

THE ROLE OF FELONY PROBATIONERS' FAMILIES IN THE DESISTANCE  
PROCESS

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LINDA RAINS-RUSSELL, B.S., M.S.

DENTON, TEXAS

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TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
DENTON, TEXAS

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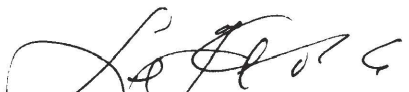
To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Linda Rains-Russell entitled "The Role of Felony Probationers' Families in the Desistance Process." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Family Studies.



Lillian Chenoweth, Ph. D., Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:



Department Chair

Accepted:



Dean of the Graduate School



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## ABSTRACT

LINDA RAINS RUSSELL

### THE ROLE OF FELONY PROBATIONERS' FAMILIES IN THE DESISTANCE PROCESS

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The purpose of this study was to explore the role of family during probation from the perspective of the felony probationer. A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used to gain insight into how felony probationers' perceive their family's role, and what aspects of family are deemed most and least helpful during probation.

Interviews were conducted with 18 felony probationers who were at least 21 years of age, on felony probation for a minimum of three years, and assessed as being medium to high risk. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed by both the researcher and a professional transcriber. Four major themes emerged: family networks; providing focus, direction and meaning to life; source of frustration, disappointment and stress, and; family ties.

Family networks were discussed within the subthemes of family composition, perceived quality of the family relationship and family formation. Children as motivation, nurturant and instrumental support, and structure in daily life were discussed under the theme of providing focus, direction and meaning to life. Family was perceived as a source of frustration, disappointment and stress when instrumental and nurturant support

were lacking. Strong ties with family members were demonstrated throughout the interviews.

Felony probationers reported the importance of what family provides from both an overall perspective and day to day interactions. Families provide nurturant and instrumental support—at varying levels. Support was categorized at four levels: optimal, acceptable, helpful and minimal.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Criminal behavior is a complex human and social phenomenon. Both crime rates and individual crimes result from a host of social and individual causes, creating numerous problems and challenges (Hudson, 2001). Crime rates in the United States are on the rise (Vera Institute of Justice, 2007), and in some areas “accelerating at an alarming rate” (Rosen, 2006, p. 1). This increase impacts both the criminal justice system and family networks. For example, incarceration of a family member, especially a parent, creates disruption and stress for the entire family system (Kazura, Temke, Toth, & Hunter, 2002) and within the criminal justice system it exacerbates compounding problems currently surrounding corrections: prison and jail overcrowding; recidivism; and, revocations; which in turn affect public safety efforts. Funding issues encompass the overcrowding, while challenges to changing offender behavior dominate correctional efforts. Policies and programs addressing correctional populations are perplexed as to how to address these critical issues. Research on criminal behavior continues, but it currently appears “the field has yet to develop a realistic picture of what it takes to change offender behavior” (Visher, 2006, p. 300).

Much of the published research on programs addressing offenders’ behavior derives from Martinson’s (1974) review of rehabilitation programs that allegedly showed probation’s ineffectiveness (Petersilia, 1997). Martinson’s review became widely known



as the “nothing works” report. This report has generated much effort to understand what works in community supervision (Byrne & Taxman, 2005; Hanley, 2006; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005; Mair, 2004; May, 1999; Minor, Wells & Sims, 2003; Petersilia, Turner, Kahan, & Peterson, 1985; Rex, 1999; Sims & Jones, 1997; Travis, 2003). The “what works” movement in the United States is program based and evolves from a sociological perspective using recidivism as the primary outcome (Petersilia, 2004). A recent interest in criminology is desistance—why people stop offending. This perspective focuses on the processes that lead offenders to quit crime (Farrall, 2004; Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Farrall & Maruna, 2004; Laub & Sampson, 2001). Recent findings from Farrall’s (2004) longitudinal study of desistance identified factors thought to correlate with desistance, i.e., motivational, social and personal circumstances. In other words, informal social controls have been found to be more effective in the process of desistance than formal social controls. Mills (2005) reported social bonds such as family relationships have been recognized to provide the incentive and pressure to change. These findings all suggest the emphasis of probation be shifted away from offending-related to desistance-focused (Farrell & Maruna, 2004, p. 361).

With substantial increases in the offender population, finding “what works” becomes a goal for all stakeholders. Therefore, the response to criminal behavior will need a variety of aims, approaches and resources (Hudson, 2001).

#### Statement of the Problem

Increased crime rates results in increased numbers of persons under correctional supervision. At the end of 2007, the United States adult correctional population reached

7.4 million men and women, an increase of 26.8% from 1995 through 2007 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). Within the same time frame, probations increased 29.2%. Approximately 1 in every 31 adults is under community and/or correctional supervision. Table 1 provides information on persons under adult community and correctional supervision at year end 2007 as reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Table 1

*Adult Community and Correctional Supervision*

Total estimated correctional population	<u>Community Supervision</u>		<u>Incarceration</u>	
	Probation	Parole	Jail	Prison
7,430,926	4,293,163	824,365	780,581	1,532,817
Totals	5,117,528		2,313,398	
Percent to totals	83.9	16.1	33.7	66.3
Percent to estimated total	57.8	11.1	10.5	20.6

Community supervision, made up of probationers and paroles, accounted for approximately 70% of the correctional population. Of that, probationers made up more than 80% of community supervision, making it the most common form of sentencing. Probationers are “criminal offenders who have been sentenced to a period of conditional supervision in the community, generally in lieu of incarceration” (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). Almost half, 47 %, of the offenders on probation have been convicted of committing a felony, 51% of a misdemeanor, and 2% of other infractions (Bureau of

Justice Statistics, 2008). Since 1990 probationers have accounted for half the growth in the correctional population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). Parolees include criminal offenders conditionally released to community supervision after serving a prison term (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008).

Recidivism and revocations are a critical concern and one of much literature review (Hanley, 2006; Kendall, 2004; Minor, Wells & Sims, 2003; Petersilia, 1997; Petersilia et al., 1985; Rodriguez & Webb, 2007; Zhang, Roberts, & Callanan, 2006) for both probationers and parolees. Recidivism is the primary outcome measure for correctional programs as reported by Petersilia (1997). Recidivism means to commit a new crime. Revocation is the act of removing an offender from community supervision due to violating supervision conditions and/or committing a new crime (Texas Department of Criminal Justice). Data from the 1991 Survey of State Prison inmates determined that approximately 45% of inmates in State prison were on probation or parole at admission (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1995). Revocations have a tremendous impact on prison population increases. According to a report from the Legislative Budget Board for the State of Texas (2005), approximately 25% of the total number of offenders entering correctional institutions annually is parole violators, while probation revocations account for approximately 30% of prison admissions annually and these percentages have been rising from year to year. In Texas, from 1995 to 2004, felony probation revocations increased 44.4% (Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 2005). More recently, the 79<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature allocated new diversion program funds to help strengthen community supervision by reducing caseloads, increasing availability of substance abuse treatment

options, reducing revocations to prison by utilizing progressive sanctions models, and providing more community supervision options for residential treatment and aftercare. From September 2005 to August 2007, these diversion program funds have resulted in a statewide 3.3% decrease in revocations. (Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 2007a).

Recidivism and revocations can have negative consequences regarding community supervision's credibility and legitimacy in their mission to protect the public (Robinson & McNeill, 2004), alleviate prison crowding (Sims & Jones, 1997), and rehabilitate offenders (Petersilia, 1997). Having probation or parole revoked generally leads to incarceration, which in turn can have negative effects on both the offender and the offender's family. Incarceration of a family member, especially a parent, creates disruption and stress for the entire family system (Kazura, Temke, Toth, & Hunter, 2002). Research has shown that criminal justice involvement has a significant association with two types of family risks, economic strain and instability (Phillips, Erkanli, Keeler, Costello, & Angold, 2006), as well as problems leading to parenting strain, emotional stress, and children's loss of involvement with their incarcerated parent (Arditti, Lambert-Shute & Joest, 2003). Parental and marital relationships become exceptionally vulnerable during incarceration (Hairston, 1991).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of family during probation from the perspective of the felony probationer. In other words, according to the probationer, what does the family provide in terms of support—instrumental, emotional, tangible, during the probation experience? Much of the research on felony probation has been



related to recidivism: identifying risk factors, predicting success or failure, determining levels of supervision, and examining re-arrest rates. Only more recently has there been research related to the desistance process. A qualitative, ethnographic study was used to determine what family processes or associations may contribute to felony probationers' experience throughout probation. Qualitative research was appropriate for this study due to the exploratory nature of the research questions. This study solicited data to expand the understanding of desistance from crime at the probation level. Information gained from this study could affect probation supervision policies. Understanding how family may contribute to the felony probationers' experience may also benefit probation departments and supervision, intervention programs, as well as the family and felony probationer. This information could also provide collaboration efforts with community resources to assist probation, the family and felony probationer. Completing probation without revocation can provide benefits to the criminal justice system, family, felony probationer, and society. Data were analyzed for themes and/or issues to gain understanding into what role family contributes during felony probationers' probation process

### Research Questions

This study explored the role of family during the probation process from the perspective of the felony probationer. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the role of family during the felony probationer's probation process?
2. What aspect of family is deemed most helpful during the felony probationer's probation process?

