subscales. The
Supportive subscale is comprised of the average of ratings on the 25 items originally included on Skeem’s Fairness/Caring and Trust subscales because the correlation between the two subscales Skeem et al. (2007) specified was very high (r = .84). The average ratings on the 5 items from Skeem’s Tough subscale comprise our punitive subscale.  

Moderating Variables: Measures of Initial Vulnerabilities

The WRNA was administered at the Time 1 interview. It was developed and validated in research on women offenders (Van Voorhis, Bauman, & Brushett, 2013), and it includes measures of risk factors for recidivism that could affect women’s vulnerability to the influence of officer style. To ensure valid data collection with this instrument, a co–principal investigator attended a weeklong training session offered by its developers, and then trained and supervised the interviewers in its use. The instrument provides measures of depression/anxiety symptoms (the sum of 6 yes/no items; for example, “In the last several days, have you had times when you were experiencing (a) problems concentrating or staying focused, (b) mood swings . . . too many ups and downs, (c) a loss of appetite?”); general anger/hostility (the sum of 7 yes/no items; for example, “Would you describe yourself as having a strong temper?” “Do you have trouble controlling your temper when you get upset?”); substance abuse history (the sum of 8 yes/no items; for example, “Have drugs or alcohol ever made it difficult for you to perform at work or in school?” “Has drug use ever resulted in financial problems for you?”); and antisocial friends (the sum of 12 yes/no items; for example, “Do you spend time with people who abuse alcohol/drugs?” “Have any of your close friends done prison time?”). For each of these four scales, respondents answered either yes or no to each question. Scale scores were computed by summing over items so that higher scores indicated greater problems.

A measure of general self-efficacy is also included in the WRNA; this measure is the sum of responses to 17 items rated on a 3-point scale (2 = often, 1 = sometimes, 0 = seldom/never). Examples of items are “When you make plans, are you fairly certain that you can make them work?” “Does failure just make you try harder?” Higher scores indicate greater self-efficacy. As the final section of the WRNA, after the interview concluded, the interviewer responded to a set of six yes/no statements about the offender’s attitude about her crime. The items included “Offender attributes offense to others—codefendants, victims, or others are blamed;” “Offender displays no remorse for the present offense (other than remorse for being apprehended).” The scale based on the sum of these items serves as a measure of the woman’s antisocial attitude.

Dependent Variables

To measure anxiety after interactions with the PO, items from the Anxiety subscale of the Brief Symptom Inventory, shortened version (Derogitas & Melisarotos, 1983), were adapted for this study. This measure has been validated with offender samples (Boulet & Boss, 1991). It asked women to evaluate how much they experienced six anxiety-related states after interacting with their PO, including “nervousness or shakiness inside,” “feeling scared for no reason,” and “feeling tense or keyed up.” Women reported using 5-point scales ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much, and the average score was calculated. To measure reactance after interactions with the PO, seven items were adapted from the Hong Psychological Reactance Scale (Hong & Faedda, 1996). An average score was calculated from women’s
responses to 7-point scales ranging from 1 = *very strongly disagree* to 7 = *very strongly agree* to items such as “I get very irritated when my PO tells me what I must or must not do” and “Often I lose enthusiasm for doing something just because my PO expects me to do it.” Self-efficacy scales have the most explanatory value when they capture a person’s expectations of personal mastery and success in a particular area (Sherer et al., 1982). Thus, a 10-item measure was used to assess women’s self-efficacy to avoid criminal lifestyle after interactions with the PO; the measure reflected women’s confidence that they would be able to avoid a criminal lifestyle indicated by associating with criminal or abusive people, and by drug and alcohol use. Example items include “Talking with my PO makes me more certain that I can avoid people and situations that trigger my drug or heavy alcohol use” and “Talking with my PO makes me more certain I can avoid criminal people.” Items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *very strongly disagree* to 7 = *very strongly agree*, and self-efficacy scores were computed as an average of responses to these items.

