

5-2013

# Success, Desistance and Relationships Between Probation Officers and Probationers: A Social Work Perspective

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## Recommended Citation

Brinson, Ariel, "Success, Desistance and Relationships Between Probation Officers and Probationers: A Social Work Perspective" (2013). *Master of Social Work Clinical Research Papers*. Paper 157.  
[http://sophia.stkate.edu/msw\\_papers/157](http://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers/157)

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Success, Desistance and Relationships Between  
Probation Officers and Probationers: A Social Work Perspective

by

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Social Work  
St Catherine University and the University of St Thomas  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
In Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St Catherine University/University of St Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publically present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

Success, Desistance and Relationships Between  
Probation Officers and Probationers: A Social Work Perspective

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The number of individuals who are reentering communities from prison, jail, and on community supervision across the United States is vast and due to its size a limited number of programs are used on a regular basis. The purpose of this research was to better understand how adults on probation desist from reoffending. Specifically, this researcher asked both adults on probation and an accompanying sample of probation officers about how each: (1) define success, (2) challenges, and (3) how the relationships and services probation provides do and do not support efforts toward desistance, using a qualitative, exploratory design. Maruna (2001) defines desistance as “the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending.” This study was exploratory and looked at the current approaches a sample of probation officers used with their clients, their prioritization of duties in this role, the factors that encourage success in this relationship, and how each understand and define “success”. The clients (probationers) were also interviewed using similar questions formatted to their point of view. The results show that the probation officers and probationers in this sample report having some similar answers in terms of several of the variables and point to the need for increased resources for probationers and involvement from probation officers.

## **Acknowledgements**

There are so many people that I would like to thank that have helped me directly and indirectly in this research as well as through graduate school. First of all I would like to thank my chair David for his calming presences and guidance through this challenging time as well as my committee members, Deric and Phyllis, who have given me wonderful feedback throughout the entire process. I would also like to thank my fiancé Michael for holding down the fort while I chased my dreams by going back to school - I love you. My dear friend Lara for encouraging me through her moral support and always believing that whatever I set my mind to I could achieve. My parents for inspiring in me the passion of my practice and the idea that I could be anything I wanted to be. And finally for my cohort-Rick, Lisa, Melody, and Leah for which I could never have made it this far without.

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## Introduction

“The mood and temper of the public with regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the unfailing tests of the civilization of any country.”

Winston Churchill, 1910

“The National Reentry Resources Center” states that during 2010, 708,677 sentenced prisoners were released from state and federal prisons in the United States and 9 million were released from jail. Nearly 4.9 million individuals were on probation or parole at the end of 2010 (“The National Reentry Resources Center”). This being said, the number of individuals who are reentering communities across the United States is vast and due to its size a limited number of programs are used on a regular basis. They serve two roles: “a legalistic or surveillance role; and a helping, therapeutic, or problem solving role” (Trotter, 2006, p. 4).

The average citizen gives little thought to the fact that transition from prison to the community is a major life change. The impact of reentering a community that may hold those who contributed to or encouraged the client’s criminal behavior is still present and active in the client’s system (Mears, Wang, & Bales, 2008). To address these concerns the criminal justice system has implemented goals for the offender to complete while on parole or if forgoing prison time on probation. These goals can include drug assessment and treatment, cognitive-behavioral classes, anger management, and drug screening. What has been left out of these court ordered conditions are the interpersonal relationships and motivations one has to complete them. It may be very easy to state as a law abiding citizen that completing these conditions is necessary and of high priority, but emerging from a background where values may have shifted due to poverty, lack of education, and pro-social supports can create obstacles in court ordered as well as personal goals.

Another point worth mentioning is the probationer's status as an involuntary client; these individuals do not necessarily seek out the help, supports, and services provided to them and can rebel against any attempts to engage. There may be a lack of collaboration between clients and probation officers when goals are mandated and do not include the client's input. Clients can often see these mandates as intrusive and consider recommendations meaningless or even harmful (Miller from De Jong & Berg, 2001).

The bridge between a convicted individual and the community falls then to the probation and community correction officers (probation officers) who are there to help enforce the court order while also working towards rehabilitation by assisting with problems that may originate with the criminal behavior (Trotter, 2006). As with clients in other mandated programs the provider, whether it be a therapist, drug or mental health counselor, or probation officer, enters in to a lopsided alliance. Playing both the therapeutic and surveillance role is difficult and important when working with involuntary clients (Skeem, Loudon, Polaschek, & Camp, 2007). Acknowledging the differing definitions and outlooks of the mandates and goals by client and probation officer, while establishing the client's sense of choice and control and discussing in a concrete manner the nonnegotiable matters place the probation officer in a balancing act (De Jong & Berg, 2001).

Social work is very familiar with involuntary clients and actually has roots in criminal justice settings dating back to the 1890's (Ivanoff, Blyth, & Tripodi, 1994). The criminal justice system and social work have paths that have both crossed and repelled each other. In 1974 Martinson's infamous article about the failure of rehabilitation programs for offenders and their inability to reduce recidivism struck a strong note in legislation and research alike. By the early 1990's researchers turned their attention from re-evaluating rehabilitation and instead focused on

“What works?” This change in the research perspective again sparked the integration of the ideals of social work in probation practice and have come full circle contributing to the practice of probation through evidence based practices (Petersilia, 2004). Smith (2005) argues that “evidence supports the view that effective probation practice is likely to be informed by values and skills that are recognizably within the tradition of social work, and concludes that despite pressures to abandon social work as a basis for probation practice” (p. 621).

The rehabilitation versus incarceration approach can be hard to sell both on a community level as well as to probation officers who are mandated by the legislation of their jurisdiction. The overall contributions of the probation officers are to protect the safety of the public (Smith, 2005 ), deterrence (Ivanoff et al., 2006), and justice (Payne & DeMichele, 2011) leaving little room for trust, which is needed to establish a positive relationship. No matter how vigorous, a probation officer can only do so much in terms of these unreasonable expectations and will never accomplish the same level of safety as incarceration (Smith, 2005). Ivanoff et al. (2006) points out “the focus in correctional settings is on managing many individuals. This has led to the development of profiles of behavior that while statistically accurate and helpful in planning large programs or services needs, frequently do not reflect the best fit categorization for an individual offender “(p.119). This seems to be the product more of available programs than caseloads, as social workers also strain under the burden of managing many individuals. The cognitive-behavioral group work jumped out as being the most successful treatment for offenders and thus became the only treatment available, creating a state of mind with probation officers reflected in practice as “Do this, because this is what is supported by the evidence, and do nothing else; nothing else matters”(Smith 2005, p. 627). Treating each offender as an individual and proposing services with this in mind, may accomplish a connection for success between offender and



probation officer, by both offender and probation officer's definition, and makes it more likely that the offender will be actively involved and thus engaged in goal setting, services, and rehabilitation (Dowden & Andrews, 2004).

The question remains: Does the relationship between the probation officer and offender contribute to the success of the offender? And what does success mean to each party? What serves as a deterrence or an act of desistance when challenges occur? These questions demonstrate the importance of attempting to empower the client to embrace their services with a motivation to learn and to convince them of their freedom of choice at a time where they may be feeling restricted or controlled. In this study these questions were explored.

### **Literature Review**

The common view of probation or parole officers has been that their role is primarily to prevent the reoccurrence of crime through the completion of court mandates and community protection. The wide berth of this designation seems lofty in its expectations and provides little to no opportunity for the implementation of influences outside deterrence and short of incarceration to provide an alternative point of view (Smith, 2005). Thus the introduction of social work tools can either seem challenging or welcoming depending on the approach of the probation office.

Most models of social work were originally intended for voluntary clients, but the use of these tactics can alienate involuntary or mandated clients (De Jong & Berg, 2001). Working with involuntary clients in both of these fields can often create tension between the legal and organizational expectations and the broader integration of social justice and consumer rights (Brophy, Cambell, & Healy, 2003). I will be using terms such as offender and client

interchangeably as well as practitioner to encompass social worker and parole or probation officers.

### **Social Work in the Criminal Justice System**

Probation was first introduced in America in 1841 and has become an eclectic collection of philosophies and theories including social sciences (Sigurdson, McEachern, & Carter, 1973). Since 1992 community corrections has changed in ways that distances itself from social work, separating the criminal justice system from social work while continuing to keep grounded in a social work base (Smith, 2005). Ivanoff et al. (1994) and Rooney (2009) wrote that involuntary clients, whether they are with social work or probation, are clients who feel “forced or pressured” into services. Mandated clients fall into this category in that they are required to receive services by the court system (De Jong & Berg, 2001). The concept of involuntary or mandated clients is defined by the sense of the client’s unwillingness to get help or services and the overall disgruntled and sometimes rebelling nature of these clients, which may be constant through the course of the professional relationship.

To the untrained eye, probation officers and social workers may seem to have similar jobs; they both meet with individuals who are facing difficulties both internally and externally; they meet in offices, communities, and homes; and the outcomes are often positive. Another point that they share is their work with involuntary or mandated clients. Much of the research surrounding therapy with involuntary clients is based on engagement while probation officers use terms such as cooperation and compliance (Ivanoff et al., 1994).