3. What aspect of family is deemed least helpful during the felony probationer's probation process?

### Definitions

The following terms are operationally defined for the study:

Community supervision: Includes adult persons under probation.

Correctional supervision: Includes adult persons under parole, jail and prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007).

Desistance from crime: Process of ending a period of involvement in offending behavior (Farrall & Calverley, 2006, p. 1).

Desistance process: Gradual movement away from criminal offending (Farrall & Calverley, 2006, p. 18).

Emotional support: Expressions of care, empathy and concern (Cutrona, 2000).

Esteem support: Encouragement and expressions of belief in one's ability to overcome problems (Cutrona, 2000).

Family: Operationalized within this study as participants' perception.

Felony: A crime of a graver or more serious nature than those designated as misdemeanors (Black's Law Dictionary, 1991, p. 428).

Felony probation: Sentence imposed for commission of a felony crime whereby a convicted criminal offender is released into the community under the supervision of a probation officer in lieu of incarceration (Black's Law Dictionary, p. 835).

Felony probationer: An individual sentenced to felony probation that was determined by the probation department/officer as being at risk or high risk for re-offending.

Informational support: The offer of suggestions or advice on how to deal with a situation (Cutrona, 2000).

Instrumental support: The two types of support that attempt to help overcome difficulties causing distress; informational and tangible (Cutrona, 2000).

Nurturant support: The two types of support that provide comfort; emotional and esteem (Cutrona, 2000).

Offender: Generic term that applies to a person under correctional supervision.

Probation: Sentence imposed for commission of crime whereby a convicted criminal offender is released into the community under the supervision of a probation officer in lieu of incarceration (Black's Law Dictionary, 1991, p. 835).

Parole: The conditional release of an offender from prison to serve the remainder of their sentence under supervision in the community (Texas Department of Criminal Justice).

Recidivism: To commit a new crime (Texas Department of Criminal Justice).

Revocation: The act of removing an offender from community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision due to the offender violating the conditions of their supervision and/or committing a new crime (Texas Department of Criminal Justice).

Risk for recidivism: Categorization system applied to offenders after assessing risk level for re-offending. Risk level for participants will be determined by the probation department.

Tangible support: To provide something that will help a person solve a problem—loan money, take care of children (Cutrona, 2000).

Technical violation: A violation of one or more of the rules of community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision, not including commission of a new offense (Texas Department of Criminal Justice).

Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ): The agency which manages the overall operation of the state's prison system, parole, and state jail systems. The agency also provides funding, training, and certain oversight of community supervision. TDCJ is the largest state agency in Texas (Texas Department of Criminal Justice).

Violation: Failure by an offender to abide by a rule or condition of their supervision. A violation may be either technical or criminal in nature.

#### Delimitations

The study was delimited in the following ways. Participants included felony probationers at least 21 years of age, identified as medium to high risk for recidivism, living in central Texas, and who have currently served at least three years on felony probation. The study did not limit participants based on criminal offense, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, gender, marital status, or religion.



## Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of family during probation from the perspective of the felony probationer. This role is one that has not received much attention in research, although family relationships are often noted as an area of importance in the desistance literature. This study explored the influence of family on the felony probationer, which included aspects deemed most helpful and least helpful during the time of probation. This information will contribute and extend the research literature regarding desistance from crime.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of probation, recidivism, desistance, and family within the correctional system. The first section includes an overview of probation and models of service in probation practice. The second section gives a brief account of Texas' organizational structure for probation. Section three summarizes recidivism in felony probation. In this section, factors influencing probation outcome are noted as well as predictor domains for recidivism and profiles of felony probationers. The "what works" initiative currently popular with probation practice is briefly reviewed. The fourth section provides information on desistance, a relatively new approach to understanding the process of "quitting" crime. The last section establishes a basis for what role the family may contribute to the felony probationer's probation process.

#### Probation

Probation is increasing rapidly and affects more individuals and families each year. Approximately 70% of all Americans sentenced for criminal convictions live and work within communities, neighborhoods, and work environments. The majority (85%) of these individuals are on probation, making it the largest segment of corrections. Fifty percent of the probation population is felony offenders (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). Probation's initial function was to "help" nonviolent, first time offenders; rather than to serve as a major criminal sanction (Petersilia, 1997). Auerhahn (2007) utilized

simulation modeling methodology to illustrate the changing felony probationer profile which currently shows a higher level of offending. In 2000, 30% of probationers had two or more prior convictions than in 1980, and convictions for violent offences had increased 20% during the same time period. Institutional overcrowding has contributed to the increasing use of probation for convicted felons. This overuse of probation has generated concern about public safety (Petersilia, 1987; Sims & Jones, 1997). Therefore, how these felony offenders are managed carries enormous implications for public safety and the quality of community and family life (Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 1999).

In the beginning, probation was conceived and implemented with the intent to rehabilitate nonviolent offenders. Rehabilitation tasks included assistance with locating homes, finding employment, and adjusting to family difficulties. This rehabilitative model of probation persisted from its inception in 1841 to beyond 1956 when all states formally adopted probation laws (Petersilia, 1997; Purkiss, Kifer, Hemmens, & Burton Jr., 2003). Between the 50s and 70s probation evolved with little significance. As of 1985, very little research existed on felony probation. This in part was due to the initial concept of probation being reserved for nonviolent offenders. However, rising crime rates during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to public demand for harsher treatment of criminals (Petersilia et al., 1985). This increase in crime rates along with intense criticism during the 70s of the rehabilitative model resulted in tougher sanctions for criminals that included retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation as correctional goals (Purkiss et al., 2003).

Probation services vary across countries based on their basic assumptions, policies, and practices. Weiss and Wozner (2002) identified the range of theoretical and actual probation programs under ten alternative models that assist in comparing, defining, and characterizing the wide variety of approaches to probation. Two categories of probation models are those in which probation is perceived as an alternative to punishment; and those in which probation is perceived as an alternative form of punishment. Models that adopt the ideology of probation as an alternative to punishment alleviate offender responsibility for the crime and place little, if any, importance on control. Models that utilize probation as an alternative form of punishment emphasize control and basically view the causes of crime as irrelevant (Weiss & Wozner, 2002). The two categories of probation models described above illustrate the dilemma correctional policies and practices struggle with—care versus control.

### *Probation in Texas*

In 2007, Texas had the second largest adult probation population in the United States, followed only by Georgia (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). Based on the Texas Department of Criminal Justice offender profile data for 2004, the three most common offenses of felony offenders were: controlled substance 31%, assault 12% and driving while intoxicated/driving under the influence (DWI/DUI) 12%.

Probation departments within the United States operate through state statutes. This decentralized control results in a lack of a uniform structure (Krauth & Linke, 1998), making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive profile of probationers (Auerhahn, 2007). In Texas, adult probation departments, currently referred to as Community Supervision

and Corrections Department (CSCD), are organized under local judicial districts (Krauth & Linke, 1999), and administered through The Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Community Justice Assistance Division (TDCJ-CJAD). This division does not work directly with offenders; rather, it works with the CSCDs which supervise offenders. The division's responsibilities to the CSCDs include: tracking performance; monitoring budgets; distributing state funding; enforcing standards; providing administrative and technical assistance; and training and certifying probation officers (Texas Department of Criminal Justice). State funds support approximately two-thirds of personnel and programming costs for CSCDs, while the remainder is funded through offender fees. Counties provide office space, equipment and other forms of support (Krauth & Linke, 1998). All Texas CSCDs provide court services, basic supervision, and administrative services (Texas Department of Criminal Justice). Purkiss et al., (2003) analyzed all 50 states' statutes concerning the legally prescribed functions of probation officers from 1992 to 2002. Findings indicate that more states increased rehabilitative functions in 2002 while decreasing law enforcement functions. As of 2002, Texas appeared to have adopted a dual philosophy for probation, including a balance between rehabilitation and law enforcement goals.

CSCDs utilize the Texas Case Classification and Risk Assessment tool in assessing risks and needs of offenders. This tool ranks offenders' level of risk and need as: high, medium, or low. As of 2004, Texas probation offenders' risks levels were assessed as 21% high, 49% medium, and 28% low. Assessing offenders' risks and needs



are components of effective programming for reducing recidivism (Hanley, 2006; Hollin, 1999; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005).