**Control Variable: Number of Issues Discussed During Supervision**

At both the Time 1 and Time 2 interviews, women were asked whether or not 14 different issues were discussed during their supervision meetings with POs. These issues included factors known to predict women’s recidivism (i.e., antisocial attitude, education, finding/keeping a job, money issues, safe housing, staying out of trouble with the law, avoiding people who break the law, anger control, mental health, drug/alcohol abstinence, child custody, abusive partners, parenting stress, and strategies for solving life problems; Van Voorhis et al., 2010). The number of issues discussed could range from 0 to 14. Because the Time 1 and Time 2 scores were strongly correlated ($r = .56$, $p < .001$), we averaged the two values together for this study.

**General Data Analytic Approach**

Analyses were conducted using a series of moderated regression analyses in which the woman’s Time 2 reaction to supervision interactions (anxiety; psychological reactance; and self-efficacy to avoid criminal behavior, people, and drugs) was predicted by the two measures of the PO’s relationship style (supportive and punitive), a measure of one of the woman’s Time 1 vulnerabilities (e.g., depression/anxiety, anger/hostility, or antisocial attitude), and the interactions between the Time 1 vulnerability and each of the two measures of the PO’s relationship style. Models also included the number of risks and needs identified by the WRNA discussed during supervision interactions as a control variable. All predictors were grand mean centered prior to analyses. Interactions were followed up using Aiken and West’s (1991) procedure for estimating simple slopes at ±1 standard deviations from the mean for the two variables involved in the interaction.

**RESULTS**

An initial set of multilevel modeling analyses were computed to assess the degree to which women supervised by the same PO had similar outcomes. The intraclass correlation (ICC) measuring similarity in anxiety scores after supervision interactions was $r = .020$, Wald $Z = .51$, $p = .610$; the ICC for psychological reactance was $r = .081$, Wald $Z = 1.62$, $p = .105$; and the ICC for self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle was $r = .034$, Wald $Z = .84$,
These small and nonsignificant correlations suggest little evidence that women who were supervised by the same PO have similar outcomes. Thus, although the sample includes multiple offenders supervised by the same PO, there is no need to model nonindependence in analyses and standard analyses for independent data are appropriate.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1. As shown in the table, anxiety after supervision interactions and psychological reactance were moderately positively associated with one another and both were negatively associated with self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle. Thus, women who experienced greater anxiety after supervision interactions tended to report greater psychological reactance and lower self-confidence that they could avoid criminal behavior and drug/alcohol use. There is also evidence of zero-order associations between these three outcomes and PO ratings of their relationship style with the woman. These associations were relatively modest and show that when a PO had a more supportive style with the woman, the woman experienced less anxiety, less reactance, and greater crime-avoidance self-efficacy. In contrast, women whose POs had a more punitive style experienced greater anxiety. In addition, the control variable (discussion of a wider array of issues during supervision meetings) was significantly related to women’s self-efficacy in their ability to avoid a criminal lifestyle.

Correlations among the Time 1 measures of women’s vulnerabilities were generally moderate and in the expected directions. Turning to the correlations between the Time 1 vulnerabilities and the women’s reactions to supervision assessed at Time 2, it is notable that only 3 of the 18 correlations attained statistical significance. Specifically, anxiety after meetings showed moderate positive associations with Time 1 depression/anxiety and Time 1 anger/hostility, and it showed a moderate negative association with Time 1 general self-efficacy. The few significant correlations and the small size of those that are significant in general suggest that women’s responses to supervision were not directly related to their initial vulnerabilities.

MODERATED REGRESSION ANALYSES PREDICTING REACTIONS TO SUPERVISION INTERACTIONS

Our primary analyses involved using moderated multiple regression to predict one of the three outcomes (anxiety after supervision, psychological reactance, or self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle) as a function of the two PO-reported interaction style variables (supportive and punitive), one of the woman’s Time 1 vulnerabilities (e.g., depression/anxiety, substance abuse history), and the interactions between the two PO relationship style variables and the particular vulnerability. These models included the number of issues discussed as a control variable. Because only one vulnerability moderated the effects of PO relationship style for Anxiety, these results are presented in the text and Figure 1. Results for the other two outcomes are included in Tables 2 and 3 as well as in Figures 2 and 3.

