

Home Visits in Community Supervision: A Qualitative Analysis of Theme and Tone

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This research project was funded by the National Institute of Justice project, Assessing the Influence of Home Visit Themes and Temporal Ordering on High-Risk Parole Outcomes [2013-IJ-CX-0062].

Applied Research Services has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles for this NIJ project that stipulates confidential information be protected, but it is not prevented from publishing research findings. ARS has to make all “records, documents, and papers” regarding this project available to the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles.

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Abstract

Although home visits play a major role in community supervision, little is known about what transpires – what is discussed and with whom the discussion is held. This study addresses that void by qualitatively analyzing case notes of home visits with high risk parolees who entered supervision in 2008, 2010, or 2012 and exited between 2011 through 2013. Officers' written comments describing 81,732 home visits were analyzed to uncover discussion themes and tones and the parties contacted. Of the twelve themes identified, most visit conversations included parolee's contact with the justice system, housing, and employment. Analysis of the tone of comments as neutral, positive, or negative, suggested that nearly 9 out of 10 notes were neutral containing simple descriptions of the parolee's behavior and status. While home visit interactions were primarily with parolees, parents/grandparents were the second most mentioned participant in home visits. Implications for supervision through the lens of therapeutic jurisprudence are discussed.

Home Visits in Community Supervision: A Qualitative Analysis of Theme and Tone

Of the 4.7 million U.S. adults under community supervision at the end of 2014, 18% ($n = 856,900$) were on parole (Kaeble, Maruschak, & Bonczar, 2015). Over a quarter of the adults ($n = 164,225$) entering prisons nationwide in 2014 were admitted due to failure on parole (Carson, 2015). While participating in evidence-based programming significantly lowers revocation rates (Andrews & Bonta, 1998), the general question of how supervision influences parole outcomes remains largely unanswered. Research on parole failures has focused more on parolee characteristics, backgrounds, and activities (Hughes, Wilson, & Beck, 2001; Petersilia, 2009; Steen & Opsal, 2007) than on the role of parole supervision. Explorations of the influence of parole officers' supervision styles on outcomes yield inconsistent findings. For example, Blasko, Friedmann, Rhodes, & Taxman (2015); Grattet, Lin, & Petersilia (2011); and Ricks & Eno Louden (2015) report significant effects whereas Bonta, Rugge, Scott, Bourgon, & Yessine (2008) report no effects. Thus, further research is needed on how parole officer-parolee interactions influence outcomes.

Significant resources are devoted to assuring that parole officers engage face-to-face with parolees in the home, place of employment, and field office. In fiscal year 2014, personal services constituted \$43.3 million or 80% of the total expenditures of the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles (State Board of Pardons and Paroles, 2014). Knowledge gained through these interactions is believed to play a vital role in effectively managing parolees' successful reentry into the community and improving public safety. Surprisingly, relatively little is known about such face-to-face interactions. A recent review of the literature on home visits in community supervision noted a lack of "reliable and consistent data" and suggested that researchers gather fundamental knowledge about "the length and frequency (e.g., dosage) of

home visits, the qualitative nature of what occurs during a home visits, both the probationers' and probation officers' goals for these encounters, and whether home visits are accomplishing the overarching goals of probation” (Ahlin, Antunes, & Tubman-Carbones, 2013, p.35).

The current study addresses some of these questions by analyzing agency records of parolee home visits to identify the thematic content and with whom the parole officers interacted. We draw upon the therapeutic jurisprudence framework as an appropriate lens through which to understand parole officer-parolee interactions overall, and home visits specifically, as an integral opportunity for behavior change interventions. Our review of the literature traces the historical development of home visits from their roots as “friendly visits” by charities, to their subsequent incorporation into probation during the Progressive era, and the current inclusion of cognitive-behavioral evidence-based practices in community supervision. What little is known about home visits and their influence on community supervision outcomes is discussed.

Literature Review

Therapeutic jurisprudence (TJ) is “the study of the therapeutic and anti-therapeutic consequences of the law” (Wexler, 2010, p. 95). In addition to examining the roles of legal rules and legal procedures, TJ examines how the behaviors of legal actors, such as parole officers, influence the well-being of those with whom they interact. TJ encourages legal actors to integrate promising or evidence-based behavioral-science strategies for therapeutic change into their work including promoting adherence to treatment (Meichenbaum & Turk, 1987), challenging cognitive distortions (Wexler, 1996), and integrating crime and drug use relapse prevention practices (Knott, 1995).