### *Recidivism in Felony Probation*

Does probation reduce recidivism? This continues to be a vital concern since recidivism is the outcome measure for probation (Petersilia, 1997). Reports vary based on recidivism measurements which concurrently impact recidivism outcomes. Some indicators used to measure criminal activity are rearrest, conviction, revocation, and technical violations. The typical follow-up period for offenders involved in the criminal justice system is three years. Offenders most likely to recidivate do so within this time frame (Legislative Budget Board, The State of Texas, 2005).

Findings by Petersilia et al. (1985) in a seminal study of recidivism among felony probationers in California showed that two-thirds were rearrested over a 40-month follow-up period, and half were reconvicted. Morgan's (1993) extensive review of the literature on factors influencing probation outcomes showed recidivism ranged from 14 to 60 percent. Factors most common with probation violations included: property crimes; previous convictions; income; not living with a spouse or children (Morgan, 1993; Petersilia et al., 1985; Petersilia, 1997); younger age; male; and unstable living arrangements (Morgan, 1993). In Gendreau, Little and Goggin's (1996) work, meta-analytic techniques were utilized to determine which predictor domains were the best predictors of adult offender recidivism. Results indicated the strongest predictor domains were criminogenic needs, criminal history, social achievement, age/gender/race, and family factors.

Recidivism has been the primary measurement for offender management programs. Programs based on a “what works” philosophy have dominated the criminal justice field since the release of Martinson’s (1974) comprehensive review of the literature that concluded, “With few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism” (p. 25). This influential review became known as the “nothing works” report. Members of the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), the national association representing United States probation and parole officers, contend that recidivism rates only measure one aspect of community supervision and fail to recognize other critical tasks such as preparing presentence investigations, collecting fines and fees, monitoring community service, and coordinating treatment services. Practitioners also contest the use of recidivism as the sole measure of their success, noting that crime is the result of many social problems that are beyond the scope of their agencies (Bottoms & McWilliams, 1979; Petersilia, 1997).

The “what works” initiative that dominates current correctional programming focuses on evidence-based practices; some of which include standardized interventions based on risk assessment and cognitive behavioral programs (Worrall, 2004). In an address at the National Conference of the International Community Corrections Association, Travis (2003) acknowledged a need for a broader approach in determining effectiveness of correctional work by identifying three deficiencies within the “what works” approach: too much of a focus on programs and not enough on people; limited measurements of success; and, failure to measure outcomes of public interest.

## Desistance from Crime

A less known or understood concept within criminology is desistance. Desistance, as defined by Farrall and Calverley (2006), is the end of a period of involvement in offending; or the absence of criminal behavior (Bottoms, Shapland, Costello, Holmes, & Muir, 2004). The focus of desistance literature is on when, how and why offenders stop their criminal behavior; whereas the “what works” model is focused on program effectiveness in reducing recidivism (McNeill, 2002; Rex, 1999). This broader perspective within the desistance approach recognizes the complex personal, inter-personal and social contexts of the criminal model (McNeill, 2002). Desistance is understood as a process, not an event (Farrall, 2004; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 1999; McNeill, 2002), and implies a behavior change; that is a shift from criminal antisocial behavior to one of personal/social reform. Leading factors explaining desistance generally falls within two opposing paradigms; ontogenetic and sociogenic (Maruna, 1999). According to Lewin (1935), behavior is the function between the person and the environment. These two variables are interdependent and continuously and mutually influence each other (Maruna, 1999; Muuss, 1996). A person’s behavior results from the interaction between the person and his environment (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). The desistance perspective takes into account the personal and social contexts surrounding the offender.

Three distinctive theoretical perspectives from the desistance literature are identified in Maruna’s (1999) work: maturational reform; social bonds; and narrative theories. Maturational reform is based on associations between age and criminal



behavior. Social bond theories propose that ties to family, employment or educational programs in early adulthood explain changes in criminality during the life course. Where ties to informal social controls exist, they can help create and support an interest in conformity, and where lacking, offenders have less to lose from continuing to offend. Narrative theories focus on the significance of subjective identity changes, reflected in goals, motivations, and feelings. Individuals construct narratives that integrate their pasts, present and perceived futures into a personal identity that maintains and guides behavior.

The desistance literature has identified several factors associated with the ending of active involvement in offending. As Farrall and Calverley (2004) note, most factors are associated with acquiring “something” (employment, life partner or family). Overall, the literature maintains that informal social controls have more influence on desistance than formal social controls (Farrall & Calverley; 2006; Godfrey, Cox & Farrall, 2007; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1990). This concept along with the assertion by Bottoms et al. (2004) that social context is important for all transitions in the pathways in and out of crime support Lewin’s (1935) function of behavior. The desistance perspective takes into account the personal and social contexts surrounding the offender.

### The Role of Family

The ideology regarding the importance of family has translated into the promotion and design of social policy initiatives to strengthen, reunite, and create families (Travis, 2005). Travis noted that criminal justice policies favoring mass incarceration seems incongruent with prevailing social policies: separating families and weakening marriages. Families and marriage are integral parts of the mechanisms of informal social control that

constrain antisocial behavior therefore in developing crime policies, families matter. Rex (1999) concluded that offenders' own social networks are often more successful in helping to meet their needs than formal social networks. In the Urban Institute's longitudinal study of prisoners returning to communities, La Vigne, Visser, and Castro (2004) reported that respondents cited family as the most important factor in helping them stay out of prison. In Mills' (2005) review of the literature regarding the role of prisoners' family, parole success was related to family visits. These visits were described as "an essential component of the rehabilitative process" (Shafer, 1994, p. 17). With regards to prisoners' families, the main focus of the literature has been on the impacts and/or experiences of families during the imprisonment of a relative (Arditti et al., 2003; Mills, 2005; Travis, 2005), compared to exploring prisoners' perspectives of family relations and their potential support (Mills, 2005), or the importance of friends and family (Bottoms et al., 2004). Mills (2005) reported qualitative work is needed to understand the meaning of family relationships and their support for prisoners both during imprisonment and upon release. Prisoners returning to the community without family support are at a much higher risk of re-offending than those who receive active family support (Mills, 2005; Shapiro, 2003). Support, as well as the source of support is critical for offenders. Support coming from those who share close emotional bonds with the offender will be most effective (Cutrona, 2000).

Family Justice, a non-profit organization, has successfully advocated for the promotion of incorporating family focus methods in community justice supervision by engaging families in the supervision process. They emphasize the role of the family as

both an instrument of supervision and a source of support for offenders (Evans, 2002; Shapiro, 2003). The Family Justice motto sums up the need for incorporating family into correctional policies and practices—“Families are part of the solution” (Family Justice).

### Summary

Probation is the largest segment within the correctional system, affecting more people, and families, each year. Reducing recidivism has been and continues to be the primary challenge within the correctional system. Probation programs have struggled over the past 30 years in their policies and practices in attempts to reduce recidivism. Desistance, the process of “quitting” criminal behavior is a relatively new concept within the field of criminology. Theoretical perspectives from the desistance literature include: maturational reform; social bonds; and narrative theories. The desistance perspective includes both the personal and social contexts of the offender. Informal social controls have shown promise in helping to redirect offenders from re-offending; therefore, families may be a natural resource for the correctional system to tap into.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Although various approaches to exploring felony probationer's perceptions may be useful, a qualitative approach seems most beneficial for uncovering what role family plays during the felony probationer's probation experience. Therefore, this study utilized qualitative methods in the data collection and analysis. Qualitative methods have the ability to produce more meaning, depth and scope of subjective experiences within a social context (Pogrebin, 2003), utilizing language as opposed to numeric explanations. According to Maxwell (1996), qualitative methods are best suited for: understanding meaning, comprehending context, generating grounded theory, understanding processes, and developing explanations. Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 4), consists of interpretive practices that make the world visible.

This study was conducted to explore the role of family during the probation process from the perspective of the felony probationer. Interviews were used to examine the influence of family on the felony probationer, which included aspects deemed most helpful and aspects deemed least helpful during the probation process.

#### Sample

A combination of probability and nonprobability sampling methods were used in securing 18 felony probationers who were at least 21 years of age, on probation a minimum of three years and assessed as being medium to high risk for recidivism to

participate in the study. The minimum three years on probation was selected since this is the time frame identified by the Texas Legislative Budget Board (2005) as the time when the majority of offenders are most likely to recidivate. Offenders assessed as high or medium risk were requested because according to Laub and Sampson (2001), low level offending is normative; therefore researchers should not spend much time studying termination or desistance for low level offenders. Felony probationers were chosen for this study because they have committed more serious crimes and are at higher risk of recidivating, and/or having their probation revoked. Random sampling resulted in 15 contacts with 12 participating. Two participants were secured through snow ball sampling and four utilizing the convenience sampling method.