Anxiety During/After Meetings With the PO

In the analysis predicting women’s anxiety during and after supervision meetings, PO supportive style was modestly negatively predictive of anxiety, with $b = -.17$, $\beta = -.12$, $t(246) = 1.91$, $p = .058$, and PO punitive style was positively predictive of anxiety, $b = .34$, $t(246) = 3.06$, $p = .002$. The interaction of the supportive style with depression/anxiety was negative, $t(246) = 2.00$, $p = .046$, and the interaction of the punitive style with depression/anxiety was positive, $t(246) = 2.55$, $p = .011$. The control variable (discussion of a wider array of issues during supervision meetings) was negatively related to anxiety, $b = -.17$, $\beta = -.12$, $t(246) = 1.91$, $p = .058$. These findings suggest that the PO’s supportive style was associated with less anxiety, and the PO’s punitive style was associated with greater anxiety, but both were moderated by the woman’s depression/anxiety.
β = .20, t(246) = 3.16, p = .002. Thus, controlling for punitive style, women with more supportive POs were somewhat less anxious during and after supervision than women with less supportive POs; similarly, controlling for supportive style, women with more punitive POs were more anxious than women with less punitive POs. The number of issues discussed did not significantly predict anxiety, $b = -.04, \beta = -.10, t(246) = 1.58, p = .12$.

Depression/anxiety at Time 1 was positively associated with anxiety after supervision meetings, $b = .08, \beta = .13, t(246) = 2.18, p = .031$, indicating that on average (and controlling for the other variables in the model), women who were more depressed and/or anxious at the beginning of supervision tended to report higher anxiety during and after supervision interactions. Notably, although Time 1 depression/anxiety did not moderate the effects of PO supportiveness, $b = .02, \beta = .02, t(246) = .31, p = .754$, it did moderate the effects of punitiveness, $b = -.12, \beta = -.13, t(246) = 2.06, p = .040$.

Figure 1 presents the interaction between Time 1 depression/anxiety and PO punitiveness. Simple slopes analyses showed that for women high in depression/anxiety at Time 1 (i.e., 1 standard deviation above average), the PO’s punitiveness had only a small effect on the offender’s anxiety during and after meetings, $b = .11, \beta = .06, t(246) = .63, p = .53$. As seen in the graph, these women were relatively high in postsupervision anxiety. (Note, however, that even these women’s anxiety was below a score of 2, indicating “just a little” on a 5-point scale.) In contrast, PO punitiveness had a more substantial effect on women who were low in depression/anxiety at Time 1, $b = .58, \beta = .34, t(246) = 4.03, p < .001$. As depicted in the figure, when women low in depression/anxiety had POs whose style was low in punitiveness, they reported very low levels of anxiety during and after supervision.
In contrast, when the PO style was relatively high in punitiveness, women who were initially low in depression/anxiety experienced greater anxiety after meetings—essentially becoming indistinguishable from women who were high in depression/anxiety at Time 1.

Although no other Time 1 vulnerabilities significantly moderated the effects of PO relationship style on anxiety after interactions, the pattern of small negative main effects of PO supportiveness and significant positive effects of punitiveness on anxiety remained in each analysis that included one of the other five vulnerabilities. Moreover, as would be expected given the zero-order correlations in Table 1, there was evidence of significant main effects for both anger/hostility, $b = .158$, $\beta = .246$, $t(246) = 4.11$, $p < .001$, and self-efficacy, $b = -.033$, $\beta = -.191$, $t(246) = 3.18$, $p = .002$, such that women who reported higher anger (or lower self-efficacy) experienced greater anxiety during and after interactions with their POs.