Parole officers are tasked with assuring offender compliance with felony sentence and prison release conditions while assisting with community reentry. The natural home environment

has traditionally been a key locale for promoting and monitoring behavior change (Gronewold, 1964). Likewise, interactions during home visits yield ideal conditions to understand if and how therapeutic jurisprudence unfolds. Knowledge about what occurs during home visits is important to both researchers and practitioners seeking to develop best practices across all supervision components (DeMichele & Payne, 2007). Further, home visit interactions occur with people in the parolee's life who often provide emotional, residential, financial, and/or social support. Understanding how socio-cultural bonds and social influence are developed among parole officers, parolees, and their support networks during home visits may inform ways to blend surveillance and rehabilitation goals and decrease supervision failures (Braswell, 1989). While behavior change can be influenced in any environment, office visits do not offer the same depth of opportunity to witness and influence the myriad factors about a person and his/her life as do interactions in the natural environment. It is comparable to laboratory experiments versus natural experiments; context matters.

Home Visits in Community Supervision: A Brief History

Home visitation has a long and important role in social work (Beder, 1998). Originating in the Progressive era of the mid-1800's (Ahlin et al., 2013; Holbrook, 1983; Lindner, 1992), visits to the homes of aid recipients to provide financial help and advice were used by charitable organizations increasingly concerned about the character of persons who received aid (Garland, 1985; Klein, 1968; Richmond, 1899). Between 1880 and the early 1900's, charitable assistance became formalized as cadres of volunteers managed requests for aid through the use of "friendly visiting" (Beder, 1998; Leiby, 1978). Meeting in the home of the person requesting aid was recognized as vital (Holbrook, 1983), as the home afforded a more relaxed environment for gathering information and gaining an accurate picture of the situation of the person requesting

aid. The overarching goal was to "understand the family dynamics" (Beder, 1998, p. 515) and to develop plans to provide assistance (Hancock & Pelton, 1989). Other professions, notably medicine, and eventually probation and parole, began using friendly visitors (Beder, 1998; Bledstein, 1976; Cabot, 1919; Holbrook, 1983) and eventually social 'casework' became synonymous with friendly visits (Holbrook, 1983).

Both probation and parole looked to social casework as a model for supervision (Bennett, 1938; Bramer, 1926; Lane, 1937). Indeed, federal probation advocated hiring candidates with experience and education in social work (Cass, 1940; Glaser, 1969; Young, 1937). When supervising offenders, the officer was to "befriend...win their confidence...study their temperament, abilities, and special needs... aid them in thinking out their problems... inspire laudable and practicable ambitions; and suggest practical ways of bettering their surroundings and manner of life" (Rothman, 1980, p. 65). Chute's presentation at the Congress of the American Prison Association in 1922, as cited by Lindner (1992) noted that the ability to provide guidance, not just surveillance, required at least weekly home visits and more.

The practical realities of translating social casework into community supervision of offenders fell short of the ideal (Rothman, 1980) as the dual goals of public safety and rehabilitation (Glaser, 1969; Supplee, 1939; Upton, 1937) included coercive measures not embraced in social work (Glaser, 1969). Low pay discouraged potential job candidates with education and experience in casework from applying (Rothman, 1980). Only one third of probation departments acknowledged specialized training was important (Chute & Bell, 1956), thus little training in casework was provided after hiring (Ahlin et al., 2013). Further, large caseloads allowed little time for home visits (Bennett, 1937; Chandler, 2015; Center for Civic Innovation, 1999; Dressler, 1941; Leeds, 1951; President's Commission on Law Enforcement

and Administration of Justice, 1967; Rhine, 1997; Rhine, Smith, & Jackson, 1991; Rothman, 1980; Ulman, 1938). A social casework approach (Studt, 1976) served as the community supervision model for half a century (Flynn, 1940; Ward & McGrath, 2015).

In the mid-1960's, the influence of psychotherapy shifted the emphasis of supervision to the offender's emotional well-being (Clear & O'Leary, 1983) and the controlled environment of the parole office was viewed as more conducive to counseling, reducing the need for home visits and individualized supervision plans (Studt, 1972). In the late 1970's, increasing case load sizes, more serious offenses, and high recidivism rates (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000; Carson, 2015) led to pessimism about whether community supervision changed offender behavior (Martinson, 1974) and the emphasis of supervision shifted from rehabilitation to surveillance and public safety (Feeley & Simon, 1992; Rhine, 1997). This shift from case management to surveillance fostered supervision standards that delineated a specific number of home visits each month based on environmental risk (Rhine et al., 1991; Studt, 1972) and different models of supervision, including team supervision (Barkdull, 1976; Nelson, Ohmart, & Harlow, 1978), addition of volunteers (Glaser, 1969; President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967), and intensive supervision that paired a probation and surveillance officers (Erwin, 1986).

Parole Supervision Today: The Role of Home Visits

The movement of community supervision towards surveillance has been criticized recently as a "bunker mentality" (Petersilia, 2011, p. 525) resulting in a call for probation and parole to return to their roots, supervising in the neighborhood, not in the office. "Firsthand knowledge of where the offender lives, his family and his immediate and extended environment are critical elements of meaningful supervision" (Center for Civic Innovation, 1999, p. 6).