The main goal of probation as protecting the public is inherently flawed and unreasonable. The cultural meaning of organizational knowledge, training, and socialization of probation officers encourage specific attitudes and belief structures in terms of the importance of

their jobs and rehabilitation does not top the list (Payne & DeMichele, 2011). Robinson, Alexander, Lowenkamp, Oleson, and Holsinger, (2011) stated “With ever-increasing caseloads, as well as the administrative and surveillance functions that are required by supervision agencies, it seems unrealistic to assume that an officer with a relatively limited amount of face-to-face contact could have a realistic and palpable impact on offender behavior in the long term” (p. 5). Probation officers are assigned the task to prevent recidivism and improve community safety using a risk and needs models; these models may temporarily decrease reoffending, but fail to address core personality traits which are a challenging and dramatic shift for any person (Veysey, Christian, & Martinez, 2009). Research indicates that effective probation practice, e.g. practice that reduces recidivism, integrates the values and skills that are traditionally assigned to social workers (Smith, 2005). In either case the probation officer or social worker take on a dual role, both slightly askew in a position of power, but striving to make changes to the client. The office setting that are often the meeting places for probation officers or social workers and their clients can add a different dimension to this relationship. The disadvantage status of the client can hamper their ability to express feelings and negotiate for services that will meet their needs (Sigurdson et al., 1973, p. 356). Balancing the helping, therapeutic, and problem-solving role with the role of surveillance is challenging but an important and effective tool when working with involuntary clients (Skeem et al., 2007).

Smith (2005) suggests that the most effective tools for working with involuntary clients as a probation officer or social worker are often very similar; he goes on to argue that restorative justice practices strongly associate with social work; practices such as the strong relationships, feelings, empathy, care, respect, as well as commitment to compromised solutions between victims and offenders. Restorative justice offers one example of a model of probation with a

rehabilitative focus, where professionals from both social work and corrections have worked successfully together. Tyler (Skeem et al, 2007) comments that the ability of a client's willingness to comply is linked to the perception they have of the system that has required their cooperation; it is important that these clients see this decision as fair and equal. They achieve this by being treated with dignity, respect, and caring, and are a positive aspect of the dual-role relationship.

Ward (2008) describes a good first step for any practitioner as achieving desistance or "an offender's self assessment of it being worth staying out of crime and the development of the capacity to 'say no'; the role of a committed and helpful professional in achieving this; and improvements in the offender's community, social, and personal circumstances", the point being that the move to change needs to be sparked in the client as well as the practitioner (p. 402).

This approach allows the offender to co-construct the outcomes of their meetings and the practitioner to integrate an acceptance of human choice and dignity into the sessions. The respecting of the client's choice allows them to take responsibility and the natural consequences of their actions (De Jong & Berg, 2001). These terms are also part of the Social Work Code of Ethics and the importance of human relationships. This principle stresses "that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change" and to "engage people as partners" (NASW, p. 8).

For probation officers, the goals of supervision are ultimately determined by policy makers. They are the implementers of new strategies and practices that define the type of supervision deemed fit. At the same time social workers live by the same goal setting, but have less concrete means of outcome measurement. This has both strengths and limitations.

Traditionally social workers individualize programs based on client need, whether voluntary or

not, and so the outcomes are abstract; but probation officers' primary determination for successful supervision is the completion of court mandates and prevention of recidivism which are closely tracked.

The worker/service user relationship rests on the ability of the client to understand their problems and discover ways, with the practitioner as support, in which to solve them (Ward, 2008). So whether this task falls to the probation officer or the social worker, cooperation is necessary to establish a relationship that focuses not only on the mandated goals, but steps that need to be taken in order to achieve these as well as personal goals. Considering the approach of the practitioner, it might be helpful to consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which displays a triangle and within this triangle levels moving vertically. Each item in these levels needs to be obtained before being able to move to the next and the individual might move backwards if a lower level need arises. The base level displays physical needs like food, water, clothing, and sleep; the next level is security or safety; third from the bottom is psychological or social needs, such as relationships; and the top level is self-actualization needs (*Mosby's Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, & Health Professionals*, 2009; Jones, 2004). According to Maslow, the level of self-actualization is where behavior changes occur and this can only happen if the lower levels are met and continuous (Jones, 2004). If we were to look at a client through this needs assessment and this person was mandated by the court to attend chemical dependency treatment, what would be the first step as a practitioner? A probation officer who bases their belief on punitive measures might go straight to getting this person into a treatment program, but a practitioner who understand this concept would determine if the first four levels have been obtained before entertaining the idea that the client was in a position to address a court mandate such as their chemical/psychological health.

## **Techniques/Programs in Place**

The reentry of offenders into the community is inevitable; it is not a choice or option but a reality and a process (Petersilia, 2004). The techniques used by practitioners and the programs that are currently in place for mandated clients have emphasized evidence-based practice. Ivanoff et al. (1994) explains that due to its size, programs in the criminal justice system are limited. They include: diversion, alternatives to incarceration, and incarceration. These programs include two components: loss of freedom for punishment, monitoring, and protection of public safety; and involvement in programs for education, vocation, rehabilitation, supervision, and counseling. This can cause discrepancies as the level of involvement in these programs is determined by available resources and funding while the mandates and policies determine the level of supervision (Ivanoff et al., 1994).

The introduction of the potential role of group work has had the strongest evidence in terms of reducing recidivism, these groups are meant to enhance supervision, but can sometimes be misinterpreted as replacements for supervision (Smith, 2005). Many such groups are cognitive behavioral in nature. According to Ross and Fabiano (in Ivanoff et al., 1994) these cognitive-behavioral groups strongly encourage four components: self-control, critical thinking, rational self-analysis, and means-ends reasoning which is a general problem solving skill. Cognitive-behavioral group work generally focuses on the thought processes and subsequent action of offenders. It addresses this in ways that require clients to stop and study this process in hopes of making better decisions in the future.

Research has made strides in the training of probation officers and the skills that seem to encourage the lowest rate of recidivism. The focus on the RNR (risk-need-responsivity) dominates present trainings such as STICS and STARR. The RNR, first proposed by Andrew,

Bonta, and Hoge in 1990 (Bonta, Bourgon, Rugge, Scott, Yessine, Gutierrez, & Li, 2010) and also by Dowden (2004), conclude that three clinical and psychologically informed principles share strong ties to reducing recidivism, they are: risk, need, and general responsivity. Risk is matching the level of service and intensity to that of the level of offender (more services to high risk, fewer to low risk) (“Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment and Rehabilitation,” 2006). Need is looking at the criminogenic needs, or risk factors, associated with criminal behavior that will be the target of intervention. It indicates that in order to reduce reoffending the practitioner should target specific risk factors for the client. These can include family, peer associations, antisocial attitudes, and impulsivity control related to criminal history. This principle acknowledges that other needs such as emotional, personal problems, and low self-esteem are important, but not a component in reducing recidivism (Dowden, p. 203). Both of these principles are reflected in the current risk assessment given by certain counties in probation settings. The Level of Service Inventory Revised (LSI-R) takes into account the varying degrees that external forces contribute to an offender’s successful completion of probation and determines the chance of recidivism. The LSI-R is a 54 item quantitative survey that measures offender beliefs and assesses their situation in order to establish a score which defines them for high or low risk of recidivism; the items measured are: criminal history, education/employment, financial, family/marital, accommodation, leisure/recreation, companions, alcohol/drug problems, emotional/personal, and attitudes/orientation. (Andrews & Bonta, 2004). Responsivity is matching the “style and mode of intervention to the ability and learning style of the offender” (Bonta et al., 2010, p. 1). Beier (1952) alludes to this same principle in the use of client-centered therapy and uses it to judge the client for “therapy

readiness” (p. 333) and De Jong and Berg (2001) have a slightly expanded view with motivational congruence as fitting the motivation of the client to services.

STICS (Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision) and STARR (Staff Training at Reducing Re-arresting) both address the importance of face to face and relationships between offenders and probation officers. Robinson et al. (2011) and Bonta et al. (2010) accordingly discussed these models for practice as addressing needs associated with criminal behavior, removing or problem solving through barriers, and supplying the appropriate cognitive-behavioral interventions to reduce recidivism.

A newer version of a RNR has recently made its way into use in community supervision, known as the LS-CMI (Level of Service-Case Management Inventory). Andrews et al. (2004), the same authors who introduced the LSI-R, added a case management tool that “provides all the essential tools needed to aid professionals in the treatment planning and management of offenders in justice, forensic, correctional, prevention and related agencies” (Level of Service/Case Management Inventory).

The qualities of the probation officer have also become an important topic when discussing their relationship with their client. Duff (2003) and Payne and DeMichele (2011) identify two types of practitioners: punitive and rehabilitative. Those probation officers who partake in the punitive concept of punishment focus on retribution and spend more time on activities such as drug testing and revocation. These individuals tend to work through threats and coercion to punish the client and stigmatize them as offenders, creating a standard that they do not deserve certain things because of their past wrong doings and that this label will continue to be all that they are. The rehabilitation practitioner promotes reparation, and acts as a mediator between the offender, the community, and finding resolution. This approach encourages self



reform and reentrance into the community and spends time on motivational interviewing and treatment programs while still administering mandates. Skeem et al. (2007) adds that authoritative, demanding, inflexible, and belittling use of control by practitioners negatively affected the clinical and criminal outcomes of mental health probationers.