Acquiring access to felony probationers required negotiations at several levels; therefore, a systematic approach was followed—local judicial judges, probation director, information technology personnel, and felony probationers. Texas probation departments are organized under the local judicial districts; therefore, initial contact was made with the local district judges responsible for hearing and sentencing felony offenders. An overview of the study was provided as was a request for permission to access felony offenders through the probation department. After verbal permission was given, the probation or Community Supervision and Corrections Department Director was contacted for approval and assistance from the probation department. Assistance was provided by randomly identifying felony offenders fitting the study criteria, mailing recruitment letters (Appendix A), and providing space for interviewing.



The probation director initiated and directed the random selection process. Potential participants were identified through a computer generated random selection process and mailed recruitment letters. The first step involved producing a numbered, alphabetical listing of felony probationers sorted by officer—380 were identified. The random number generator function on Excel was utilized to generate 30 random numbers between 1 and 380. Those offenders on the listing that corresponded to the random numbers were identified and mailed a recruitment letter. This first wave of recruitment letters generated two potential participants—a 7% return. The second wave followed the above process except 50 random numbers between 1 and 350 were selected. This mailing produced 7 potential participants—a 14% return. The final wave randomly identified 80 numbers between 1 and 300, utilizing the same above procedures; contacts with 6 potential participants were made—a 7.5% return. Scheduled interviews were made with 14 probationers, although 2 persons did not show up as scheduled. One potential participant had to be turned down, as instructed by the probation director. A total of 160 randomly selected felony probationers were mailed recruitment letters resulting in an overall contact rate of 9% and a participation rate of 7.5 percent.

The snow ball sampling method, initiated by one of the participants, provided two additional felony probationers as participants. The convenience sampling method produced four. Three of the four participants temporarily resided at a short-term drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility. The director of the facility was contacted and verbal permission was granted for residents on felony probation to be provided a recruitment

letter. The one additional participant was recruited by the researcher from a weekly parent education class he was mandated to attend.

Interested felony probationers contacted the researcher to set up an interview time. The researcher obtained a pre-paid cell phone specifically designated for this purpose. Nine interviews were held at the probation department where security was provided. Two interviews were held at the drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility, four in the researcher's office building, one at the participant's home and two at the participants' place of employment. Security was present at each location.

Sample size in phenomenological studies is generally not specified beforehand. Sample size varies depending on the scope of the study, the quality of data, and the design of the study (Creswell, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Creswell (1998, p. 65) recommended "long interviews with up to 10 people" for a phenomenological study. One major criterion for the selection of participants is that they all have experienced the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007). Weiss (1994) suggested to stop interviewing when the information becomes redundant or unimportant. As an inducement to participate in the study, and as an appreciation of their time, a monetary incentive in the form of a \$10 discount store shopping card was offered in the recruitment letter. This monetary incentive reflects persuasion, an acceptable form of influence compatible with informed consent (Erien, Sauder & Mellors, 1999).

#### Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with two individuals who fit the study criteria. Pilot studies provide opportunities to refine interview questions and procedures prior to

interviewing the primary respondents (Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994). Gillhan (2005) added to the benefits of pilot studies by noting that they provide the researcher the opportunity to observe how study participants respond to the questions and how they, the researcher, manages the interview. Two participants were interviewed utilizing the study's interview format and then asked to provide comments and suggestions upon conclusion of the interview. No major changes were made. The pilot data were included in the final data analysis.

#### Instrument

Creswell (2007) identified the researcher as key instrument of data collection as a characteristic of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves, generally using a protocol or guide as an instrument. This study utilized semi-structured open-ended interviews to collect data. Qualitative interviewing is flexible and dynamic and provides access to the observations of others (Weiss, 1994).

Spradley (2003) introduced two themes involved in the qualitative process when interviews are utilized as a method for data collection: developing rapport, and attaining meaningful information. Rapport encourages participants to talk, while obtaining information promotes the development of rapport. Rapport refers to both the researcher and participant as having a harmonious relationship that involves a sense of trust. Rapport was initiated during phone contact and continued prior to the audio taped interview. The Interview Protocol (Appendix B) provided general questions to help build rapport. Osborne (1994) stressed the importance of empathic rapport and communication skills in phenomenological research.



This researcher chose to conduct semi-structured open-ended interviews with felony probationers to explore the role of family during the probation process from the perspective of the felony probationer. Interviewing allows the researcher to get close to the phenomenon under study (Osborne, 1994). The research plan dictated a qualitative interview study.

### Data Collection

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with medium to high risk felony probationers to explore the role of family during the probation process from the perspective of the felony probationer. Interested participants contacted the researcher to schedule an interview appointment. This phone contact was an opportunity to again explain the purpose of the research, answer any questions the participant had, and schedule an interview appointment. At the scheduled interview, the researcher provided the consent form (Appendix C) for participant signature, as well as information regarding their rights, possible risks, and potential benefits. The consent form followed the university's Institutional Review Board's requirements. Prior to the taped interview, the participant had another opportunity to ask any questions they may have had concerning the research process. An adaptation of the interview protocol illustrated by Creswell (2007) was utilized for documenting the non-recorded information, and notes were taken after the recorded interview. Participant's name and assigned identification code, along with the demographic information and rapport building was not taped. This was designed to protect the confidentiality of the participant. Only the researcher has access to the interview protocol. Together, the non-taped and taped portions of the interviews

lasted approximately one hour. The taped portion of the interview consisted of open-ended questions that elicited information regarding the research questions (Appendix D). Prompts were used as necessary to expand on statements and/or gain more information. Following the interview, the participant was thanked for their participation and given the incentive.

### Data Analysis

Upon completion of each interview, the audio tapes were reviewed and all but five were transcribed by a professional transcriber. The remaining five were transcribed by the researcher. The responses were put into a word document and coded with an assigned code. Each assigned code has its own document. Once a document was completed, the researcher read over the text. Upon completion of all audio taped transcriptions, the researcher began the analysis process utilizing the phenomenological data analysis method described by Colaizzi (1978). As suggested by Colaizzi, all participants' transcripts were read multiple times to develop an understanding. The next step in the data analysis was to extract phrases and/or sentences that directly pertained to the phenomenon. Meanings were then formulated from these significant statements. This process "involves creative insight where the researcher must leap from what the participants say to what they mean" (Colaizzi, p. 59) while remaining connected to the data. These formulated meanings were then organized into clusters of themes. These themes were referred back to the original text for validation.

## Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is measured against the principles of trustworthiness and evaluated using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as its criteria. Guba (1981) proposed this model for assessing the quality of qualitative studies. The components of this model translate to the concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity as applied in the quantitative paradigm (Krefting, 1990).

### *Credibility*

Credibility, a component of trustworthiness, refers to the level of confidence that can be applied to the study's findings. One strategy to help achieve credibility is triangulation (Krefting, 1990). Triangulation refers to the use of multiple and different approaches to provide corroborating evidence, which in turn helps guard against researcher bias (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The researcher used triangulation as one way to establish credibility. One professional from family studies experienced in qualitative data analysis and one professional from the criminal justice field were identified and provided the transcribed data, findings and conclusions, for feedback regarding alternative interpretations of themes, language, or observations. After review, both supported the researcher's findings and interpretations. These findings were also supported through the research literature.

### *Transferability*

Transferability is another component of trustworthiness. It refers to the degree in which the findings can be generalized to larger populations. Rich, thick descriptions

from the transcriptions were used to allow readers to make determinations regarding the transferability of the study results (Creswell, 1998). Quotes from the transcribed data were used to support the emerged themes.

### *Dependability*

The third criterion of trustworthiness is dependability, which refers to the consistency of the data. This concept is similar to reliability, in that it refers to how consistent the findings would be if the study were replicated with similar participants and in a similar context. In quantitative research, reliability is dependent on the stability, consistency, and sameness in the study, whereas in qualitative research variability is expected (Krefting, 1990). Two strategies the researcher employed to increase dependability were detailed documentation of the data collection process and acknowledgement of the researcher as the research instrument. Detailed documentation helps establish an “audit trail” (Guba, 1981, p. 87) whereby an outsider could examine the data, methods and findings of the study. The researcher as the research instrument is present in every phase of the research process, therefore it is important to clarify at the onset biases that could impact the researcher’s findings and approach to the study.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability, the last measure of trustworthiness, refers to the degree in which the findings are the result of the research process and not that of other influences (Guba, 1981). Peer review is one way the researcher can achieve confirmability. Creswell (2007) defined the role of the peer reviewer as a “devil’s advocate” (p. 202), an individual who asks hard questions regarding all aspects of the research process in order to help keep the

researcher honest. The researcher frequently consulted with her major professor and another professional in family studies to review the data collection and data analysis processes in order to reduce researcher biases.