Recent research on evidence-based programs (Bourgon, Gutierrez & Ashton, 2012) and offender responsibility (Andrews & Bonta, 1998) has shifted the supervision function to once again include case management (Lowenkamp, Holsinger, Flores, Koutsenok, & Pearl, 2013) and concern for the individual and social needs of offenders (Maruna, & LeBel, 2010; Kennealy, Skeem, Manchak, & Eno Louden, 2012). A hybrid or blended model of supervision has been recognized identifying three roles (Taxman, 2008): enforcing supervision requirements, assisting offenders returning to the community, and following the community supervision agency's policies (Clear & Latessa, 1993). While surveillance and rehabilitative activities may appear to present the officer with conflicting mandates (Burton, Latessa & Barker, 1992; Clear & Latessa, 1993; Ellsworth, 1990; Klockars, 1972; Taxman, 2008; West & Seiter, 2004; Whetzel, Paparozzi, Alexander, & Lowenkamp, 2011), research suggests that the subject matter and focus of home visit interactions may be more affected by the officer's supervision style, orientation or personal values (O'Leary & Duffee, 1971; Klockars, 1972), organizational philosophy (Clear & Latessa, 1993; O'Leary & Duffee, 1971), and caseload size (West & Seiter, 2004).

Surprisingly, discussions of the purpose, goals, and variations of home visits are almost absent from the literature (Ward & McGrath, 2015). Random home visits remain a primary practice because it is argued they reveal the true nature of the parolee's home life (Gronewold, 1964), and therefore, a better method of advancing public safety. Seminal research by Dressler (1941) provides a rare glimpse into what managers expected in their parole officers' home visit notes: that the number and content of home visits accomplished a balance between public safety and rehabilitation (casework); that parolees and family members were meaningfully engaged; and that the parolee's residence and activities were verified. The wisdom of unannounced home visits was questioned as a demeaning activity that intruded on the personal lives of parolees

(Carney, 1977) and family members reported unannounced home visits to be disruptive (Studt, 1972; 1976). Studt (1972) found travel time between home visits was often far greater than the time spent speaking to the parolee and/or others in the home. Contact standards signaled that surveillance was the primary reason for parole officer-parolee interaction (Studt, 1972; 1976). Thus, shifting the home visit focus to surveillance yielded little information about new criminal activity and resulted in what Stanley (1976) described as a “stiff, shallow encounter” (p. 99). More recently, several studies examined home visits conducted under the framework of risk management and found that home visit length and overall time spent with offenders varied based in part on the parolee’s risk/supervision level (Bakke, Quigley, Prestine, & Kiockziem, 1990; Bercovitz & Bemus, 1993; Clear & O’Leary, 1983; DeMichele 2007; DeMichele, Payne & Matz, 2011).

Recent research provides a few insights into how the attributes of officers and organizations may influence supervision outcomes. However, unanswered questions include the actual subjects discussed and other particulars of home visits, and if the setting of the home provides a safe and comfortable environment wherein productive interactions related to surveillance and rehabilitation can occur. The goal of the current study is to increase our understanding of home visits in offender supervision by analyzing the thematic content discussed during or documented following home visits and with whom interactions occurred. The data were drawn from official case notes of parole officers who supervised prison releases who began parole supervision in calendar years 2008, 2010, and 2012 and who exited between calendar years 2011 to 2013.

Method

Site

The Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles is responsible for supervising all offenders released from prison onto parole, currently over 23,000 parolees. In fiscal year 2014, 284 parole officers supervised an average caseload of 88 parolees (State Board of Pardons and Paroles, 2014). Georgia parole officers, legally classified as peace officers, are required to carry firearms and other law enforcement equipment and are responsible for arresting parole violators. Officers are required to wear all safety equipment when on duty.

Georgia's 8-week parole officer basic training includes developing an understanding and recognition of the challenges faced by felons, such as substance use, mental illness, under-education, un/under-employment, transportation, and safe and affordable housing. Officer training emphasizes serving as resource brokers and case managers, locating and matching services to individual needs that promote success under supervision, and monitoring attendance. Law enforcement related training encompasses qualification with a firearm, building and body searches, arrest and handcuffing procedures, self-defense, and safety awareness training. Twice yearly firearms requalification includes a review of the use of force continuum when confronting danger or making an arrest. The Board utilizes a valid and automated actuarial risk instrument (Braucht, Meredith & Prevost, 2004; Meredith & Prevost, 2010) and agency policy to determine each parolee's initial and subsequent supervision levels. By policy, regardless of risk score, parolees serving for egregious or high profile, violent and sex offenses are assigned to the highest level – specialized supervision requiring two interactions with the parolee outside the office each month, with at least one face to face at the home and a second at the parolee's place

of employment or the home. Surprisingly, the appropriate issues/topics to be discussed with parolees during interactions are not specified in the home visit section of the manual.