In practice, a mix of a therapeutic alliance and social control were preferred practitioners working with mandated clients. Trotter (2006), Beier (1952), and Rooney (2009) identified pro-social modeling as making a difference in the role of the practitioner and the success of the outcomes, punctuality, reliability, politeness, friendliness, and openness all contribute to this relationship. Pro-social modeling and reinforcement is described by Trotter (2006) as “involving workers, identifying and being clear about the values they wish to promote, and purposefully encouraging those values through the use of praise and other rewards” (p. 23). In this instance it would refer to actions that promote support and care for others and non-criminal. Rooney (2009) goes on to promote pro-social modeling as an effective tool for lowering offending rates and establishing a relationship by engaging in practices of reliability such as returning phone calls, keeping appointments, and the worker doing what they say they’re going to do (p. 390).

Allen (1985) contributes one of the only attempts at offering offender input into the expectations of their probation officers. While in his study most of the offenders offered no suggestions to probation, the 25 percent who did offer input made some important points. For instance offenders believed that probation officers should be an advocate, increase emphasis on employment assistance, be allowed to provide shortened probation sentences for good behavior, lower caseloads for more one-on-one contact, and probation officers should benefit the community directly. These suggestions help us to understand the place that clients in this setting

are coming from and may prove to be beneficial to consider when deciding when implementing programs, services, and policies.

Although techniques cross the lines between social work and community corrections, it is important to remember that there can be a very distinct difference between certain involuntary clients and mandated clients. Both of these groups receive pressure from outside sources to make change, but offenders who have experienced or are threatened with incarceration face a very different, but difficult road to success.

### **Defining Success from the Perspective of Probation Officers and Offenders**

The first point that should be made in this section is that success is defined as something positive in nature, in varying degrees, and not simply the absence of failure (Mead, 2005). Unfortunately such a topic is not so cut and dry when it comes to offenders. That is, if they simply do not commit another crime that does not necessarily constitute an overall success of supervision or programs. Handler (1975, in Ivanoff et al., 1994) stresses the importance of perceiving the client in a social system that contributes to both the problem and the solution. He continues by emphasizing the importance of contact and coordination between all members of the client's system to identify problems and seek solutions.

The definition of success for offenders and practitioners is a topic not thoroughly explored. Practitioners have a duty to the court or governing body to assist the client with completing the ordered mandates, but looking at the court defined objectives is only one piece of the puzzle. It does not include input from the practitioner or clients, and can overshadow other more pressing issues. The nature of the practice includes a high level of monitoring and progress on individual goals takes a back seat to the mandates (Ivanoff et al., 1994) The obvious goal for clients in this situation would be to keep from reoffending, to remain drug free, and complete any

other conditions of probation per community and societal standards. Although the literature does little to address the specific outlook of both probation officers and offenders on this subject, Ivanoff et al.(1994) comments that offenders' goals include housing, drug treatment, job or vocational training, avoiding criminal involvement, and maintaining social relationships. Ivanoff et al. continues by expanding this perspective to include family relationships, informal supports such as friends, work associations, and organized groups (e.g. church), and formal support systems like school. The standards of success from the perspective of the probation officer do not focus on the individual, treatment provider, and program characteristics, but rather on recidivism rates. The reentry of an offender into the community cannot be boiled down to simply whether they commit another crime, but must encompass a multitude of goals (Petersilia, 2004). Allen (1985) was one of the few researchers to address the needs of offenders. When asked about their experience, they reported that probation's main purpose was deterrence, but that it should ideally be rehabilitation.

It is important to look at the impact of the criminal justice system on these offenders because of the implications it has on resources and programs that once completed, define success in the eyes of the law and community. Prisoner reentry has become an important concern to Democrats and Republicans alike, and \$100 million of federal money has gone to promote strategies for reentry (Mears et al., 2008). The move from prison into the community is a major event and so should be included in considering the ecology of the client. Much like the ecological approach, the risk assessment given to offenders on probation, the LSI-R or CMS-I, takes into account the varying degrees that external forces contribute to an offender's successful completion of probation and chances of recidivism. Veysey et al. (2009) note a disproportionate number of those in prison are people of color, those struggling with mental health and/or

chemical dependency issues, poor education and employment skills, and other outcomes from substandard housing, violent neighborhoods, and dysfunctional families. The identity of the offender is linked to all of these things and if a change is to be considered, the network, role, and trustworthiness of the offender need to be transformed (Veysey et al., 2009).

### **Challenges for Probation Officers and Offenders**

The reentry of an offender into the community can pose several challenges both for the offender and the practitioner(s) that work with them. First and foremost the offender, whether imprisoned for a time or not, has now been labeled. The crime committed by this individual is public knowledge and can show up on any background check. This can make simple things very hard, such as finding employment and housing. Society often excludes offenders from research and policy development reinforcing their stigmatization (Allen, 1985). The focus of a correctional setting is managing large groups of offenders and does not individualize for best fit (Ivanoff et al., 1994). This means that service to clients suffers because of the weight given to satisfying the bureaucratic requirements of the job (Sigurdson et al., 1973). Along with that comes the realization that involuntary clients are often placed in programs intent on changing them with no regard as to the client's willingness or readiness for an intervention (Shireman and Reamer, 1986:88, in Rooney, 2009).

We can also revisit the dual-role relationship that practitioners and involuntary clients have. The very implications of the relationship between probation officer and offender make it potentially adversarial. The probation officer is often seen as a branch of the body that placed judgment on the client and therefore cannot be trusted. These concerns are reasonable because potentially sharing with a probation officer could lead to technical violations and even jail time; the limits and boundaries of supervision should be made clear and often (Ivanoff et al., 1994).

Apart from the effectiveness of the probation officers, the concept of trust is not immediate, but necessary for productive communication (Allen, 1985).

The amount of research that has been put into the programs for mandate/involuntary clients shows that there is a stark difference in the approach and services provided to these individuals versus those who seek services out willingly. The relationships and definition of success between providers and offenders plays a major role in the outcomes of this commitment. Measuring the outcomes can be so much more than whether the client re-offends and should be recognized as an important area of study. Approaching this topic with the intent to collect this information allows for the exploration of definition and perspective.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In the literature the theory of desistance is a sudden event which acts as a permanent turning point for an offender's life, an event that prevents the individual from committing another crime (Maruna, 2001). To desist is to stop from doing something, therefore in terms of the criminal justice system, desistance is refraining from offending. (Dictionary of Prisons and Punishment, 2007). As much as the idea of a single moment changing someone's life so drastically for better is appealing, Maruna (2001) defines desistance as "the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending. The focus here is not on the transition of change, but rather the maintenance of crime-free behavior in the face of life's obstacles and frustrations" (p. 26). Laibrich (1993, in Maruna, 2001) attributes desistance to a "major cognitive changes" and it is not simply doing or not doing, but the way they interpret their life that causes change (p. 32).

Desistance research asks the question "Why do people stop offending?" and what can the criminal justice system do, or refrain from doing, in order to assist this process (Maruna, 2001).

Although desistance may seem to be synonymous with rehabilitation they differ in their implications. Recovery may be a closer match to desistance. Rehabilitation is a program, while recovery or desistance is a more individual, agentic, and purposeful process (Maruna, 2001). Rehabilitation might initiate the change process but desistance is the continual practice and implementation of personal values and roles into one's daily life to prevent reoffending. Consider an individual who is an alcoholic; they may go through rehabilitation and refrain from using alcohol, but it is a consistent implementation and personalization of what was learned in rehabilitation that make the person successful. They also do not use the term ex-alcoholic, whether desisting or persisting, continuing to use, they self identify as an alcoholic. For offenders the same is true; they may always be labeled as offenders but it is looking to the future that can spark change.

The use of the term desistance can also be misleading; offenders rarely wake up one day and decide to stop committing crimes. It is a process of trial and error, where offenders typically wind in and out of the roles of desisting and persisting. It is the use of roles that can contribute to the success of the client in the eyes of the criminal justice system. Once the offender has removed the role of persistent offender, it must be replaced or risk relapse back into that role. Studies have shown that once there is a serious commitment to a positive value-based goal, this role replacement can take place, and the new role may take shape in a multitude of ways: father, spouse, partner, leader, etc. (Maruna, 2001).

The use of self-narrative has been the strongest predictor of desistance, where the focus is on the way the offender interprets their story. Shover (1983, in Maruna 2001) attributes change to "identity, self-concept, and the framework employed to judge oneself and others" (p. 34). Shover goes on to list the primary elements of the process: "the acquisition of an altered

perspective on their youthful self and activities, a growing awareness of time, and a revision of aspirations to include goals such as contentment, peace, and harmonious interpersonal relationships” (p. 34). All of these themes can be found when using self-narratives to establish desistance, the facts are not as important as the meanings attached by the story teller (Maruna, 2001). Narratives have been of great interest to research because of the implications they have on internal self-narratives which has been shown to influence human behavior patterns, by understanding the way the offender interprets their own actions can lead to an understanding of why the crime was committed (Maruna, 2001).

The use of imprisonment is a popular tool in Western society, offering a time for offenders to think about what they’ve done and straighten out, but this may do more harm than good. The loss of connections to commitments in the community has been found to reduce the chances of desistance. These commitments include: custody or access to children, social connections that could encourage the adoption of positive values, loss of employment and therefore income and feeling of productivity, and being assigned the stigma of ex-offender which can impact housing, employment, etc. (Dictionary of Prisons and Punishment, 2007).