#### Role of the Researcher

Neither the researcher nor her family has personally been involved with the criminal justice system. Affiliations with the criminal justice system have primarily been indirect and related to job responsibilities. Job responsibilities centered around crime victim issues and advocacy. Other involvements included: interacting with law enforcement departments, both civilian and military; legal agencies; courts; and training military police in domestic violence and victim issues. The researcher's current involvement with the system involves conducting quarterly parent education classes for probationers assigned to attend.

#### Summary

Multiple sampling techniques produced 18 felony probationers for participation in a phenomenological study. Requirements of the Institutional Review Board were followed and adhered to throughout the research process. Data were collected through taped interviews and analyzed using a phenomenological procedure. Findings were validated utilizing multiple strategies.



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of family during the probation process from the perspective of the felony probationer. Interviews were used to examine the influence of family on the felony probationer, which included aspects deemed most helpful and aspects deemed least helpful during the probation process. This chapter provides the findings from the interviews and the data analysis.

#### Description of Participants

Eighteen felony probationers agreed to participate in audio taped interviews for this study. To meet study criteria participants had to be at least 21 years of age, on probation for a minimum of 3 years, and assessed as being medium or high risk for recidivism. Sampling methods included random, snowball, and convenience. Descriptive information was collected from each participant (Table 2). Participants included 11 males and 7 females ranging in age from 24 to 61 with a mean age of 33 years. Twelve participants described their marital status as married, three cohabitating, two divorced and one single. Two female participants that reported being married, and one single, indicated their husband was currently serving time in prison. All participants had children.



Table 2

*Participant Information*

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## Gender

Male	Female
11	7

## Age in Years

	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69
Male	4	4	2		1
Female	2	4		1	

## Marital Status

	Married	Single	Divorced	Cohabiting
Male	8		1	2
Female	4	1	1	1

## Number of Children

	1	2	3	4	5
Males	4	2	2		3
Females	4	2			1

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*Note.* Values reported are frequencies.

Additional descriptive information collected described the participants living arrangements (Table 3). Eight males and one female reported living with their spouse and children, although one of the above male participants reported that he, his wife and

their five children also lived with his parents. Two divorced male participants did not live with their children although they reported being very involved with them. Two female participants reported having two children, but only having one living with them. All but three respondents lived with children. Children ranged in age from 6 months to 40 years of age. Forty-one of the 48 children were minors.

Table 3

*Participants' Family Structure*

Current Living Arrangements	Males	Females
Spouse and children	7	1
Spouse, children, and parents	1	
Mother and children		1
Children		2
Girlfriend/Lady friend	2	
Boyfriend and child		1
Adult daughter, grandson, roommate		1
Daughter, roommate/girlfriend and child		1
Self	1	

*Note.* Values reported are frequencies.

Family members included biological parents and step-parents, spouses, girlfriend, roommate, children, grandparents, siblings, adult children, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Family members also included a friend and an ex-wife.

Information regarding felony convictions was not sought although several voluntarily characterized their offenses. Thirteen cited the use of drugs and/or alcohol as being the primary cause of their probation. Several citing drugs/alcohol also reported other offenses simultaneously. Other felony offenses cited included aggravated assault, hot check, injury to a child, and burglary. Four participants did not characterize their offense.

### Findings

The phenomenological data analysis method utilized in this study was based on Colaizzi's (1978) systematic approach. First, audio taped interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were read multiple times to acquire a general overview of the content. The second and third steps entailed extracting significant statements and formulating their meanings into themes. Four major themes emerged along with several subthemes. The major themes were (a) family networks; (b) providing focus, direction and meaning to life; (c) source of frustration, disappointment and stress; and (d) family ties. These themes were referred back to the original transcripts in order to validate them. Each transcript provided statements that reflected each of the major themes. Table 4 lists the themes and subthemes that emerged.

Table 4

*Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
1. Family Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Family composition</li> <li>b. Perceived quality of family relationship</li> <li>c. Family formation</li> </ul>
2. Providing Focus, Direction and Meaning to Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Children as motivation</li> <li>b. Nurturant and instrumental support</li> <li>c. Structure in daily life</li> </ul>
3. Source of Frustration, Disappointment and Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Lack of nurturant support</li> <li>b. Lack of help with child care</li> <li>c. Financial concerns</li> </ul>
4. Family Ties	

*Theme 1: Family Networks*

The overall purpose of this study was to explore the role of family from the perspective of the felony probationer during time on probation. Questions were asked during the interview process that would lead participants to describe their own families and their relationships with them. Since family inclusion may vary among the participants, their definition of family was accepted. Most participants began descriptions with either their biological family and/or their family of origin. All participants described relationships with all members recognized as family, although some descriptions were more specific than others. Some participants described all family member relationships as

good while others used a mix of descriptions depending on who they were speaking about. The description of the focused family member is what determined the category of family relationships. Family formation was noted by several participants when asked where their family was the day they received probation. The subthemes in this section include family composition, perceived quality of the family relationship and family formation.

*Subtheme: Family Composition*

Eighteen participants were asked to describe their family. Most felony probationers' described their families as a combination that included their biological family, extended family, and family of origin. Participants' descriptions included deceased family members, an ex-wife, a girlfriend, a lady friend, and a roommate.

I have a wife, 5 children. I stay with my mom and dad at this time; we all stay together. (P1)

We have lived in \_\_\_\_\_ 5 years now. I am 25 and my wife is 22. We've got a 3 year old girl. So far we're going really great. My closest family members are probably a 3½ hours drive from here. (P3)

My mother passed away in August of 04 and she was my main family member. I lived with her and my daughter, uh so when I lost her, it was very hard, I felt very alone; I was basically left alone. I do have a sister, who has gotten really close, and I've got my grandparents who are very supportive, and then I have my boyfriend, who I live with. (P2)

Well, there's my wife and my kids, that's my immediate. My immediate attention goes to them. Then I have some cousins of mine that I grew up with that are like brothers and sisters. My mom passed on. My mom was my world. She passed away 15 months ago come the 23<sup>rd</sup>. (P5)

My family, I guess I would consider that my brother and sisters, my mom, and maybe an aunt and uncle. But they don't understand anything. They are not really into my business or anything. They don't know what I work for, how much money I get back, they don't know anything. Oh yeah, and I have a sister-in-law and my kids. My husband (in prison), he thinks I'm a bitch right now, and my kids make up my family right now but, the rest around it would be my mom, my aunt, my sister-in-law, my brother and sisters, but my brother's on drugs right now, so I don't talk to him. (P6)

Right now, it's my kids and my wife. Like my dad, when I was little, I was living under their roof, but now I have my own wife and kids. My mom passed away but my dad is still here in \_\_\_\_\_. My real mom is not around, but I have a step-mom. (P8)

I have a fairly large family. I have a lot of distant family. I consider my immediate family to be my 3 brothers and my sister. I consider my wife and my daughter my entire family, more so than my brothers and my sister. (P9)

My dad lives here and my kids live here. The rest of my family lives in Maryland or Virginia. There's my mom and I have an older sister, a younger sister, and a



younger brother. I consider my girlfriend family but I didn't know her when I got into trouble. (P10)

I have a very large family. I have cousins, aunt, uncles, and a grandmother. My daughter is family, the only family of my family, but she's it. I consider my husband family but he is currently not around (prison). (P11)

Well there's my wife (name), and my daughter, (name). Basically, they're the world to me. My mother, she's been a big help, my brother, and my friend (name) who is more like an older brother to me. He's a friend but acts like an older brother. They are all close by. (P12)

My mother and my father, they are both still living. My mother is blind, raised 8 kids by herself, pretty much because dad was working – you know till they divorced when I was about 12, uh, all my brothers and sisters; lost one brother a couple of years back. We're still close; still family they live you know within 100 miles – so that's good – you know. My ex-wife is family to me because we share our children, 5 children – and that's pretty well who makes up my family. (P14)

Yes, I have a sister and she's married and lives in Texas and 3 nephews and they are grown and I have 5 kids – uh, and I have 3 grand kids – and I have a roommate and he's like family and I love him a lot. We get along very well, since I been kind of sober. (P15)

I live with my mother. Well, we all live together, my mother, me, and my two sons. I have a brother left in Dallas and I have one that lives in \_\_\_\_\_. I am the oldest child out of three and the only girl. Me and my mother are really close

and my mother's mother, my grandmother. (P16)

Actually, I consider my husband and my 3 children, but also my mother and my brother and sister. They live close by. (P17)

I have 9 brothers and sisters and there's my mom. I'm really close to my mom.

My dad passed away about 8 years ago. My husband, I've been with him since I was about 17 so about 11 years we've been together. I have 2 sons. I am really family oriented. (P18)

#### *Subtheme: Perceived Quality of Family Relationship*

Felony probationers were asked to describe their relationship with their family. Participants described their perceptions of their family relationships based on who they were speaking about; therefore, some participants used more than one description. These descriptions were then grouped into the following categories: positive, improving, neutral, and negative. Overall, based on the language used, 14 participants described at least one relationship within the family as being positive. Four participants described relationships as improving; 3 as neutral; and 1 negative.