Data

In 1998, Georgia implemented a data rich, computerized case management (CMS) system for all active and discharged parolees. Information about officer and parolee interactions, entered into CMS via laptops in the field, are stored on the agency's secure database. Case documentation and activity is primarily input using dropdown lists and check boxes. Every case entry includes a text field in which officers' comments provide context for the supervision activity or highlight especially pertinent parolee behaviors and events. Reviewing the series of comment fields is particularly important before officers, including those who are not the officer of record, meet with parolees and their family members or significant others and for arrest preparations. Comments detail conversation topics; the officer's observations, advice, and instructions; and statements by parolees and family members. Additional topics may include the parolee's post-prison adjustment, job-seeking efforts or work performance, compliance with release conditions, family or parenting issues, and other topics related to supervision progress. Indeed, agency management emphasizes the importance of thoroughly documenting all supervision activity with the dictum "If it's not in CMS, it didn't happen."

Within large caseloads and constantly changing parolee risk-need levels and responsibility issues, comments are useful as a quick reference for reviewing the most important proximal issues for each parolee and provide important information on a parolee for other staff. Comments about previous encounters guide conversations or instructions to the parolee. Moreover, when parole office managers periodically review officer case notes, comments are vital for understanding how the parole officer is managing each case. The information entered

for home visits includes: date and location (home), who was spoken with (parolee, other), check boxes indicating various activities or comments that may occur at the home (verbal reprimand, drug test, verify residence, positive comments, program referrals, etc.) and lastly, a summary of the discussion.

Home Visit Validation Study (HVVS)

A validation study was conducted to assure that the historical case notes available for analysis in the CMS system were indeed reflective of the officers' summary of the content of home visits. The sole purpose of the validation study was to assess the confidence that the data reported in CMS accurately and consistently represented the content of home visit interactions. During a 5-month period between 2014 and 2015, six members of the research team observed 64 parole officers as they conducted 383 home visit interactions. These interactions were representative of regular home visits across agency districts, parole officers, and parolees assigned to high or specialized supervision, the risk level of our study population. High or specialized cases were selected because by design the greatest number of home visits should occur with parolees who are high risk. Information regarding several key aspects of home visits, including conversation content, was recorded by the research team using a standardized coding form created and field tested through collaboration with the parole agency.

The research member coded a new form after each targeted observation. Subsequent to the ride-a-longs, each form was compared to the subject matter of the officer's home visit comments in CMS. Categories of discussion were classified under surveillance/rules or needs/programs/assistance. The most frequently discussed themes in surveillance/rules included: employment status (60%), other issues (36%), fees and payments (27%), recent law contact (21%), and following instructions (17%). The remaining topics included drugs/alcohol (16.5%), electronic

monitoring (15%), moving (12%), paystubs (8%), reprimands/warnings (8%), and room checks (8%). The dialogue that occurred in the category of needs/programs/assistance included employment (26%), substance abuse recovery (19%), physical health (15%), mental health symptoms (10%), housing (8%), education (7%), and mental health recovery (5%).

To determine the degree of correspondence between what observers recorded as topics of discussion during the home visit and what was entered by parole officers in the CMS case notes, a member of the research team compared the two records for each home visit. Topics noted on the observation record and in the CMS case note were coded as a match. If a topic was observed but did not appear in the case note, or it was present in the case note but did not appear in the observation form, it was coded as not a match. The degree of matches were totaled for each topic area and the percentage of matches (degree of concordance) was calculated. The degree of concordance identified on the observational forms and in CMS case notes ranged from a low of 88% concordance for employment status to a high of 96% concordance for mental health symptoms. Overall, more topics were observed than were recorded in the CMS case notes, but the representativeness of topics documented in CMS was consistent with those observed during the home visits. Therefore, while some topics are under-documented, the validation study suggests that the case notes are an accurate reflection of the topics discussed during the home visit.

Sample

The parolees (N= 11,268) in the current study started a parole cycle in calendar year (CY) 2008 [January 1- December 31, 2008], CY 2010 [January 1- December 31, 2010], or CY 2012 [January 1- December 31, 2012] and were released from parole either by revocation or successful discharge in CY 2011[January 1- December 31, 2011], CY 2012 [January 1-

December 31, 2012] or CY 2013[January 1- December 31, 2013]. Table 1 presents their characteristics as drawn from CMS data, the state's computerized criminal history (CCH) records repository that collects charge and conviction information for all fingerprinted arrestees, and Department of Corrections (DOC) inmate history data. For more details regarding the data sources and measurement coding, contact the first author.

- TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE -

The parolees were predominantly male (89%) and unmarried (88%). Approximately two thirds were nonwhite (64%), with children (63%), and completed less than a high school education or equivalency diploma (66%) prior to the current supervision episode. Although their ages at the onset of parole ranged from 17 to 65, the average was 32 years old. Fewer parolees had a documented chronic illness in their history (19%) than mental health (31%) or drug problems (44%). The majority had at least one arrest for a drug offense (66%) or a probation/parole violation (72%). This cohort was also likely to have been previously incarcerated in prison, with some having up to 12 cycles ($M = 1.18$). Parole revocations were found among a third (34%). Only 7% had sentences of 2 years or less. More of the sentences were for property offenses (36%) than drug (22%) or personal offenses (33%).