I have chosen the desistance theory because of its focus on the interpretation of the story teller. I interviewed probation officers and probationers and used the answers given to reflect on their outlook, engagement, and confidence in themselves, their roles, and the outcomes of probation.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this research was to better understand how adults on probation desist from reoffending. It used and asked about concepts as outlined by Maruna (2001). Specifically, this

researcher asked both adults on probation and an accompanying sample of probation officers about how each: (1) define success, (2) what are the challenges, and (3) how the relationships and services probation provides do and do not support efforts toward desistance, using a qualitative, exploratory design. This qualitative design used in-person interviews with probationers and probation officers with the goal of defining success by current probation officers and offenders on probation. I asked both groups how they define a successful outcome in this setting (asking adults on probation) about goals they have for themselves, what is important to them presently, and going forward; and about concepts articulated in desistance theory, such as: the idea of taking on new roles, having positive, value-based goals, and making connections to commitment as components of this process. Lastly, I asked each about how they perceive and make use of a probationary relationship in the service of this potential “shared goal”.

This study is exploratory and looked at the current approaches probation officers used with their clients, the prioritization of duties in this role, the factors that encourage success takes in this relationship, and how each understand and define “success”. The clients (probationers) were also interviewed using similar questions formatted to their point of view (Appendix B)

### **Population and Sample**

The populations I studied are adult probationers and probation officers in large counties in the Twin Cities. The sample’s probation officers were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. This researcher attended a probation officer meeting to introduce the project, explain the interview process and confidentiality, and provide the contact information of the researcher for probation officer’s to follow up on if they chose to volunteer. Part of the participating probation officers sample consisted of those with undergraduate degrees in social work and all were



currently supervising high risk offenders as defined by the county they work in and as determined by the LSI-R or LS-CMI, with scores ranging from 25 and above for the LSI-R and 21 and above for the LS-CMI.

The probationers constituted a small convenience sample recommended by their probation officers as they came in for their probation meetings. Participants were invited to participate by their probation officers as they came in for their probation meetings. This notification took the form of the probation officer verbally informing the eligible participant of the nature of the study, the time commitment involved, as well as a small financial incentive. If interested, adult probationers visited the room where this researcher was over the course of several days to review and sign a consent form and complete the interview. Participating probationers varied in age, from approximately 19-60 years. The socioeconomic status of the probationers ranged from lower to middle income. All offenders were currently on probation and determined at a high risk for recidivism, determined by the LSI-R or LS-CMI, and the county in which they reside.

The purposed sample size was 8-12 participants in total, with 4-6 participants each (i.e. four to six offenders and four to six probation officers, with or without social work training). I collected data from January to February 2013 and was contacted directly by the probation officer if they chose to participate. For the probationers I was available during a specific time, located in the same building as their probation officer, and was available to provide interviews to volunteers. Five probationers and six probation officer participated in interviews.

### **Protection of Human Participants**

The identities of the probation officers who participated in the interviews were kept confidential in the following ways: the researcher did not ask identifying questions while in the

interview, the names were known only to the researcher, the interview was audio recorded on a device that is locked in the researcher's home when not in use, the transcripts of the interviews were kept on a password protected external hard drive, and audio files were deleted after transcription of the interview. These were deleted from the external hard drive the day of the presentation of research (May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

Offenders were invited to participate by their probation officers. They were told what room to go to after meeting with their probation officer and that their participation is completely voluntary. They received an incentive in the form of a \$10 gift card. The probationer arrived at the interview room unattended; the researcher did not ask for the offender's name, probation officer, or specifics of their offense. Allowing the offender to arrive at the interview room unattended gave them the option to not participate in the interview freely and without their probation officer having any knowledge of their participation.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher and were shredded after authenticated by the researcher. All audio and electronic transcriptions of the interviews were kept on a password protected SanDisk external hard drive and destroyed by the researcher after the presentation of the research project (May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

Both probation officers and offenders signed an informed consent (Appendix A) and were provided with an explanation of the study, the risks and benefits of the research, and the terms of the confidentiality. The proposal of this project was presented to the IRB board of the University of St Thomas and approved before proceeding. The proposal for research was also reviewed by the counties who participated and approved prior to data collection.

## **Data Collection**

The counties participating in this research have a long and experienced history in surveying the clients that are serviced through community corrections and are very familiar with the requirements of confidentiality and avoiding coercion. This researcher signed data and confidentiality agreements with both counties. Similar interview questions were used for both probation officers and offenders, and changed only slightly to reflect their position and level of education appropriate language. The interview consisted of a series of questions based on the process of desistance and asked about adult probationers' experiences of probation-particularly their relationship with their probation officer. The participants were asked about their experience of probation, types of services probation currently utilizes, and what services might be beneficial to implement. These questions consisted of: the offender's goals both on and outside probation; how probation fit/does not fit or help/does not help with things that are important to the probationer and their goals; what the challenges are that face offenders; what the successes are of offenders; if they notice any changes in behavior, values, goals, or priorities from before they were on probation; and in the face of challenges what helps them to desist from reoffending (Appendix B). The probation officers were asked to reflect on the use of probation by the offenders on their case load, what constitutes as and the definition of success for these clients, what presents as challenges, what they prioritize, and what they see as important in the officer-probationer relationship (Appendix C).

## **Data Analysis**

The researcher conducted the interviews, which were audio recorded and later transcribed. Qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed using both open coding (going in without ideas of what is there allowing oneself to be surprised) and with "start codes": listening

for themes related to desistance. For instance the researcher listened for themes related to how probationers and probation officers define success, the participant's outlook on the current probation system and its programs, and the actual and ideal prioritization of probation officer's job duties. The researcher also listened for similarities and differences between probation officers with and without social work training in an effort to make some links to social work practice and education/training (i.e. regarding what social workers may need in preparing for this professional role). The researcher also utilized field notes after each interview in order to debrief.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study was that the sample was small and convenience-based. This decreased the reliability of the study in terms of findings and the ability to be generalized beyond this sample. This researcher provided depth by using both interviews which are in short supply in the current research. Another strength includes the fact that this research holds the potential to give a voice to an otherwise mostly unheard from population, in the context of the move of corrections towards a more clinical model of rehabilitation, and the use of desistance theory to inform this research.

The strengths of this study include the ability to compare the voices and paradigms of two experiences of a professional relationship, with the hope of providing depth to the probationer and probation officer relationship which is lacking in the literature.

### **Results**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the relationship between probation officers and probationers considered high risk for recidivism as determined by the LSI-R or LS-CMI. The sample of participants was collected from two highly populated counties in Minnesota. Approximately 30 probation officers and 30 probationers, were invited to participate in an interview with the researcher, the probationers were given a \$10 incentive available at the

conclusion of the interview. Of the participants asked six probation officers and five probationers agreed to interviews. The experience of the probation officers ranged from 3-37 years; all were Caucasian. There were two female and four male participating probation officers. The probationers ranged in ages from approximately 19-60, were all African-American males, and have all been on probation and/or previously in the prison system.

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The questions asked during the interviews were geared toward the relationship between probation officers and probationers, the use of desistance, and the definition of success. The analysis was inductive and the researcher sought to identify and code the interviews for specific themes.

### **Relationships Between Probation Officers and Probationers**

One of the prevalent themes to come from the interviews was the relationships between probation officers and probationers. The probation officers were asked directly about how they use and to describe their relationship with probationers; the probationers were asked in a more general way to describe if and how their relationship with their probation officer helps, hinder, or makes any difference in achieving positive outcomes.

One of the themes that emerged was the personality traits of the probation officers. The probation officers showed a use of self and intentional skills when working with probationers. The probation officers showed a propensity to respond according to what their clients needed. For instance they would describe becoming or assuming roles such as an authoritarian, best friend, or “little brother” in order to develop a relationship with the probationer. They mentioned traits such as being dynamic, responsive, and flexible as important to the relationship.

Probationers described experiencing more mixed feelings, pointing out the fact that they understand that probation officers are bound by rules when working with them. Although probationers sometimes described perception of the probation officers as having “no

personality”, or being "out to get me", and "not nice" their personal accounts with their own probation officers proved to be respectful and were often experienced as helpful.

Both probation officers and probationers discussed personal traits that they believe contribute to their relationship with their clients.

<b>Table 1- Personality Traits</b>	
<p><b>Probation Officers:</b></p> <p><i>"Anyway I can (laughing) I'm always looking for angles, you know and I'm a unique personality just like everybody else in the department... anyway I can get a relationship with them whether it has to be the authoritarian, whether it has to be the best friend, the big brother, the little brother, just whatever angle I think I can work I'm gonna probe it, I'm gonna try it. Relationships are fluid"</i></p> <p><i>So I think that's what makes a good P.O., I think is a dynamic personality, someone who is responsive and able to kind of pick up on the nuances and to kind of maneuver all that interaction stuff."</i></p> <p><i>"Being flexible.. I'm really clear with them and fair, as long as they're in compliance, they're fine and if not they know what the consequences are going to be."</i></p>	<p><b>Probationers:</b></p> <p><i>"There's a mantra in which they follow, there's a guideline for them, some probation officers have no personality, no level of empathy or understanding and I'm basing that on some years ago."</i></p> <p><i>" I know that if I carry myself in a respectful manner, I'm going to receive the same because he's a professional. The perception of the relationship probationer and P.O. is that the guy's out to get me, that's the perception."</i></p> <p><i>" Only thing I can say is that [as] long as your probation officer or somebody sees that your trying and willing to go the distance and take care of your business they don't have no problem with you. It's just that basically they want you follow by the rules and it took a long time for me to understand that, "Ok I'm on probation so what, they can't tell u what to do" and "Oh yes they can."</i></p> <p><i>"I've heard of people having probation officers that aren't nice, I feel like she's helpful 'cuz I feel like she wants to see me make it. That's just how I feel personally, some people don't trust 'em or whatever, but I trust her fairly.."</i></p>

Along with personality traits a common theme was the concept of change, the readiness of it, and what it looks like. The probation officers again mentioned that concept of flexibility or not being rigid, and the need to connect with the client by making it clear that they want the same thing, and by addressing deficits in order to make change.