**Psychological Reactance During/After Interactions**

Table 2 presents the results predicting efforts to restore freedoms after perceiving the PO is limiting them. We refer to these outcomes as psychological reactance (i.e., the tendency to respond negatively or in a way that is opposite to the PO’s suggestions), and examine it as a function of PO-reported interaction style, the woman’s Time 1 vulnerabilities, and the interactions between PO style and vulnerabilities. Like the models predicting anxiety, these models included number of issues discussed as a control variable. Note that because neither general self-efficacy nor substance abuse history moderated the effects of PO style on reactance, these moderator variables were omitted from the table.

The pattern of results in Table 2 is quite consistent across the four measures of women’s vulnerabilities in the table. In each model, as well as the models in which substance abuse history and general self-efficacy at Time 1 were moderators (not included in the table), PO supportive style had a significant and fairly substantial negative association with psychological reactance controlling for other variables in the model, indicating that women responded with lower psychological reactance to POs who reported using a more supportive style. None of the models showed evidence of a main effect of punitive style, but there was evidence that women whose POs discussed a wider range of issues generally reported lower reactance. Moreover, none of the six vulnerabilities showed main effects for reactance, and so, for example, it was not the case that women higher in antisocial attitude reported higher psychological reactance. Finally, there were significant interactions between PO punitive style and the woman’s Time 1 depression/anxiety, anger/hostility, antisocial attitude, and antisocial friends. Figure 2 presents these interactions, and the last two rows of Table 2 present the simple slopes.

As is clear in both Figure 2 and Table 2, for each of the four vulnerabilities, PO punitiveness is more strongly associated with psychological reactance for women who were relatively lower in a relevant type of vulnerability. Specifically, if the woman was low in depression/anxiety (or as shown by the three additional analyses presented in Table 2, low in anger/hostility, antisocial attitude, and antisocial friends) at Time 1, having a more punitive PO resulted in significantly higher reactance. Note that although the slopes for the punitiveness–reactance relationship appear to be negative for women who are relatively high in the Time 1 vulnerabilities, none of the simple slopes attained statistical significance. Thus, there is little evidence that PO punitiveness is associated with lower reactance for women who have more vulnerabilities. In sum, it seems that increased PO supportiveness is generally
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderator Variable</th>
<th>Depression/Anxiety</th>
<th>Anger/Hostility</th>
<th>Antisocial Attitude</th>
<th>Antisocial Friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO supportive style</td>
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<td>−.24</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>−.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO punitive style</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of issues discussed</td>
<td>−.06*</td>
<td>−.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>−.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO supportive by moderator</td>
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<td>−.09</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>−.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO punitive by moderator</td>
<td>−.05*</td>
<td>−.15</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>−.16*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SIMPLE SLOPES FOR MODERATOR BY PO PUNITIVE INTERACTION**

| Moderator high (+1 SD) | −.24               | −.13           | .19                | −.16               | −.09           | .18                | −.22               | −.12           | .17                | −.18               | −.10           | .16                |
| Moderator low (−1 SD)   | .35*               | .19            | .16                | .38*               | .20            | .18                | .44*               | .24            | .17                | .41*               | .22            | .17                |

*Note.* Predictors include PO’s self-reported interaction style with each offender, the offender’s psychological vulnerabilities, and interactions between interaction style and vulnerabilities. Average number of issues discussed during supervision was included as a control variable. PO = probation or parole officer.

*p < .05. **p < .01.

**Figure 2:** Interactions Predicting Offender T2 Postsupervision Psychological Reactance as a Function of PO Punitiveness and Offender T1 Vulnerabilities

*Note.* For both PO punitive style and offender vulnerabilities, low is 1 SD below the mean and high is 1 SD above the mean. PO = probation or parole officer.

associated with lower reactance, as is discussion of a wider range of issues. In contrast, increased PO punitiveness is associated with higher reactance, but only for women who were low in depression/anxiety, anger/hostility, antisocial attitude, or antisocial friends at Time 1.
Table 3 presents the results for the moderated regressions predicting offenders’ reported crime-avoidance self-efficacy after meetings with POs. For this outcome, five of the six vulnerabilities showed significant interactions with PO relationship style (Time 1 depression and anxiety was the exception). In this case, however, there were interactions that were significant for both PO supportiveness and punitiveness.