While the longest supervision episode was 5.5 years, the length of supervision averaged 1.5 years ($M = 565.35$ days). On average, 16.35 home visits occurred per parolee. Almost a quarter of the parolees were on electronic monitoring at some point during the supervision period and over half incurred a technical violation within 6 months of prison release. The average risk score upon release from prison was 6.3 on a 1 to 10 scale. These parolees changed supervision levels, parole officers, and residences on average more than twice ($M = 2.58$, $M = 2.34$, $M = 2.31$, respectively) and were employed around 8 months ($M = 237.38$ days). Few of them failed

many programs ($M = .54$) and close to half (47%) failed a drug test. The majority committed a technical violation (73%) and one third (33%) were arrested for a technical violation. Over a quarter (28%) were arrested for a new felony and 24% were revoked back to prison.

Case Notes on Home Visits

For ease of data analysis, the sample was split into three cohorts based on the year the parole period started. The total case notes by cohort were CY 2008 = 308,134; CY 2010 = 525,119; and CY 2012 = 149,059 for a grand total = 982,312. All case notes identified as successful face-to-face field or face-to-face collateral contacts at a residence were selected for each cohort and then sorted to retain those that specifically captured home visits with a parolee or another person. This step resulted in the following total number of home visit case notes by cohort: CY 2008 = 70,263; CY 2010 = 59,357; and CY 2012 = 12,713 for a total of 142,333 documented home visits. This subset of case notes was further screened to identify only parolees who were on high or specialized supervision at either the beginning or the end of their parole period. This sample of documented home visits of high risk or specialized supervision parolees consisted of CY 2008 = 40,865; CY 2010 = 31,528; and CY 2012 = 9,339 for a total of 81,732 case notes.

Analytical Strategy

NVivo qualitative software was utilized for case note storage, coding, and analysis. Among the case notes, 41,858 (51.2%) consisted of the following statement: “No arrest(s) noted.” and were removed from the data set before importing into NVivo for thematic coding to reduce the size of the data base thereby expediting analysis. These cases were merged later with the NVivo thematic coding output.

The research sought to identify three main attributes of the case notes: the topics of discussion, the tone of the interaction, and with whom the parole officer interacted. To assist, a word frequency count identified what words appeared most often. Two members of the research team reviewed the frequency distributions, read through a random set of case notes to assess their content, and began the iterative process of identifying discussion topics. Any uncertainty about the appropriate categorization of case notes were discussed by the two members of the team. A single case note could, and often did, contain more than one topic. The two researchers discussed how to capture the topical content of the case notes; specifically, how to categorize the individual topics under common themes about supervision and the parolee's life. Words that appeared at least 20 times were then grouped under the following 12 themes or spheres of life: education, contacts with the criminal justice system, electronic monitoring, employment, health, housing, income (including supplemental security income), movement or transportation, substance use, treatment, supervision fees or costs, and parolee and/or residence searches. Table 2 lists the synonymous search terms that represented each theme or sphere of life. Subsequent word searches for synonymous terms for each theme were conducted and the results were reviewed to ensure that the narrative fit with the topic of the theme or sphere of life. A single case note documenting a home visit may address more than one theme or life sphere, so the total number of cases listed under themes exceeds the total number of case notes.

- TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE -

A similar process identified the tone of comments in case notes. Relying on the NVivo word frequency output, two members of the research team developed a list of 55 words denoted negative comments (e.g., lazy, warned, reprimanded) and 56 words that reflected positive comments (e.g., encouraged, congratulated, good job). An NVivo search of these terms yielded a

set of comments with negative terms and a set of comments that contained positive terms. Across the three cohorts, a total of 14,375 case notes contained at least one positive word and the 15,029 case notes contained at least one negative word. The comment field in the case note that contained each term was then read and either confirmed to be a positive or a negative comment by each of the two researchers. A comment was classified as positive if the statement was encouraging, supportive, and/or optimistic of the parolee (e.g., doing a good job at work; working hard to keep from using drugs). A comment was classified as negative if it was discouraging, critical, and/or pessimistic (e.g., he has no intention of doing what I ask; he wants to not work and live off his girlfriend). A single case note entry could contain a mixture of positive and negative terms and as such could contain both a positive comment and a negative comment. As a result, the total number of positive comments and negative comments may exceed the total number of case entries. Likewise, if a comment contained a negative term or a positive term, but was judged to not reflect any tone, it was regarded as descriptive and classified as neutral. If a researcher was uncertain about whether a comment reflected a positive, negative, or neutral tone, that comment was reviewed with the other researcher and a decision made about its classification. Finally, within the classification of tone, the comments were categorized by theme.