Some probationers even expressed that probation had been a good thing, once they decided to make a change, and a sense that they were given a second chance, and that they felt they are being looked out for.

Table-2 Change and Readiness

<p>Probation Officers:</p> <p><i>"you can't be rigid in your thinking, you can't go into any one of these cases and assume you know anything about what got these people there, you know, and what's going to get them out."</i></p> <p><i>" what most of them want is to get off and that's great and I always start with, "We want the same thing, we may not always see eye to eye on how to get there, but as long as we can communicate and work through the bumps in the road, we'll get there"</i></p> <p><i>"But start from that place of my deficits aren't something to deny or avoid or I don't want to talk about them because they make me uncomfortable and I want to look at the future and all you want to talk about is my past, that kind of thing that we're not doing ourselves any favors. So that's what I would say success is, is that, and then from there hopefully everything else can kind of branch out, it's that solid foundation for them to grow into whatever it is they want to do."</i></p> <p><i>"I think part of our job is to help them see that life can be improved if they're able to make some changes that will also get them off</i></p>	<p>Probationers:</p> <p><i>"I would never admit this but being on probation has been a good thing, it's kept me focused, I see him every 3 weeks and at first it was rocky 'cuz I hadn't made up my mind whether I was going to start using."</i></p> <p><i>" I hadn't made up my mind, people when they get to this process in their life after committing a crime, this is a blessing"</i></p> <p><i>"They like trying to give people that made mistakes a second chance especially if you really know you messed up and you know you need this second chance. Some people don't want the second chance and gonna be on probation until they get caught and they gonna go back to the prison system cuz they institutionalized so that's what they accustomed to doing. You got some people who really regret certain things that they done and wanna change and those the people I feel she could help get back on their feet."</i></p> <p><i>" ...she actually as soon as I been on probation actually been lookin' out for me and she has conversation with me like she's actually like she really actually cares what's going on with me... whenever I say I need something or I say</i></p>
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<p><i>probation so that those two thing can coexist and that by doing some of the things the court's asking them to do taking a look at some of the behavior that's bringing them back time and time again, is going to help their situation and if people have about what they're doing is contrary to the goal sometimes they're not able to see that."</i></p>	<p><i>I need some information she makes sure she get it if she can get it, if I can't get it myself she'll get it... if anything come up just call her no matter what it is, just call her."</i></p>
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## Challenges

The question of challenges when it came to being on probation were answered the most consistently between probation officers and probationers. The probation officers were asked specifically about what challenges their clients face, while probationers were offered a more generalized question about their challenges as a whole.

Probations officers point out that the barriers “run the gambit”, from mental illness, chemical dependency, financial, housing, past trauma such as abuse or neglect growing up, and lack motivation to accomplish these things. Not only do these barriers persist, but the probation officers commented on the use of them by their clients as potentially a form of an acceptance of their role in life or as armor so that failures can be blamed on others.

Probationers also brought up the same challenges that probation officers did, including: housing, and chemical dependency, but also commented on their behaviors as well as their environment. They reflected on some of the reasons accounting for criminal activity. Not having the support system of their family, falling into old behaviors, being stubborn, and a rebel were described as part of a lifestyle. Both groups spoke to financial challenges. Financial challenges came up during the interviews with probationers, who described struggling with unemployment and probation/court fees.



**Table-3 Challenges**

<p><b>Probation Officers:</b></p> <p><i>" from mental and physical illness to financial, to social, um obviously it's no secret we have a lot of minorities on our case load, there's a lot of institutionalized issues out there, a lot of them accept their realities, a lot of them live down to expectations and they're fulfilling this role I think in a lot of them...I think they bought in that this is it for me, you know " I make babies, I sing rap songs, and I run around with my friends with a 9mm on my hip "</i></p> <p><i>"Everything's a barrier, a lot of them use it as their armor, it's their protection. They come in here feeling worthless, feeling ashamed, guilty, and so they'll hold their [barriers], they don't want to let them go, they don't want financial independence because then their failures are their own. And you find that a lot, it's easier to have this "us and them" mentality...but when you get to them as adults you have to stop that narrative and you have to say "Oh, ok, at what point do you stop?"</i></p> <p><i>" they are not us, they are not people who are functioning well in society and then had some sort of thing happen; those people tend to be very low risk and tend not to even make it to my office. The people that come into this door are the people that never knew life beyond makin' babies, selling drugs, and getting picked up by the police that's life. As much as they say they hate it it's comfortable and it's predictable and there's something to be said for comfortable and predictable."</i></p> <p><i>"...struggles are going to be financial, they're gonna be mental illness, chemical dependency..they may also have a lot of family issues..they may be homeless..it can just be so many things."</i></p> <p><i>"I think it's important to point out their high risk areas, they might not recognize a lot of</i></p>	<p><b>Probationers:</b></p> <p><i>"I went back to some old behaviors that I knew would end up badly"</i></p> <p><i>"It was once a week, then it was twice a week, then it was every day, then it was every time I got some money and money was a factor in it, we didn't have no money for me to be using. I had lost my job, I had got laid off we was down to one income, I was on unemployment and it was starting to run out and I was starting to panic, then I was getting high, if I hadn't been getting high I wouldn't have panicked 'cuz I would went and found me..jobs"</i></p> <p><i>"I was working at one point in time but I caught a felony so it made me not have a job anymore. So right now..they knew about me being on probation, they knew about my felonies but now it's more or less like the higher up jobs that pay more kinda don't want 'em at their jobs."</i></p> <p><i>"I wanted to be a rebel..it was the lifestyle"</i></p> <p><i>"...that's probably another goal to get everything expunged so I can just walk in and just "Any felonies?", " Nope" and be proud of it. Right now it's kinda, you know you put on applications you see that nice paragraph and you see those two little boxes and even though you're tempted to check "no" the good person, the good Samaritan in me says yes and will explain upon interview and then I put very open and in parenthesis let 'um know look I'm not hidin' it just letting u guys know I had a rough background."</i></p> <p><i>"...you are the company you keep..."</i></p> <p><i>" Through my eyes the world, u had be on drugs, to deal with life's stress, anything that life throws at u the only way u deal with it is drugs and alcohol, that's what I thought. Now,</i></p>
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*them have family members and friends in the CJ system as well so maybe having them return to their family or friend's house is not going to be in their best interest."*

*"I went to a house yesterday and...it's Feb. and they're sleeping on the porch and that's where I live and this is the best I got and that answers some questions about how they're gonna be able to handle their conditions of probation and it gives you a little bit of a sense of maybe they're not lying when they're saying they don't have bus fare..."*

*"The thing we always complain about is housing and it's very difficult to change a culture. Housing and employment are..the background checks are killers for our people and again they're static, there's not much we can do about that."*

*"It's difficult for us to do what we're talking about, put distance between this (the crime) and in the middle put in some positive things that you've done when [you] can't get hired..same with housing, I can't get an apartment, that creates a situation where I'm gonna stay in this unhealthy situation because I don't have a lot of options."*

*"employment, housing, the last several years I've been getting a lot more mental illness, we need resources for that. And resources not only to deal with mental illness, but to deal with dual diagnosis the MI/CD programs, housing for that... but the problems that exist are you got corrections here and you got mental health here and mental health does not want to work with correctional clients because they're criminal, you got me who wants to work with correctional clients but doesn't want to work with mental health clients because they're crazy."*

*I still think the same way, but there's other ways. "*

*"What made it hard for me? I'd say me, me just bein' stubborn, me not wantin' to play by the rules, me not wantin' to sit and listen (what) the next person said. I had a real problem with authority and I felt like well I'm grown, you can't tell me what to do, but it wasn't the point of you telling me what to do, it's the point of well we're not really telling you what to do we're trying to help u out it's like you don't want the help"*

*"I was physically and sexually abused when I was younger...Department of Children and Family Service came and took me away from my home, they locked me up...then I just kept gettin' locked up...I was rebelling...the support of my family, it wasn't there..it was a negative environment..."*

*"...you don't have nobody. Then going places, livin' on the streets, livin' with drug dealers, livin' in drug houses and just partyin' and doin' all that and...none of your family not's willin' to help you out but the only people that want to help you out is the people that sell drugs or do crime, give you a place to lay your head even though you know it's wrong but this the only family you got. So now it's to the point well ok now I gotta sell drugs or I gotta do this to support me so I has some food in my stomach or I have some new clothes or I have a coat for the winter."*

*"... now that I'm a felony I can't even get public housing, there's a lot of things I can't get."*

*"... seems like drug felons are worse than assaults, everybody got 5 years probation for beating up their wives or girlfriends but me I sold one little tiny thing to somebody and I'm on 20 years watch."*

<p><i>“One of the struggles we have is that we have clients who want jobs but they don't want to put the time and effort into their chemical use and we try to explain or try to work with them to discuss you're not gonna hold a job if your chemically dependent [or] if you don't take care of your mental health issues, or your bipolar or your anxiety, or your depression or whatever else it is.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I just wish they didn't make us have to pay so much these probation fees and court costs and stuff like that, 'specially if u serve time...I feel some of the fines and stuff should be minimized because especially when you first get out of jail they want you to pay that at a certain time and there's no way possible that's gonna happen.”</i></p>
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**Desistance**

The conversations that centered on the theory of desistance, or the ability to not commit crime, differed between probation officers and probationers. Probation officers tended to focus on the behavioral aspects of change, if they thought they had any hold over it at all; and presented themselves as people providing an opportunity for” options and alternatives”. They also pointed out the need to accept failures, not letting that continue to be a barrier, but to move past it and to learn from it as important.