Examination of the main effects revealed that PO supportive style was modestly positively associated with self-efficacy to avoid a criminal lifestyle, controlling for other variables in the model; the supportiveness coefficients were statistically significant in two of the four regressions and marginally significant ($p < .10$) in the other four (i.e., the three sets of tabled results and the omitted results treating Time 1 depression/anxiety as a moderator). Thus, there was a tendency for women with more supportive POs to report higher self-efficacy in avoiding a criminal lifestyle. In contrast, punitive style was significantly negatively associated with self-efficacy to avoid criminal behavior, people, and drugs in all models, suggesting that women with POs who used a more punitive style reported lower crime-avoidance self-efficacy after interactions. There was also evidence that, beyond the effects of PO style, women reported higher crime-avoidance self-efficacy when their POs discussed a wider range of issues with them during supervision meetings. Finally, it is once again notable that five of the six Time 1 vulnerabilities showed no main effects on crime-avoidance self-efficacy, and the only Time 1 variable that did show an association was the general measure of self-efficacy: Women with higher Time 1 general self-efficacy reported higher crime-avoidance self-efficacy at Time 2, controlling for other variables in the model.

### Table 3: Moderated Regression Results Predicting Self-Efficacy to Avoid Crime-Related Behavior After Meetings With Probation or Parole Agent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderator Variable</th>
<th>Anger/Hostility</th>
<th>Antisocial Friends</th>
<th>Antisocial Attitude</th>
<th>Substance Abuse History</th>
<th>Self-Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$SE$</td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO supportive style</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO punitive style</td>
<td>-.28*</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of issues discussed</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO supportive by moderator</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO punitive by moderator</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SIMPLE SLOPES FOR MODERATOR BY PO SUPPORTIVE INTERACTION**

| Moderator (±1 SD)                       | .41**           | .24                | .16                 | .39**                   | .23          | .14        | .43**       | .25     | .16  | .44** |
|                                         | -.01            | -.01               | -.14                | -.02                    | -.01         | -.15       | -.01        | -.00    | .14  | -.30 |

**SIMPLE SLOPES FOR MODERATOR BY PO PUNITIVE INTERACTION**

| Moderator (±1 SD)                       | -.02            | -.01               | .17                 | -.02                    | -.01         | .18        | -.02        | .18     | -.59 | -.28 |
|                                         | -.59**          | .28                | -.61**              | -.30                    | -.18         | .18        | -.61**      | -.30    | -.18 |

**Note.** Predictors include PO’s self-reported interaction style with each offender, the offender’s psychological vulnerabilities, and interactions between interaction style and vulnerabilities. Average number of issues discussed during supervision was included as a control variable. PO = probation or parole officer.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. 

Self-Efficacy to Avoid a Criminal Lifestyle After Interactions
There were two significant interactions between PO punitive style and the Time 1 variables; specifically, antisocial attitudes and antisocial friends (see the top two graphs in Figure 3 and the two sets of simple slopes in the bottom two rows of Table 3). These interactions actually reflect the same pattern of results shown for reactance; for women lower in these vulnerabilities, the PO’s use of a punitive style had a significant negative effect on the women’s crime-avoidance self-efficacy. In contrast, punitive style had very little effect on self-efficacy for women who were higher in antisocial attitudes or who had more antisocial friends.