Finally, the same process identified who the parole officer interacted with during the home visit. Relying on the NVivo word frequency output, two members of the research team developed a list of words that were descriptors (e.g., mother, girlfriend, wife, brother, uncle, etc.).

Results

Themes or Spheres of Life

The frequency of the 12 themes/spheres of life identified in the case notes are presented in Table 3. The top three themes discussed by parole officers during home visits included the parolee's contact with the criminal justice system (58.1%), housing or verification of residence (25.9%), and employment (17.1%). The next most commonly discussed spheres of life were electronic monitoring (5.5%) and transportation and movement (4.9%). Among the least discussed topics were health (2.4%), searches (2.1%), and education (1.9%).

- TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE -

Tone of Home Visits

The analysis of the tone of a case note revealed that the majority of case notes (89.6%) contained only neutral descriptions as they had neither positive nor negative tones. The 41,858 (51.2%) that contained the sole statement, "No arrests noted" were classified as neutral. The 8,453 (10.3%) case notes containing a positive and/or negative tone were analyzed to identify the topic, theme or life sphere discussed. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3. Coupled with our prior data on the themes of the comment fields, this data permits us to calculate the overall number and percent of positive, negative, and neutral tones across each theme.

As expected, neutral case entries were by far the most common. Negative comments exceeded positive comments when the topic was contacts with the criminal justice system, electronic monitoring, substance use, transportation and movement, supervision costs and fees, health issues, and/or searches conducted. Conversely, positive comments exceeded negative comments regarding housing, employment, treatment, and education.

The Parolee's Social Support Network

During home visits, parole officers interacted with parents or grandparents most often ($n = 5,491$). Other family members, including children, siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles

comprised the next largest group ($n = 4,208$). Intimate partners interaction occurred far less frequently ($n = 982$), followed by employers ($n = 962$) and peers, roommates or co-workers ($n = 848$).

Discussion

Contemporary correctional services in North America are touted as following a set of evidence-based principles (Guevara, Loeffler-Cobia, Rhyme, & Schwald, 2010). First, the fundamental risk-need-responsivity (R-N-R) principles are operationalized into cognitive-behavioral skills taught to correctional agents to assure that their dual responsibilities to enforce the law and foster positive behavioral change are understood, especially for parolees assessed as high risk (Kenneally et al., 2012). Training also includes development of skills to build alliances and enhance relationships with parolees and support networks based on behavioral health research (Lambert, 2013). This training is supplemented with coaching, including performance-support processes based on interaction recordings and feedback (Bourgon, & Gutierrez, 2012; Robinson, VanBenschoten, Alexander, & Lowenkamp, 2011). Another significant advancement in therapeutic jurisprudence is emerging from European and adolescent criminologists' research that emphasizes the socio-cultural and cognitive processes involved in transitioning from criminal to pro-social identities and lifestyles (Maruna & LeBel, 2010). Integrating knowledge on how people desist from crime enhances clemency decisions, improves R-N-R assessments, and informs correspondingly dynamic and protective interventions development beyond those achieved by simply focusing on "what works" in reentry (Serin, Lloyd & Hanby, 2010).

Face-to-face contacts in the field with parolees and their family, friends, and employers have been the cornerstone of community supervision since its inception over a century ago. Prior research indicates that home visits are regarded by many as an opportunity to assess the true life

of returning citizens while others associated with the individual see it as intrusive and disruptive. The contours of the home visit are likely shaped by how an agency defines the purpose of community supervision along a continuum of case management to surveillance.

This study examined the unique thematic content and tone of home visits that occurred with high risk parolees in one state. The data were validated through an observational study of home visits to assure parole officers' documentation mirrored what trained observers identified as the topics addressed during home visit. While acknowledging that the positive tone of the home visit, especially the positive steps parolees had taken, were under-represented in parole officer's documentation, the degree of concordance promotes confidence in the case management system data accurately reflecting the topics discussed during home visits.

Our findings indicate that discerning whether or not a parolee had contact with law enforcement or the criminal justice system is the predominate subject of home visit conversations. Housing and employment constituted the second and third most common home visit themes, respectively, and a greater percentage of interactions had a positive rather than negative tone. Much research shows that housing and employment status are significant factors that influence parole success (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014). However, over half of documented comments consisted of no more than a statement indicating that the parolee reported no arrests. This finding suggests that officers' documentation about home visits serve more of a surveillance than a behavior change goal. Recent studies (Bonta et al., 2008) indicate that poor adherence to the R-N-R principles and practices produce little or negative impacts on recidivism. Focusing on unchangeable risk factors or supervision conditions increased recidivism rates an average of 6% while R-N-R adherence produced an average of a 30% *decrease* in recidivism (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990). Thus, training and supervision of parole officers should

encourage interactions that maximize R-N-R principles and conversations, especially as relates to the application of responsivity (Braucht, 2009).