Probationers credited more external forces such as family, kids, and obtaining material things such as their own house or business with their will to change. Many of them commented that growing up, having kids, and being a better person for important people in their lives was seen as a motivation to not commit crime. Support, using coping mechanisms learned through treatment, and being positive also were common responses by probationers.

<p><b>Table 4-Desistance</b></p>	
<p><b>Probation Officers:</b>  <i>“Let's talk about reality, let's talk about the fact, now I don't doubt your desire, desire is a 10 out of 10..you want this badly there's no question in my mind... It isn't so much a lack of desire, it isn't a lack of want or need or whatever...It's a lack of structure and support...but I mean literally...something to give them that additional buttressing so that when their will power wanes, when their fatigue sets in, there's something else there to</i></p>	<p><b>Probationers:</b>  <i>“I got kids..they's my number one motivation to stop. Because if I don't stop then I go to jail then if I go to jail I don't see my kids and my kids [are] without me.”</i>   <i>“ And just being on probation it...literally makes you be a different human being. You know, you stop doing the things that you was doing, you stop..boozing and druggin' cuz if you keep doing that you end up in jail...”</i></p>

<p><i>help keep them moving forward. "</i></p> <p><i>"...get back in the driver's seat and grab this thing and just accept the fact that if you fail, it does not mean failure. I think that that's really hard to define for them that's another one of those intangibles, its embracing failure, and they don't get that cuz our culture is so pro-success that they don't want to talk about failure."</i></p> <p><i>"...knowing that your failures don't define you.."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't do anything that decreases their risk of going back down those old paths. They do it all, I present options and alternatives..I think that's the hardest thing for a lot of probation officers to accept, is that you don't change people."</i></p> <p><i>"..you have to meet them where they are, not where you want them to be."</i></p> <p><i>" It's just got to be the right moment, timing is everything, they have to be in the right place mentally, they have to have the right set of experiences and consequences, and it's such a volatile specific cocktail that it just.. could be the right moment and it clicks and you can sense it that they're there but it not because of any one thing a PO did it's about this entire combination of experiences."</i></p> <p><i>"What do we have control over, what don't we have control over?" finding a balance of understanding their story and listen to their story and trying to get them to move past that to what can they control now, what can they do?"</i></p> <p><i>"I think desistance is just kind of supporting them from not putting them back in a bad situation or the high risk situations that they had previously or that may have gotten them to where they are now."</i></p>	<p><i>"My goals are just basically bound to be a good person all the way around."</i></p> <p><i>"Just go back home with a whole new attitude, a whole new persona, a whole overall new person, do a whole 180, just let them know I'm not the person that I use to be, I'm [a] whole new person, I've done everything I possibly did, could, to destroy myself and now I'm doing everything I possibly can to help and better myself."</i></p> <p><i>"...it's all about will power and mind control. You can set your mind to anything, you can set your mind to find your drug so why don't you find yourself not using a drug."</i></p> <p><i>"Things might come to my mind like, oh God I'm mad, I'm gonna go do something. Then I go through a process, if I go do it, look at the consequences, if I get caught I go to jail...And I look at it and say 'Nah'."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't want my kids growing up saying oh well my dad smokes weed, or my dad drink's. I want my kids to say your dad does that? My dad doesn't do none of that."</i></p> <p><i>" Being off probation and takin' it one day at a time and followin' by the law cuz it comes to a point in their life where you get tired of being locked up and if you don't break that cycle then it's just gonna constantly happen.. you really get tired (of) gettin' told what to do and when you got ta go in your room, when you can eat, and you gotta lock down, what time you go to sleep"</i></p> <p><i>" ..when you have somebody to support you it don't seem like the world is against you"</i></p> <p><i>"Oh there are always going to be war stories and flash backs, it's the mind power and will power of it. I just wasn't ready..I was going with so much stress...and for me to stop using</i></p>
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*"I tell them "Let's be forward thinkers, there's nothing we can do about what you did or why you're here...We can learn from it and we can try to put some distance between that and your goal...But if you continue to commit crimes there's nothing I can do for you, all bets are off..."*

*"If he's clean he has a less chance of reoffending. If you're on your medication and you're not highs and lows you have a better chance of not reoffending. If you are staying away from the environment that help lead you...you have a less chance of reoffending. I think the biggest thing we can do address issues and try and move them away from that because there's a reason why they're here and what happened needs to be looked at and addressed and if this is a reoccurring theme you've [seen] this situation before let's stop knocking our head against the same wall, are you ready to make some tough choices and move along"*

*Then we pounce on that, that readiness to change and try and facilitate it as much as we can, but if it's not there it's pretty difficult for us to create it we can create an environment, we can try and be supportive of it when we hear it"*

*"I'm a big believer in that we're all products of our environment that we grow up in. A lot of... people on probation...they've grown up in some pretty crappy environments, neighborhoods, families, been victims of abuse, drug abuse, chemical abuse...So the challenges that these clients face is they're in this environment and they've learned these behaviors, good or bad, whether their aggressive or whether the easiest way to make a couple hundred thousand dollars is to go sell some drugs on the street...So we have these learned behaviors and we have these values and value systems and beliefs that are really embedded in our clients*

*my escape it wasn't in the question, it wasn't part of the criteria..."*

*" I feel obligated and I do feel obligated in certain aspects so my kids got a place to stay and their not staying this person, staying with this person, stay with this person."*

*"I learned my lesson...I was sittin' there playing chess with an old man...he just told me something straight, he just "Don't be like me" and I was like "What you mean?" he was like "I been gettin locked up since I was 13, now I'm facin' like 20 some years or 25 years or somethin' like that and he was like 55/56 and he was like when I get out I'm not gonna have no life...I gotta still get a job...I'm gonna be working till I'm 90 or 100 or till I'm dead. He was like, it took me this long to realize 'cuz they gave me all this time over my head. I could understand that..."*

*"Would I keep going through that cycle or would I break the cycle?"*

*"So if I can place myself around in a positive surrounding then I got positive people by me I know I'm gonna have a good day, I'm gonna have a ok day, just for that day. Then when I wake up the next day I gotta do it again...I gotta keep pushin' myself forward one day at a time..."*

*"Everything they done gave me on probation for me to do, it's positive and it keeps you motivated if you let it, if you're willing to work it and you're willing to change yourself. If you're not willing to change yourself then it won't work, it comes a time when you gotta stop and say, "Who I'm really doin' this for?"*

*" I have nothing but time on my hands so what's the best thing to do? Go out there and make something happen."*

*Anticipate challenges: " You got to because*

<p><i>that believes that authority figures are bad and out to get us and the world's against us, I can't get ahead...I think the biggest barriers for probation clients is that they have these embedded errors in thinking, that everything I do bad and no one cares about me, I can't do anything right, I can't get ahead. They have all these different errors in thinking going on and this kind of trained behavior of how to do things that is anti-social that by the time we get 'em in adult probation I don't know how to change that."</i></p>	<p><i>nobody's life's is perfect so you gotta understand that something is gonna go wrong it's the fact of do you prepare yourself for that or do you just walk into it and ok I deal with it when it's there...do you use the proper tools to decide..[what] might or could happen..."</i></p> <p><i>"it's really the probation, you have to think about how it effects who's close to you like for me it'd be my kids, my mom, my sister, people that's close to me that look for me to be out here..I don't know if I'm a support or am just something, you know, how motivated I am... I have to look at how many people I disappoint if I get myself in trouble again."</i></p>
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**Success**

The initial reaction to the question of how probationers achieve success when posed to either probation officer or probationer was initially almost word-for-word the same "To get off probation" or "not go back to jail" or a recitation of the rules of probation, for instance: to remain law abiding, drug and alcohol free, and to fulfill other court ordered conditions. The probation officers did comment on the individuality of their clients and that success differs between individuals.