Figure 3: Interactions Predicting Offender’s T2 Postsupervision Self-Efficacy to Avoid Criminal Behavior, People, and Drugs as a Function of Probation or Parole Agent Punitive and Supportive Styles and Offender’s Time 1 Vulnerabilities

Note. For PO punitive style, PO supportive style, and offender T1 vulnerabilities, low is 1 SD below the mean and high is 1 SD above the mean. PO = probation or parole officer.
The other four significant interactions were with the PO’s supportive style. As can be seen in Figure 3, these interactions share a common theme (although the results for Time 1 self-efficacy, which is a strength and not a vulnerability, are flipped). These interactions suggest that over and above the modest main effect of supportive style, having a supportive PO was especially strongly positively related to crime-avoidance self-efficacy for women who were higher in crime-related vulnerabilities, or lower in general self-efficacy, at Time 1.

**DISCUSSION**

The results suggest that a woman’s response to supervision interactions depends on the relationship style her PO adopts with her. Broadly speaking, (a) more supportive POs elicit more positive outcomes—lower anxiety and reactance, and higher crime-avoidance self-efficacy; and (b) more punitive POs elicit more negative outcomes, at least in the areas of anxiety and crime-avoidance self-efficacy. Beyond these general patterns, the moderation analyses indicate that the punitive style is especially ineffective or even counterproductive for women who score low on selected predictors of recidivism, and the supportive style is especially effective or productive (for crime-avoidance self-efficacy at least) for women who had characteristics that predict recidivism.

As emphasized by other researchers (Carroll, 2005; DeRubeis, Gelfand, German, Fournier, & Forand, 2014), the moderation analysis proved to be important in understanding the effects of a professional’s relationship style with clients. Without this analysis, the negative effect of punitiveness on reactance for the women who scored lowest on selected predictors of recidivism would not have been recognized. As discussions during PO interactions with clients are generally about compliance with rules, avoiding criminal behavior, avoiding drug and alcohol use, and engaging in prosocial activities (e.g., work, education), reactance would typically involve asserting one’s right to partake in prohibited activities and avoid prosocial activities. This surely is not a desirable outcome, especially when coupled with the finding that for women with characteristics that predict recidivism, punitiveness had no significant effect, and thus does not appear to benefit any of the subgroups of women we studied.

Without the moderation analysis, we also would have underestimated the effect of PO relationship style on some subgroups of women. Specifically, we would have missed the positive effect of punitiveness on anxiety for women who had low levels of anxiety and depression to begin with. We also would have underestimated the positive effect of a supportive style on crime-avoidance self-efficacy for women with several characteristics known to predict recidivism. These errors would suggest less support for dual-role relationship theory than we actually found.

The most repeated finding was that PO punitiveness had its most negative effects on reactance for women with the lowest scores for depression/anxiety, anger/hostility, and antisocial attitudes and friends. These are the women with the greatest tendency to be law-abiding. Women who tended to be more law-abiding based on one or more influences on their recidivism risk also reacted to punitive supervision style with anxiety and with low crime-avoidance self-efficacy significantly more than did women not subjected to punitiveness. We considered alternative explanations for these unexpected findings. First, these women may simply be upset, angry, and/or demoralized, as they generally have tendencies to be law-abiding, but their supervising POs report using a punitive style of relating to them.
Second, uncertainty management theory suggests that a perception of fair treatment (i.e., procedural justice) makes people less anxious in conditions of uncertainty (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002). For women without strong criminal tendencies, the punitive style may both increase uncertainty about being sanctioned and reduce perceptions of procedural justice, thereby creating anxiety. Finally, the organizational justice literature shows that when employees perceive injustices at work, they respond with heightened anxiety and low self-efficacy to perform tasks (e.g., Phillips, 2002). Women who are relatively prosocial women may view PO punitiveness as unjust. Although the PO–client relationship differs markedly from relationships of employees with their coworkers and managers, the same dynamic may be present. Specifically, perceived just treatment may be taken as an indication of the offender’s ability to avoid criminal activity and substance use, and perceived injustice may create anxiety and lower self-efficacy, albeit not to perform work tasks, but to avoid criminal people and activities. Further investigation of these alternative explanations for our findings would contribute to understanding why the more prosocial women react most strongly to punitiveness.