The validation study permitted a nuanced analysis of officers' written comments, and our findings suggest that the comments frequently did not reflect the positive tone observers noted in many home visits. Our review of officer comments in the larger analysis also found a limited number of positive comments while the vast majority were rated as neutral. This raises a question as to whether officers' comments reflect a documentation of what they perceive as important to their organization or, more specifically, of particular importance to their supervisor. Another explanation is that the notes serve as a synopsis of top concerns about a particular parolee rather than a reflective summary of the visit. Clear and O'Leary (1983) found that officers shift their emphasis in supervision based on their perceptions of the organization's explicit and implicit philosophy. Unfortunately, information on the organizational priorities or the parole chief's priorities that shape parole officer emphasis is not available for this analysis.

Our study found that only a small portion of home visit conversations included individuals other than the parolee. As prior research notes family members often regard unannounced home visits as disruptive (Carney, 1977; Studt, 1972; 1976) and may be reluctant to interact with parole officers. However, it may be that contact requirements minimize the accessibility and/or the value of the role of the offender's family members and significant others during home contacts. Studt (1972) found that officers had to return to the home on another occasion when the parolee was home to "count" the contact. While officials may acknowledge that family members can provide valuable information and support for offender reentry, operational policies or procedures may inadvertently work against developing alliances with significant others. Studt (1976) highlighted how home visits impact the family as well as the

parolee. While parolees must submit to the conditions of supervision, including unscheduled home visits, family members must endure and accept unplanned intrusions into the home at all hours. Organizations seeking to maximize the level of cooperation and pro-social support that family members can make to successful and sustained reentry should consider how to productively engage significant others while respecting their rights and privacy.

Therapeutic jurisprudence informs contemporary community supervision's focus on building the essential skills necessary to effectively support the initial transition to the community, then the successful completion of supervision by fostering dual surveillance and change agent skills. Continuing the legacy from the early history of community supervision, this blended approach requires basic and advanced skill training with sustained coaching that includes audio recording of interactions, self-assessments and expert feedback. Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS) (Bonta, Bourgon, Rugge, Gress, & Gutierrez, 2013; Bourgon & Gutierrez, 2012), Strategic Techniques Aimed at Reducing Rearrest (STARR) (Robinson, Lowenkamp, Holsinger, VanBenschoten, Alexander, & Oleson, 2012), and Skills for Offender Assessment and Responsivity in New Goals (SOARING2) (Taxman & Serin, 2016) are skill development programs for training officers in communication skills, cognitive-behavioral interventions, and responsivity to crime desistance. In addition, operational policies and procedures that structure and document interactions are pillars for maximizing the potential impact of individual officer's skills. When conducting home (or other) visits, pertinent case management system information on the individual's dynamic R-N-R factors should inform such interactions. The data that is subsequently entered is a vital cornerstone for ongoing process and outcome improvement processes. While the current analysis did not investigate the degree to which R-N-R principles guide home visit interactions, further analysis is planned.

Overall, our findings suggest that home visits serve as a means to enhance controlling strategies and surveillance rather than facilitating more effective rehabilitation and behavioral change goals. If subsequent analysis confirms this to be the case, it suggests that community supervision agencies still need to explicitly articulate how supervision can be conducted to promote desistance from criminal activity and engagement in productive, prosocial activities. The role that home visits play in assisting in the attainment of those goals is important for community supervision agencies to identify. Taxman (2015) argues that desistance should be integrated into the mission and goals of the agency. Such efforts are important to address the negative consequences of mass incarceration policies and practices. In our review of agency records (i.e., annual reports, standard operating procedures, training manuals), we found no mention of the importance of supervision to advance desistance rather than compliance.

Several limitations of our study must be acknowledged. First, our sample was a single state and thus, generalizability to other locations is cautioned. Second, the sample was limited to high risk level parolees thus, these results are not representative of home visits with lower risk parolees. Third, our validation study found that officers' comments may not reflect the positive tone and accomplishments that were acknowledged during a home visit. Thus, our findings may under-report those aspects of the home visit. We recommend that future research utilize observational methods similar to our validation study to further document the nature of home visits. Forthcoming research (Meredith, Hawk, Johnson, Prevost, Finn, & Braucht, 2017) suggests that the number of home visits was negatively related to the likelihood that a parolee would experience a technical violation, drug test failure, arrest, felony arrest, or revocation. Future research should examine if the theme and/or tone of the home visit, and not simply the number or dose, has differential effects on outcomes.