*The positive relationship.* One type of family relationships described by most participants was positive. Terms used by participants that described relationships positive in nature were good, close, open, loving and caring, and wonderful. The following quotes illustrate relationships described as positive.

She (wife) is the world to me, has been with me through the hard, the soft. I mean I am the type of person who is learning to express himself. She has brought that

upon me and that is something that I didn't know. Like I said, she is just the world to me. (P3)

Loving, caring. Well, for me it's been new; I have a new son and I'm a first time father and everything is new. He's learning. He's learned how to open up the child gate. It's different and that is the thing about it. Four years ago I was single and what relationships I did have they weren't meaningful, but here and now is the best thing that ever happened. (P5)

My relationship with my brothers is very open. I can conversate with them and I can tell them anything, no matter if it's messing up or having problems with my wife and our relationship. So, my brothers and I have a very comfortable, communication based relationship. My wife and I, we share communication from our past, to our present, to our future. We know exactly where both of us have been. We know the struggles we have had in the past, on her part from promiscuity or drugs and alcohol and violence and from my past alcohol, violence, and promiscuity. In the present from hard working to our future. We are a communication-based relationship. (P9)

We're close but not really, really close. We used to be really close when I was in high school back in '96-'97 but then we started drifting a little bit apart and then they moved out to \_\_\_\_\_. Because I couldn't move out there with them, because I was on probation, I didn't ask my probation officer to move out there with them, but I guess they took offense to that which I needed a town to work in and there was no work out there so I had to stay here in town. My relationship

with my wife and daughter is really good. We have our ups and downs just like every married couple. It's really good. (P12)

I think it's good. I mean we grew up close, we were real poor so I think that helped – we've kind of grown together. I'm glad that my dad lived long enough for my feelings changed about him – because you know since he wasn't there and stuff like that: there might have been bitterness or – I think he could have done better as a father supporting us and things like that – and I was bitter about that – you know but as you grow older and getting to know him again – he went through heart surgery years ago – that's why our relationship you know – I've always been close to my mom and I'm glad my dad lived long enough – we usually tried to go out – he goes to a senior dance first Sundays every month so I try to make that with him you know – things like that – Mother, crazy about her because she's just a super strong woman and – brothers and sisters, I just love all of them you know. (P14)

Uh, close relationship; they love me, I love them; we do things together. I go visit my sister, she come visit me cause she lives out of town; and me and my nephews we go out to eat and my daughters we go out to eat and we go to church together, we go to functions together, like picnics, or graduations or sometime special occasions. (P15)

My husband, me and his relationship is wonderful and my brother and sister. Me and my mom are real close, real, real close. (P17)

It's good sometimes, bad sometimes. Like, I really talk a lot to my brothers and my sisters. We are really, really close to each other. We all stay in a really close-knot spot. We all take care of my mother. She's remarried and been married for 13 years so I have a 10 year old sister. I love my family. (P18)

*The improving relationship.* Participants described some relationships as improving. These relationships were described as growing, having more communication, more open and having an understanding of the situation. Following are quotes related to this concept:

At this time its more open, but it use to be real just shut down – really quite, stuff like that and now they understand you know that I'm really trying to succeed and do right. And it's I talk to them more; uh more open – as I said – and it's just different, its actually a whole different life style when they, when its, its an understanding of what I'm really trying to do. (P1)

I think it goes hand in hand. It's getting better – it's getting better and mostly on my part and I'm responding to them and opening up the doors. (P2)

With my mother, it's grown a lot, grown a lot. When I came onto probation, I got into a Civigenics program and I learned a lot of things about life, a lot of things about my alcoholism. I was able to stop and look, you know, it's actually a disease. I was able to realize that my mom had been through a lot of things that I had actually caused. She always wished for the best. I went out and did my own thing. Today, I am able to forgive her but she abused me and I have seen her abuse my little brothers and stuff. Today, I am able to tell her I love her. With

my father, like I said, from the age of 5 to the age of 8, I stayed with him. He's always been my world. Today, he's no longer with us. I lost him about 4 months ago. It was one of the hardest things I've had to go through in life. Today, I tell my wife, if I didn't have a drink through that, I don't think I will ever drink again, you know. (P3)

My relationship with my family, it's not like a mother and daughter relationship as far as my mother's part. We are pretty much distant. I think it's just the way we grew up. We grew up like that, you know, but like I said within the year everybody seems to be talking a little more and getting a little bit closer and all that. So, it's not the best but we're getting closer. (P6)

*The neutral relationship.* Three participants indicated having neutral relationships with extended family members. These relationships were not distinctly described as being positive or negative. Following are participants' comments.

With my cousins, now it's just we're related. (P7)

He sometimes helps me, once in a great while, but once he gets mad or something and when he gets mad at us he won't talk to us for a week or two weeks. So, I say I ain't going to kiss his butt, but I don't know. If he wants to talk to me, he can come up to my house because he knows where I live at. So, I don't really talk to him all that much. (P8)

My dad, we get along but not like we used to. We used to be buddy, buddy but now it's more like a father and son relationship. I wouldn't say it's friendly. (P10)



*The negative relationship.* Only one participant described her family, except for her daughter, as having no contact. This participant was cut off from her family because of her relationship with her then boyfriend, now husband. This is what the participant had to say when asked to describe her relationship with her family.

There is not one, except with my daughter. I don't have a relationship with any of my other family. I don't speak to them. They're not there. I don't associate at all with them now because of my husband. When they found out I was seeing him, they cut me off. (P11)

#### *Subtheme: Family Formation*

One element of family structure that emerged during the interviews was the timing of family formation. This first became evident in a few of the participants' response to the question of where their family was the day they received probation. Thereafter, if family formation was not clarified prior to this question, then participants were asked directly. Ten of the participants indicated that relationships with their current spouses did not occur until after they began serving time on probation. Six of the ten had their first child after marrying. The following are a sample of statements that prompted this concept.

My mother was in the courtroom. I still wasn't married and I didn't have a 3 year old daughter. My father was still out somewhere working, I believe. (P3)

I'm trying to remember. Well, I wasn't married at the time. (P4)

I didn't have any. I didn't have my wife at the time. (P5)

My family was pretty much on their own, like I was on my own. I really didn't have a family at that point. I was a solo person and stuck to myself, stayed by myself, and was on my own basically. (P9)

My mom was out in \_\_\_\_\_. My friend \_\_\_\_\_, he was in \_\_\_\_\_ and I hadn't met my wife yet. (P12)

### *Theme 2: Providing Focus, Direction and Meaning to Life*

Most felony probationers perceive their families as providing them with a focus, direction and meaning to life. This theme emerged from the participants' accounts of family help, both direct and indirect. Several of the participants stated only positive comments, although all participants had at least some positive remarks. Those things deemed helpful included their children as a source of motivation, nurturant and instrumental support, and structure in daily life. Children were specifically mentioned as a source of motivation. Nurturant support consists of emotional and esteem support while instrumental support consists of tangible and informational support. Aspects of nurturant support mentioned were understanding, being there, helping, encouragement, and providing them with a second chance. Instrumental support was perceived as having financial assistance, transportation, housing, and help with children. Everyday tasks of working, being home, taking or helping take care of children as well as attending appointments, meetings, and/or classes helped in providing structure to their lives.

*Subtheme: Children as Motivation*

Children offer a source of motivation in the form of emotional support to the participants. The following are comments more specifically related to the participants' perception of children's involvement in providing support.