The use of measures taken from a widely varying group of respondents strengthens our confidence in the validity of findings. POs reported on their relationship style with each client. Women offenders reported on their responses to interactions with the PO and provided information used to create assessment scores for characteristics such as antisocial peers. Finally, interviewers rated women’s antisocial attitudes based on women’s detailed descriptions of and thoughts about their offenses and protocol used in the WRNA. The multiple sources of data address the problem of common method variance that results in inflated correlations between variables that share a common measurement method (Watson et al., 1987).

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND FOR PRACTICE

Focusing first on measurement, one of the Cronbach’s alpha scores (for PO-reported use of a punitive style with specific clients) was quite low. However, descriptive data analysis showed that although the scores did not range along the full scale, the distribution of scores was approximately normal and there was no evidence of a floor effect. The skewness coefficient was .934, which is well within an acceptable range for approximate normality in a sample (George & Mallery, 2005). Thus, it is unclear whether this measure is seriously flawed. Even if it is, this would mean that the size of the regression coefficients would be lowered, and the negative effects of punitiveness would be greater than reported.

The measure for the control variable, number of problems discussed with the supervising PO, does not take into account whether women’s needs suggested the utility of discussion. Future research should construct this variable to reflect the number of women’s documented needs that were discussed.

Turning to the selection of variables to include in the analysis, the lack of prior research on short-term results of dual-role relationship styles in correctional settings left us heavily reliant on a rather disparate literature on substance abuse treatment providers, psychotherapists, and social services and medical personnel. We relied on this literature to formulate expectations about the probable effects of PO–client interactions and the women’s characteristics that might moderate these effects. There may be other results of PO relationship style besides anxiety, reactance, and crime-avoidance self-efficacy that should be studied,
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and other relevant moderating variables. For instance, recent stress events promote drug-use relapse (Tate et al., 2008) and may be an important vulnerability that moderates the effects of relationship style, perhaps increasing the positive results of a supportive style or the negative effects of a punitive style. Future research should expand the individual characteristics and the short-term effects of relationship style studied.

Research also would profitably be expanded to different types of correctional populations, including women with no drug involvement and men with various patterns of criminal involvement. Another direction for research is the investigation of the link between fairly immediate effects of PO relationship style that we studied and longer term outcomes, such as substance use and criminal activity. Relationship style may have direct effects on long-term outcomes, or effects that are mediated by women’s more immediate responses to interactions with their POs (e.g., anxiety, self-efficacy).

It also would be useful to determine why some POs use punitive versus supportive styles of relationship with particular women. Client characteristics may influence the nature of the relationship. For example, a study of therapist–client alliance in substance abuse treatment programs found that youths’ age, motivation to abstain, self-efficacy, coping skills, and commitment to support programs like Narcotics Anonymous were positively associated with stronger alliances (Urbanoski et al., 2012). In addition, the PO’s characteristics may have an influence, as shown by research on therapeutic alliance (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003; Davis & Ancis, 2012). PO selection and training might be informed by knowledge of predispositions and skills related to the use of a supportive relationship style, which in our research was related to the most positive and none of the negative reported effects of PO–client interactions.

Study findings contribute to renewed attention to the PO–client relationships as an influence on individuals on probation and parole. A number of curricula (see review by Lowenkamp et al., 2012) exist to train correctional practitioners. The complex nature of dual-role relationships with offenders may lead POs to use a punitive relationship style. However, the current study findings along with similar results by other researchers suggest that curricula need to focus on skills in building supportive, nonpunitive relationships (Kennealy et al., 2012). In addition, training for correctional service providers should build understanding of reactance.

NOTES

1. The two other tenets of the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) approach are that correctional services should be targeted at offenders at highest risk for recidivism and should address those needs that cause recidivism (Andrews, 2011).
2. We use the label punitive rather than tough because the five items included putting the woman down, talking down to the woman, punishing the woman, making unreasonable demands, and expecting the woman to do all the work.
3. To preserve space, detailed results of statistical analysis are presented only when significant. All tables and graphs are available from the first author.

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