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Table 1. Parolee Descriptive Statistics (N=11,268)

Variables	N	Min	Max	M/%	S.D.
<i>Demographics</i>					
Male	11,268	0	1	89%	0.31
Unmarried	11,268	0	1	88%	0.33
Nonwhite	11,268	0	1	64%	0.48
Have Children	11,262	0	1	63%	0.48
No High School Grad/GED	10,851	0	1	66%	0.47
Parole Start Age	11,245	17	65	32.03	9.32
<i>History</i>					
Chronic Illness	11,267	0	1	19%	0.39
Mental Health Problem	10,859	0	1	31%	0.46
Drug Problem	11,041	0	1	44%	0.50
Total Prior Arrests	10,954	0	101	10.13	7.80
Prior Drug Offense Arrest	10,954	0	1	66%	0.47
Prior Parole/Probation Violation Arrest	10,954	0	1	72%	0.45
No. of Prior Prison Incarcerations	10,855	0	12	1.18	1.66
Previous Revocation	10,832	0	1	34%	0.47
<i>Prison</i>					
Short Sentence (≤ 2 years)	10,855	0	1	7%	0.25
Property Offense	10,859	0	1	36%	0.48
Drug Offense	10,844	0	1	22%	0.42
Personal Offense	10,859	0	1	33%	0.47
<i>Parole</i>					
Days Supervised	11,268	18	2,038	565.35	361.93
Any Electronic Monitoring	11,268	0	1	23%	0.42
Violation 1 st 6mo of Supervision	11,268	0	1	54%	0.50
First Risk Score	11,268	1	10	6.30	2.18
No. of Supervision Levels	11,268	1	11	2.58	1.25
No. of Parole Officers	11,268	1	14	2.34	1.45
No. of Residence Changes	11,268	0	24	2.31	1.90
No. of Days Employed	11,268	0	1,933	237.38	298.93
No. of Program Failures	11,268	0	9	0.54	0.95
No. of Home Visits	11,268	0	216	16.35	22.39
<i>Outcomes During Supervision</i>					
Drug Test Failure	11,268	0	1	47%	0.50
Technical Violation	11,268	0	1	73%	0.44
Technical Violation Arrest	11,268	0	1	33%	0.47
New Felony Arrest	11,268	0	1	28%	0.45
Revocation	11,268	0	1	24%	0.43

Table 2. Terms Associated with Themes/Spheres of Life

Sphere of Life	Terms Searched
Contacts with justice system	arrests, court, police, jail, violations, charge, enforcement, warrant, transported, custody, sentence, probation, bail, banishment
Housing	ROR, house, apartment, apt, trailer, residence, res
Employment	employment, employ, emp, DOL, application, overtime, promotion, job, work, receipt, benefits
Electronic Monitoring	electronic, equipment, phone, EM, power, landline, polygraph
Treatment	classes, treatment, trt, program, salvation army, recovery, counselor, assessment, counseling, counsel, orientation, SAC, MRT
Substance Use	test, THC, alcohol, COC, cocaine, results, tested, drinking, drug, marijuana, pot, weed, reefer, meth, heroine, heroin, crack, screen
Transportation or Movement	vehicle, car, truck, auto, drive, license, transport, ride, MARTA, train, bus, moving, evict, travel, transfer, conditions
Supervision Fees/Costs	arrearage, fees, fines, payment, restitution, money, cash, PSF, psf
Income and SSI	security, disability, SSI, disabled, pay, paystub, paycheck, receipt, benefits
Health	hospital, medication, meds, doctor, sick, Grady, diabetes, surgery, hepatitis, pain, cancer
Education	school, GED, course, college, GPC
Searches	seized, seize, seizure, search

Table 3. Frequency Distribution: Themes and Tone Identified in Case Notes¹ (*n* = 81,732)

<u>Theme</u>	Total	<u>Tone</u>		
		<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
No Arrest Noted	41, 858			
Housing	21,192	17,289 (81.6%)	2,612 (12.3%)	1,291 (6.1%)
Employment	13,975	11,274 (80.7%)	1,647 (11.8%)	1,054 (7.5%)
Contact with CJ System	5,660	3,376 (59.6%)	438 (16.5%)	1,876 (70.5%)
Electronic Monitoring Treatment	4,487	3,511 (78.2%)	414 (9.2%)	562 (12.5%)
Substance Use	3,870	2,776 (71.7%)	564 (14.6%)	530 (13.7%)
Transportation and Movement	2,944	2,095 (71.2%)	279 (9.5%)	570 (19.4%)
Supervision Fees/Costs	4,028	3,064 (76.1%)	452 (11.2%)	512 (12.7%)
Income and SSI	2,402	1,712 (71.3%)	319 (13.3%)	371 (15.4%)
Health	2,037	1,505 (73.9%)	297 (14.6%)	235 (11.5%)
Searches	1,964	1,458 (74.2%)	241 (12.3%)	265 (13.5%)
Education	1,713	1,178 (68.8%)	233 (13.6%)	302 (17.6%)
	1,631	1,265 (77.6%)	222 (13.6%)	14 (8.8%)

¹A single case entry might contain both positive and negative tones and thus the totals in the column may exceed the number of cases and total percentage may exceed 100%.