My children they are real supportive of me. My oldest – no (son), but he went to one of my groups with me – he wanted to go with me. To me that was real uplifting. (P1)

I got small children and they still remember you know when I was in my addiction, you know, they give me hugs and man that's joy right there; my daughter hollers my name, you know when I come home from work you know, dada – that actually makes me feel good, that actually puts that much more thought in my head to stay clean you know, I'm not walking home drunk slurring or smelling like whatever, you know, I actually feel good about myself when I hear my children actually happy to see me. (P1)

Uh, just for my children of course, I want to change and I want to get through probation. (P2)

It feels great to come home from work and have my little one run out to the car, hug me, and kiss me. Just like right before I came up here, she was going where are you going, you just got here. I said I'll be right back. (P3)

Today, I am glad that I don't need any of that assistance and that I can maintain my family and give my little one what I couldn't have, especially an education. I tell my wife I would give my life for my daughter to finish college. (P3)

I have 2 beautiful children and I love them very much. I love them more every day. I have more fun with my kids than with anything, that's my adrenaline. (P4)

I have a new son and I'm a first time father and everything is new. (P5)

I am not going to pass alcoholism and addiction to my kids. (P7)

My little girls, if I am fixing to drink a beer, they'll say daddy, you're on probation. So, they encourage me. That's all they do is encourage me. (P8)

It would be more helpful if my mother was here, but I am not leaving my kids. (P10)

My daughter just being there in general prevented a lot, because I was in and out of DePaul (psychiatric hospital) a few times, suicidal, and she gave me a reality check. Seeing her gave me the strength not to do it. (P11)

I don't want to do anything bad to stay away from my daughter. I want to be there for my daughter and I'd rather be there for my daughter and stay away from being in jail and being away from her. (P12)

My kids, I'm their hero – I'm their hero and it's just kept me focused so much, you know even when I couldn't depend on myself because I was so low on myself, you know not want to disappoint my children. (P14)

What keeps me moving forward is my children and because of that, because when I got on probation I had one kid and when I got on probation I had two more and this is the first time I've ever left my kids for this long. My kids come first to mind when I get that anger or have the urge to fight, because I don't want to leave them to go to prison. (P17)

Then, I had my son and I stayed out of trouble. Both of my kids have been my motivation for staying out of trouble, for me to be there for them. (P18)

*Subtheme: Nurturant and Instrumental Support*

Nurturant support, which consists of emotional and or esteem support, was provided to participants in a variety of ways. Comments related to nurturant support are stated in generalities; therefore statements will include several sources of nurturant support: understanding, being there, helping, encouragement, and providing them with a second chance. The following are comments generally related to the participants' perception of family providing nurturant support.

They (wife and daughter) support me in everything. For example, my wife she came from a family where she never needed anything. She got everything she ever wanted, and with me, she knows I have my responsibilities with probation, my restitution fees, and even though I can't make complete payments, she understands she can't get a new pair of shoes every week, or new clothes every week. For my little one, we will take her out to the store and she will want this little kind of toy and I have to explain to her we have payments and daddy don't have money today so then she will go to the dollar items and I'm like we just can't this weekend. So she is just like all right. She will take what she can, you know, like what she can get. Like I said, my wife is fantastic. She understands and helps me out in every process. I don't have to buy lunch from the cart that goes down to the job site. My wife has my lunch ready in the mornings. I mean it's excellent. I couldn't ask more from my wife. (P3)

She is understandable about my going to AA, taking my GED courses, and she is actually supportive. When I met her, I couldn't spell, I couldn't read. My wife actually sits down with me and my little one at the same time and helps me with some words. (P3)

I think her support towards me going to AA and my GED classes. There are days when I feel today is not the day. I don't want to and she tells me the big book says the days you don't want to go are the days you need to go the most. (P3)

Like I said, my wife has been the world to me. I think if it wasn't for her and through all the situations that I've been through while I have been on probation, it would be real difficult to contain myself through the last 6 and ½ years I have been on probation. (P3)

My mother was there for me, barely, because she was really mad at me. I hadn't officially screwed up but I was headed in the right direction so she was officially giving me tough love. Every time I would talk to her and tell her this is the situation, I wasn't trying to give her excuses, but I wanted her to see it from my point of view to try and give her an understanding from where I was coming from and I think that helped because she did stick with me as it all turned out. (P4)

Keeping me out of trouble. You don't seek out the friends that you had before. I don't know, I think I was seeking approval much more than anything else, trying to seek friends and people, but the people you meet like that tend to not really be your friends. That being said, it gives me reason to be a better man because I have



gone through a divorce and I have gone through child custody and the bad end of that. So to regroup and to get a second chance, it's given me more purpose. (P4)

My family has been my rock, my anchor. My wife is very proud and gives me a lot of support and vice versa. We're best friends. I have been very lucky, that's all I can say. (P4)

I think just the support, just being there, and somebody for me to talk to and keep me on my schedule, reminding me when to go to probation. (P4)

I still think I am too focused and determined not to fall back and to get this over with that I don't think I would let that deter me in any way. I still think I would be able to get through it and I'm strong enough to where yeah my family's the reason why I am not going to let it falter. (P4)

Four years ago I was single and what relationships I did have they weren't meaningful, but here and now is the best thing that ever happened. (P5)

The person I was before you (wife) met me was totally different than now. When I was doing drugs, it was crazy. I don't know how I survived. I basically isolated myself from everybody, all hopped up, and nothing to care about. As long as I was doing what worked for me, that's what I did. Now, it's honey you need to do this or you need to do that and that's why now my priorities have shifted. Every day is new and I'm looking at it through new eyes from that perspective. I guess I feel I love life and I don't know any other way to describe it. (P5)

Just being there. Because without them, I'm back to my old self. That's what I live for and basically without them, I would just be crazy. Because, in all fairness,

I have been alone but I haven't really been alone. I don't even want to think about being without them. (P5)

They are very supportive, emotionally supportive, and like I said, you know, that's my world. Everything I do revolves around them and they help me. Lots of times I'll feel down or something like that and my wife or my kids will say or do something and especially my youngest son. (P5)

My cousins, they seen it all and they don't enable me. If I need any kind of help they're there. (P5)

Everybody's been really supportive. Everybody depends on me like I depend on them. I told my wife as long as you're okay, I'm okay. (P5)

Yeah like I said my family is my core support. They are the ones that keep me centered. It has made everything easier. It would not have been as easy without them. (P5)

Emotionally, I can say my older brother, the Marine; he is probably the only one that has played a major part in helping me. He was there with the guidance to where I needed to take myself and how I needed to be acting. (P7)

She's (wife) just like I am so proud of you. You're the best. I am so lucky, you're so good. She don't say it like that, you can do it, but in her expressions and attitude, it's you can do it, and I know I can do it. (P7)

My brother, I didn't have any other examples to leave alcohol alone. He was the main one saying you don't need to drink. ((P7)

Keep on encouraging me because with out that encouragement I would go out there and drink and run around with my friends. I give them a lot of credit for where I am now. I used to drink a lot and would go out everyday but now they keep me at the house all day. I got one year probation left. I was in anger management class but I didn't do AA class or anything like that, so I am doing this with the help and encouragement of my family. (P8)

He (brother) loved me. He loved me and he didn't judge me. He said, "You know what? I am here for you." It was emotional, physical, and financial. I'm here for you man, what can I do to help? He offered himself. I am his family because for a man to open up his family home, no matter to a brother or any type of family, father, mother, to open your family home is love. That's down to the bone love. (P9)

I met her and I shared with her what I wanted to be and my innermost feelings I shared with her what I wanted to become, what I wanted to do and she believed me. That is what was the most important factor in my change is that she believed what I said. She believed that I could become better and she believed that I could do the things I was saying. I believe without the relationship with my wife and her looking at me the way a wife looks at a husband and being the foundation and being the kick behind me, she was the main factor in making me take steps. Helping me to believe in myself with lots of encouragement and was there for me and when you connect intimately, you connect on a whole different level, I think

that relationship along with the relationships with my brothers, was perfect to cultivate me to where I am today. (P9)

They pretty much supported me through everything even when I was coming down off of drugs. It was emotional support because of the terms of my probation; I couldn't have contact with my son. You know, birthdays, holidays, they would come around and they were there. My nieces and nephews would come over and just having them around would make it easier. (P11)

They give me the attention and focus and support I need to get done whatever needs doing at the time. (P12)

A lot of it is the emotional support, the moral support, and basically a reason to stay out of trouble. My wife and my daughter are reason enough to stay out of trouble. Basically, all of my family would be a good reason to stay out of trouble and that's what I've been doing. I love them all. (P12)

My family, since I went on probation has really encouraged me and they've told me how proud they are of me and they just want me to continue to do well; and that just makes me feel so happy you know; now that I can communicate with them because before I got on probation they wouldn't have much to do with me, because they didn't like the way I was. Today they talk good about me and proud of me and that makes me feel good. (P15)

I don't think I would have made it without the support and encouragement they gave me. They encourage me to keep looking forward to the next day and pray about it and everything will be all right. (P16)

I don't think I would be where I am today. I think I would be in prison. I would still be fighting without the support of my mom and my husband to think and understand, I would still be fighting. They have showed me pretty much how much they loved me and cared for me. They actually told me you're the first one in the family that's been on probation that completed it. Their support and encouragement shows me that, you know, that I can achieve. (P17)

I get a lot of encouragement from my mom and my older siblings. They tell me you know you can do it and once you get off, everything will be okay and you will be stronger. That helps a lot. Hearing if from them is a lot of validation. (P18)

Instrumental support which consists of tangible and or informational support is perceived as another source of family support. This form of support is generally provided to help solve a problem or lessen its consequences (Cutrona, 2000). Instrumental support comes in the form of financial assistance, transportation, housing, and helping with kids. Following are responses related to each form of support.

*Financial assistance.* Financial concerns plagued many of the participants. Many of these concerns were directed toward their probation fees and/or costs related to their conviction. Although many cited financial concerns, not all received financial assistance.

