Probation and Parole Officer Communication Style as an Antecedent to Reactance, Self-Efficacy, and Restoration of Freedom for Drug- and Alcohol-Involved Women on Probation and Parole

Sandi W. Smith, Jennifer J. Cornacchione, Merry Morash, Deborah A. Kashy, and Jennifer Cobbina
Michigan State University

Importance of Probation and Parole Officer Relationship to Female Offenders

- Probation and Parole Officers constitute important members of offenders’ social networks
- Close relationships with POs have been shown to result in less risky behaviors
- PO’s job is to use persuasion to get women to live within societal rules, and in this case to avoid drug or alcohol use
- POs can use different communication styles with clients

- **Conversational Style** – encourages open communication on a variety of topics
- **Conformity Style** – reflects obedience to authority

Self-Efficacy to Resist Drugs and Alcohol and Reactance as a result of PO Communication Style led to self-reported use and violation patterns

- **Self-efficacy** - the belief in being able to achieve one’s personal desired outcomes
- **Reactance** - perception that being able to think, feel, or act freely in the way that one desires is being threatened.

- Both of these psychological states are important as they lead can to drug and alcohol avoidance or use
- Conversational communication style enhanced self-efficacy to avoid drugs and lessened reactance which led to lower self-reported use and fewer violations.
- Conformity communication style lowered self-efficacy to avoid drugs and increased reactance which led to higher self-reported use and more violations.
Our Sample

- N=250 women (drug and/or alcohol-involved) who had not changed POs during the course of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Supervision</th>
<th>Probation</th>
<th>Parole</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Women</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2</td>
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- Mean age 34
- Racially/ethnically diverse
  49% white, 36.6% black, with others Native American and multiple races. Many reported being Hispanic.

Practical Application

- Using a conversational communication style in which you supply offenders with information, referrals, and support may increase offenders’ self-efficacy to avoid drugs and decrease reactance and drug and alcohol use and violations.

- Using a conformity community style by using orders and threats may lower self-efficacy to avoid drugs and alcohol and increase violations.