The question was posed to each probation officer what they thought their probationer's definition of success was. The probationers were asked to identify their goals as a means of possible success as well as an invitation to speak to their goals, even apart from probation

<b>Table 5-Success</b>	
<p><b>Probation Officers:</b></p> <p><i>"The easy answer to that is to get off probation...I don't think you can lump all the probationers together and say what's a success case, I think you have to take a look at those individually, and I can't look at one case and say that's a success and have that same measure for another person in a totally</i></p>	<p><b>Probationers:</b></p> <p><i>"My life is pretty much done in regards to having a lot of long term goals."</i></p> <p><i>"To just basically be the best husband, best father I can be."</i></p> <p><i>"#1 goal is not to get arrested and you know</i></p>

<p><i>different situation in a totally different set of circumstances."</i></p> <p><i>"Sometimes a month of sobriety before a guy goes to prison is success, because he's never had that month...sometimes success is being successful at taking them off the street and getting the dangerous people off the street."</i></p> <p><i>"Overcoming their personal barriers, I wouldn't say success is any easier to define. I know that right now, the way the systems are they like to look at successes [as] completion of programming or no recidivism of same or similar in X amount of time. Look, we've got to measure these things somehow, so they have to be coded and they have to be measured but I think for my offenders and the way I look at their success it's about overcoming their own personal barriers...Identifying them."</i></p> <p><i>"...their ideas of success is something tangible, and what I'm trying to pitch is something very intangible. To them their success is having a good job, whatever that may be for them, having a stable living situation, whatever that may be, having a true relationship, whatever that may be, tangible things and I think that it's hard to sell intangibles"</i></p> <p><i>"So it's just about redefining our measurement of success, maybe it's getting away from this idea that it's reform..to reform something is to restore it back to its original pristine state, you're assuming that anyone of these offenders came in an original pristine state."</i></p> <p><i>"I define success by what their goals are...they may get through their probation and discharge but I don't know if I would consider that successful. Successful would be do they have goals, are we setting goals, are they reaching their goals?"</i></p> <p><i>"I think for most of them it's getting off</i></p>	<p><i>especially try to improve on being a model citizen and being a better probationee"</i></p> <p><i>" to be self-employed, house, and marriage and those right there I can say that basically they're a challenge to reach, well not the marriage part anybody can get married, but you know the challenging part is to be able to over step those boundaries that kind of prevent those."</i></p> <p><i>"My goals in life is actuality be a better person and to be free, enjoy my freedom."</i></p> <p><i>" Remain law abiding, get my GED, and basically stay out of trouble and take it one day at the time."</i></p> <p><i>"To get off [probation]"</i></p> <p><i>"...stay law abiding but finish college..."</i></p> <p><i>"... finish probation is one, ain't get in no more trouble is two, finish my degree in network development and pretty much live my life and have fun with my kids and my family pretty much that's my goals while on probation even afterwards but that's one of the big things to do is tie a negative to a positive."</i></p> <p><i>"I need ta get my own place..."</i></p>
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<i>probation but feeling stable, feeling so when they walk out of here they have some kind of stability."</i>	
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This research provided a way to compare the responses of probation officers and probationers on the subjects of relationships, challenges, desistance, and success. Allowing for the introduction of both sides of or roles in probation allowed for a comparison of topics and mind set surrounding these themes by each stakeholder in this process.

### **Discussion**

The United States has more individuals incarcerated than any other country in the world. The individuals who commit crimes do so for many reasons and therefore become a part of the correctional system through prison, jail, parole, or probation. Prior research, although vast in its implications for the practice of probation, has had little to say with the input of the clients in this system. This has potentially created a lack of understanding from their point of view. The implication of evidence-based research is evident through the use of multiple programs introduced into Community Corrections in programs such as Thinking 4 Change, cognitive behavioral groups, and the introduction of mental health probation officers into these departments. This research hoped to give readers a sense of both “sides” or roles of community corrections.

The major themes that were looked at throughout this research were the relationship between probation officers and probationers, challenges, desistance, and definition of success. The researcher interviewed and coded looking for these themes in order to better understand how this might improve community corrections.



## Relationships

The probation officers who agreed to be interviewed showed a very reflective and clinical approach to their work with their clients. The idea that they changed their approach to meet each probationer depending on what that particular individual needed in order to accomplish their goals and the fact that these goals went beyond the scope of the court-ordered mandates showed the influence of social work and evidence-based practices to be strong. Even a probation officer, who denied use of any therapeutic tools as demonstrated below, admitted to the use of chemical dependency literature guiding his practice with clients who face this as a challenge.

*"I'm not a social worker, I'm a probation officer...if there's a need for therapy there are people out there that are much more qualified as therapists than I am...I think we gotta realize we can know a little bit about a lot of stuff, but if we're going to specialize let's send it to someone who knows what they're doing...it's like asking a general practitioner to be an orthopedic surgeon, let's not do that, let's send them to the orthopedic surgeon."*

The characteristics associated with being a good probation officer described by these officers such as being flexible, responsive, and dynamic all speak to the importance of the practice of support rather than a punitive approach to their work. Even the aspect of community visits by probation officers has evolved from “tail 'em, nail 'em, jail 'em” to an opportunity for the probation offices to get a better understanding of where their clients come from.

The probationers seemed to make a connection between the concept of probation and what they actually encountered when visiting their probation officer. Their initial understanding of probation was that it was there to catch them doing something wrong. In fact many of the probationers spoke of trusting their probation officer, having mutual respect, structure, and support.

The readiness for change expressed by probation officers also made a strong argument for the need for the development of a trusting relationship with the probationers. Probation

officers commented on their attempt to bring the probationer in as an ally rather than a subordinate, "We want the same thing...". A common barrier to this was that while the probation officers could see and had the tools to understand that in order for the probationers to be successful they had to "start from a place of deficits" or addressing where the probationer had struggled in the past with criminal behavior, it didn't always sit well with the probationers. Probationers tended to want to look towards the future, to make goals based on what was to come and what they could accomplish; they reiterated that focusing on their past only made for bad memories and avoidance. One probation officer describes that reluctance of looking at the past and only wanting to look towards the future:

*"You know I hear a lot of them say, something as simple as making a payment  
"well when I can pay it all off I'll pay it" 'cuz in their mind making a full lump  
sum payment is so much more virtuous then dropping \$5 per month. And I get it,  
I think it's cultural, I think it's our society; you know it's about you know buy now  
pay later kinda thing and they want the trappings of success without the toil and  
the time that it takes and that's the intangible piece, you know"*

The evolution of probation and the increased training of probation officers to develop other means of connecting to clients has definitely grown, but some probation officers complain that this increase in training takes time away from their clients, that along with their administrative duties can cause them to be short on face-to-face time. Other probation officers welcome the introduction of new tools and approaches.

*"We have to be bigger than the tools and I think there's a real strong emphasis  
right now on the tools, its evidence-based and that's great. And it is, because it  
gives us..it's a tool, like I say don't throw your hammer away because it can't cut a  
board, that would be foolish.... But don't carry you hammer around as if it's the  
only thing that you got or need. And don't throw away..pick another tool, because  
you don't use it as much anymore. They're all there, they're all useful in their own  
ways. "*

## Challenges

The theme of challenges was interwoven throughout the interviews and tells a trying story of failure and consequences. The probation officers and probationers both touched on the idea of employment, having it and maintaining it. Probation officers commented that although employment was a challenge for the probationers, it also required having the motivation to go out and find it. Part of the "bad behavior" that one probationer commented on pointed out that unless he or she is in the right frame of mind and ready for change it was much easier and more lucrative to go down to the corner and sell drugs than to continually be turned down for jobs because of one's criminal history and even successfully getting a job to work equated with long hours for low pay. The subject of the court and probation fees came up as well. Probationers described an impression or experience that they were put in a position of debt as soon as they get on probation and that makes it difficult to change one's life, to provide for oneself and family if this person owes the county.

Limited resources became a strong source of discussion with the probation officers as well. One commented that at one time he had numbers to call for assistance in mental health services, he could connect his clients very easily for evaluations, chemical dependency treatment, and employment opportunities, but due to budget cuts, he no longer had those resources. Even with the available resources there are problems, if a probationer is required by the court to chemical dependency treatment but does not meet the requirements of a Rule 25 assessment and they don't have insurance then the treatment comes out of that individual's pocket. At the same time an individual might seek help for their addiction, mental health, or counseling for abuse, that person may not know where to go to get that assistance.

Probationers used the question of challenges to reflect on the change of attitude many of them have had. Many recalled being stubborn, rebellious, and having an environment that condones criminal behavior. They recalled being brought up in households where the priority wasn't nurturing and law abiding, but filled with chemical use, abuse, conflicting with authority, and neglect. As one probation officer put it "they are not us, they are not people functioning well in society..." and all this adds up to experiences and behaviors that can conflict with the law.

### **Desistance**

The theory of desistance when presented to probation officers and probationers took on very different meanings for each. Some probation officers admitted that they have no influence over their client's desistance and are only there to provide options for them. While this may seem unlikely, the idea that this probation officer can provide resources and alternative that might not otherwise be available or known to the probationer and that this is seen by the probationers as a kind of support they may have yet to experience speaks volumes to increasing desistance. The probation officers who felt they did have a hand in the desistance of their clients focused, what one so eloquently put it on "the intangibles". The changing of behavior, errors in thinking, and motivations are what probation officers heavily relied upon as their vehicles of change. The probationers on the other hand tended to attribute their changes to external forces such as being a role model for their kids, showing those closest to them that they've changed, or simply not wanting to spend any more time in jail. While the idea of internal change was not completely dismissed, many of the probationers drew on their learning in treatment or cognitive skills settings, learning to take one day at a time, using coping skills such as distraction and deep breathing, and placing themselves in positive surroundings with positive people.

Neither of these outlooks is bad, but the ability to use them or to draw from several of them seemed for the probationers to be an important factor in ultimately reducing recidivism.

### **Success**

The definition of success for probation officers fit well with the challenges that probationers described facing. In successful probation relationships, a clinical approach to probation seemed to be emphasized as one that gave less attention to a punitive approach. Probation officers acknowledged that each person on their case load is different, and that in turn the definition of success varies between individuals. Treating each person who comes in to their office as an individual also encourages their relationship, assists in combating challenges, and therefore increases desistance. One challenge as described by probation officers is the concept of measuring success. The uniqueness of the individual cannot be reduced into a measureable and quantitative objective in which to base trainings as well as department reviews. Probation officers, programs for probationers, and trainings for probation officers are based upon measureable goals like completing administrative duties including reports, meeting notes, etc. This was described as creating a gap between what these professionals are told works and what's actually being done on a daily basis.

### **Implications**

Probation officers fulfill an important role in the criminal justice system and it takes significant amounts of time and energy to train and provide the best services to those on probation as they are able. The responses of the probation officers imply that the use of social work principles holds potential value in this setting, in particular the respect for the individual, their unique circumstance, and having flexibility in the probation officer's approach.

The interviews of both probation officers and probationers highlight the need for an increase in resources for those on probation. The availability of mental health and chemical dependency assessment and treatment as well as the opportunity to have housing and employment are important not only to the individual's self image, but the overall health of the family and community. The restrictions that probation officers are faced with in terms of the resources available and the qualifications required for services are a common dilemma presented to probation officers.

Along with the availability of resources, an interesting point was made during the interviews with probation officers. This was the fact that this department is called Community Corrections, but too often probation officers commented on the fact that they spent little to no time out in the community observing the probationer in their external environment. At the same time, many of the challenges provided in this research point to an "us versus them" mentality between probationers and the community. One probationer commented on the changes he's seen:

*"You get to a point in your life that the word community enlarges, it becomes huge because you start to partake in where you live, what goes on, who lives there. I use to know who lived to the right of me and the left of me and directly across the street from me, the community today no one knows who lives next door...Today the community is so diverse it creates a wall or standoff-ish attitude and it shows in the daily passing of people, no eye contact, no one says hello, everyone takes the other person as a threat but they live next door....To contribute to the community, they call gangs in the community terrorists now 'cuz that what they are, they're predatorial (predatory). They're robbing and taking advantage of people they live next door to that's not good..."*

Probation officers and probationers reflected on the obstacles of finding housing, a job, and being financially stable, but many are left in communities that see them only as a felon. It is easy to talk about probationers contributing to society and paying their dues, but what about

when they have, do they continue to be shunned? If the standard probationers were living up to before breaking the law resulted in involvement in the criminal justice system, will the community continue to send them back to the same environment and expect different results?

There are few times in which the literature includes those who are in the criminal justice system in the ecological approach. The expectations of a community and pressure, or lack thereof, to achieve a certain standing in life have a great impact on the outcome of the individuals in that community. It is important to note that the expectation of success, however it is defined, lies with both the probationer and probation officer.

### **Strength and Limitations**

The strengths of this study include the fact that a sample of voices from a population that is rarely heard from was able to be captured. This increases the body of knowledge surrounding probationers' perceptions of supporting desistance in terms of what works in the criminal justice system and where there may be similarities and discrepancies (i.e. in the impressions of probationers and probation officers). Another strength of this study is the open format in which both probation officers and probationers were allowed to express and open up new avenues for future research.

This research allowed for a great deal of exploration into the thoughts and processes behind probation. However, it was a challenge to access the probationer population; even with the gift card incentive it took several tries to come up with participants willing to sit down for an interview. The participants who did complete an interview were those who seemed to have a very trusting relationship with their probation office and therefore the information presented may not have captured an accurate representation.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

Although this study provided results that could increase the awareness of a rarely heard from population there are implications for future research. The group of participants, both probation officers and probationers, was very small and only included those on high risk probation. The research could be expanded to include those on low risk probation and high risk parole. One may even go so far as to include those incarcerated and if there are implications for relationships with correction officers and defining success.

The interviews also took place at or near the Community Corrections officer right after meeting with their probation officers. Even though confidentiality notices were explained and signed, the idea that someone in the probation office might hear what they said was a concern for some, this includes probationers and probation officers. Meeting with participants outside of the community corrections office in a more neutral setting could contribute to the elaboration and honesty in interviews. For this study the interviews were done at or near the Community Corrections office as a safety measure for the researcher. As previously mention probationers were also given a \$10 gift card as an incentive to participate, this may produce greater involvement if it was increased as well as attract probationers who may have been more reluctant.

Based on these findings probation officers in this sample seemed to grasp the importance of their role in the lives of their probationers. It is important, however, to continue the expansion of their knowledge and tools when working with probationers. The fact that all of the probation officers were Caucasian while all the probationers were African-American might also lead others in exploring this concept coming from the perspective of race. The continued growth of this



knowledge should contribute and not hinder the relationships with the probationers and therefore be reflected as a part of their individual and departmental review.

## **Appendix A**

### **CONSENT FORM FOR PROBATION OFFICERS**

#### **UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

#### **GRSW682 RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **Success, Desistance, and Relationships between Probation Officers and Probationers**

I am conducting a study about probation officers and I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because your involvement with this population. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Ariel Brinson, a graduate student at the School of Social Work, St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas and supervised by Dr. David Roseborough.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is: To put together a qualitative research paper that describes your experience in community corrections, your relationship with individuals in this setting, and the support provided through the county community corrections.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Allow for an hour's worth of questions that will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The study will take every precaution to protect the identity of the participants, the audio tapes and well as corresponding transcripts will be locked in the researcher's desk at her home. All audio tapes, paper, and electronic records from this research will be deleted or shredded the presentation date of this research (May 20, 2013).

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's home. The researcher will also keep the electronic copy of the transcript in a password protected file on her computer. No one besides the researcher will have access to any identifiable information including the audio files and transcripts. The researcher will not be asking questions that could identify the individual in the interview and if some are presented the

researcher will delete any identifying information from the transcript. The audiotape and transcript will be destroyed by May 20, 2013.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer and may stop the interview at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the county or your probation status. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw; data collected about you will be destroyed and used for no further studies.

**Contacts and Questions**

My name is Ariel Brinson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me. You may also contact my instructor David Roseborough or University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board with any questions or concerns.

**You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study and to be audio taped.

---

**Signature of Study Participant**

---

**Date**

---

**Print Name of Study Participant**

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**Signature of Researcher**

---

**Date**

## **Appendix A (cont.)**

### **CONSENT FORM FOR PROBATIONERS**

#### **UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

#### **GRSW682 RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **Success, Desistance, and Relationships between Probation Officers and Probationers**

I am conducting a study about individuals currently on probation. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because your involvement with this population. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Ariel Brinson, a graduate student at the School of Social Work, St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas and supervised by Dr. David Roseborough.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is: To put together a qualitative research paper drawn from interviews conducted, that describes your experience in community corrections, your relationship with probation officers in this setting, and the support provided through the county community corrections.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Allow for an hour's worth of questions that will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The study will take every precaution to protect the identity of the participants, the audio tapes as well as corresponding transcripts will be locked in the researcher's desk at her home. All audio tapes, paper, and electronic records from this research will be deleted or shredded on the presentation date of this research (May 20, 2013).

The researcher will provided participants with a \$10 gift card as an incentive upon completion of the interview.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's home. The researcher will also keep the electronic copy of the transcript in a password protected file on her computer. No one besides the researcher will have access to any

identifiable information including the audio files and transcripts. The researcher will not ask questions that could identify the individual in the interview, these include name, probation officer, or offense specifics. If some of this information is presented by you the participant the researcher will delete any identifying information from the transcript. The audiotape and transcript will be destroyed by May 20, 2013.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer and may stop the interview at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the county or your probation status. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw; data collected about you will be destroyed and used for no further studies.

**Contacts and Questions**

My name is Ariel Brinson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me. You may also contact my instructor David Roseborough or University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board with any questions or concerns.

**You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study and to be audio taped.

---

**Signature of Study Participant**

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**Date**

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**Print Name of Study Participant**

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**Signature of Researcher**

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**Date**

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Questions for Probationers**

1. What are your goals, both on and outside of probation?
2. What successes have you experienced with these goals so far?
  - 2a. Any specific examples?
3. What challenges have you faced, do you anticipate?
  - 3a. What helps you work through these challenges?
4. How does your work with your probation officer help/hinder/matter?
5. What might you still need that you're not getting?
  - 5a. Inside or outside probation
6. What do you see as different or changing between now and the end of probation?

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Questions for Probation Officers**

1. Please describe your education. How does this shape your practice?
2. What do you think the goals of those on probation with you are?
3. How do you define success for your probationers? How do you think your probationers define success?
  - 3a. How do you balance the therapeutic and surveillance roles of your job?
4. What challenges do people on probation face?
5. What tasks do you perform that help those on probation? What tasks hinder those on probation?
6. What information/services/tasks would you like to see implemented or given more weight in community corrections/your daily work activities?

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