Without them it would be very lonely and (pause) financially it would—little as they have helped—it would have been much harder, I wouldn't have been able to get probation if they hadn't paid for that lawyer. (P2)

My brother has helped me financially. (P7)

Money. My mom, more of the money came actually before I got probation actually, helping with lawyers and you know, things like that. He (father) has helped me out financially, also. (P10)

The time I lost a job, I needed some financial support; they've always been there for me. My wife's been there for me. She didn't think she could do it, but she was able to. My friend, \_\_\_\_\_, has even helped out a little bit. We've been able to slowly pay them back for their financial support both to (friend) and my mom. (P12)

My mom has helped me with my probation fees. Other than that, the most supportive thing they have done is help me with my probation fees. (P16)

She's (mother) helped me on some of my probation fees. And, she's helped on my rent (P17)

*Transportation.* For several, transportation was critical for work, visiting children, helping with children and making meetings and appointments.

She (mother) gets me to where I need to go as in work, groups; you know even just anything extra. If I just need to go to the store or something like that, she does help me out, with stuff like that. (P1)

They take me wherever I need to go. (P13)

That's another way they've helped—transportation with the kids and things like that. (P14)

My mom bought me a car. She bought me a car during my probation period because she knows I couldn't really get one. (P17)



They (brothers and sisters) help me too and give me back and forth transportation.

(P18)

*Accommodations.* Another form of assistance mentioned by some participants was accommodations. Having a place to stay and/or help in getting a place to live was beneficial.

Living has been hard because you have to tell them what you're on probation for and no matter how long ago it was it doesn't matter because if you're on there for fighting or drugs, they don't want you living in their facility. I've lived in the same place for 6 years because my mom is the property manager there. (P18)

I live with my mother. We all live together, my mother, me, and my two sons.

(P16)

I've actually lived with (sister) for a little bit. I've rented a house from her which was probably a little cheaper than what she would have rented it to someone else

(P14)

When I first moved back to \_\_\_\_\_, I stayed with my dad for awhile but that didn't work out too well. It was helpful at the time because I didn't have a job when I first got back here. My dad got me an apartment. I mean there's not many places I can move. (P10)

That was the most important factor of my family being there was to say, hey, you have a place to stay. (P9)

I have a wife, five children. I stay with my mom and dad at this time; we all stay together. (P1)

*Children.* Help with taking care of or transporting children were other forms of tangible assistance that was provided to several participants. The following responses illustrate this form of assistance.

Well I got sent off to that place because I fell behind on restitution and my sister ended up having to take my kids while I was there. At the very end of the last month I was there, my mom took them at the end of the month. So they have helped me out a little bit. The most helpful thing was when I got sent to that place. If it wasn't for my sister being there and if I didn't have family or something, I don't know where my kids would have been. (P6)

On Tuesdays and Thursdays I go to class, my brother and his wife watch her (daughter) till about 9:30 when I get out of class. (P7)

My girlfriend helps with that. She picks them (kids) up and takes them places and does great. (P10)

They've been there for emotional and they even offered to come up once or twice and watch (daughter) while I went to see my probation officer. (P12)

They kept my kids while I had to do compliance for probation. She (mother) watches my children when I have to go to probation. (P17)

I work two jobs and my mom watches my boys while I go to work. It's hard doing what I need to do, working and all the classes I've had to take. I couldn't do that if I didn't have somebody to watch my kids. (P18)

*Subtheme: Structure in Daily Life*

Structure from everyday routine tasks also helped in providing a sense of focus, direction and meaning to life. Participants were asked to describe a typical day that included keeping their family in mind. Responses centered on work, home, children, and meetings/classes. Following are examples of participants' responses.

I wake up in the morning, go to work. My little boy sleeps with me because my wife is sleeping with my little girl right now. She is breast feeding so she doesn't want to wake us up so she sleeps in my baby's girl room with the baby. So, I wake up in the morning and go to work and then come home. When I come home, they welcome me with a big hug and then sit down with the family. We eat dinner usually; try to, because she doesn't work. She is going to school on line. Basically just stay at home and to help her out I wash the dishes and wash out the bottles. We don't have a dishwasher, so I keep the dishes clean. But other than that, she does pretty much everything. Maybe every now and then we'll go for dinner out to a restaurant or maybe pizza, but other than that we just stay at home. (P4)

A typical day is like when I get off work and try to make a meeting. Sometimes, depending on what my sponsor is asking me to do like making a conditions meeting and or making a step meeting. I just basically try to keep myself busy you know. We do work assignments and stuff like that and then I come home. We try to make dinner time at least 6:30 or 7 o'clock. I get up too early for everybody else. My kids generally stay up 'till about 8 or 8:30 then they go to bed

and it's just me and my wife. We sit there and talk sometimes we watch a program. About 10 we'll watch the news and then go to bed together and go to sleep. (P5)

I wake up at 4:30, I go to work, I work until about 5 o'clock, come home, on my way home, I pick her (daughter) up, take her a shower. On Tuesdays and Thursdays I go to class, my brother and his wife watch her 'till about 9:30 when I get out of class and then I do it all over again. It's just wake up, go to work, and then come home. The days that I am not going to school, I am trying to do a little bit of studying, take her outside or take her to the park, and now lately trying to get her in bed earlier and that's it, just work and school right now. (P7)

Get up, go to work, come home. I watch TV and sometimes go to my kids sporting events. They do a lot more now. There's football, baseball, and a lot more now because I live in (city) now. I lived in (city) until a year ago. I am working two jobs now. (P8)

Now a typical day is coming to work, getting off work, and being with my daughter. Her getting out of school, homework, and that's pretty much it. (P11)

I get up around 8:30; play with my daughter until I go to work. Go to work around 3:30, so from 8:30 to 3:30 my wife's at work and I'm playing with my daughter. When my wife gets home, I get dressed to go to work. She gets home before I go to work, so I see her briefly then I have to go to work. She has her days off so when she has her days off, I see them both all day unless it's during the week and

then, like now it's her day off I'll see her all the way up until 2 o'clock, I came to the interview and after the interview I go to work. (P12)

I'm a paper carrier; my day starts at night and uh then in the morning I wake my daughter at 7:30 so she can get up and get ready for school uh, I clean a couple of houses so uh, 2 days a week I go clean houses; my days off I just rest and relax; I go to church during the week and also on Sundays so uh, that's it. (P15)

My mom calls me every morning to see how I'm doing. She'll watch my boys. I don't know, just a typical day is really busy. I go to work. I work two jobs and my mom watches my boys while I go to work. I drop them off after I get up and take my little sister to school. Go to work come home, pick them up, and cook dinner. My brothers and sisters come over whenever they want. (P18)

An indication of how beneficial the support family provided to the participants was in their responses to the third research question that focused on the aspect of family that was deemed least helpful. Participants were asked to describe things that were not done to help; were least helpful to them; and, what they would like to see change. Several of the participants stated everything their family did was helpful and there is not one thing they would change about the role their family has played. The following statements are an indication of how the participants overall, perceived their family's support.

I just can't think of anything, I mean, because they've been there. (P12)

They haven't ever done that. I wouldn't change anything. Nothing. They've always helped whenever I needed help and I've always helped them. (P12)



Nothing. Everybody's been real supportive. Everybody depends on me like I depend on them. I told my wife as long as you're okay I'm okay. (P5)

Gosh I don't think there is really anything. They couldn't have been more of a role model. I don't know what I would change because I haven't even thought of that. I think that now as everything is and how it has played out, it's been great. I don't think I would change anything. (P4)

There's not something I can think of. It's hard to think about something because I really can't. These are questions that have not even crossed my mind. (P3)

### *Theme 3: Source of Frustration, Disappointment, and Stress*

Some felony probationers perceived their families as a source of frustration, disappointment and stress. This theme emerged based on the overall statements and descriptions participants gave concerning their family. Although all participants had at least some positive remarks, a few focused more on the negative aspects of their family's involvement. This was established through their family's lack of nurturant support, lack of help with child care, and financial responsibilities. Lack of nurturant support was perceived through family's non and/or negative communications, lack of caring, understanding or involvement, and not considering the probationer's situation. Not helping with child care and financial responsibilities were two other sources where frustration, disappointment and stress were voiced.



*Subtheme: Lack of Nurturant Support*

Lack of nurturant support is where most of the frustration and disappointment was voiced. Participants were asked to describe things that their family had not done to help; were least helpful to them; and, what they would like to see change. Comments related to this concept included no understanding, help, encouragement, forgiveness, life style change, and/or family closeness. Participants perceiving a lack of nurturant support generally relate the source to a variety of family members. The following comments that illustrate this concept are grouped into three categories: (a) family members they live with, (b) family members they do not live with, and (c) a combination of both.

Following are comments participants made concerning family members they were currently living with.

I still have a problem emotional, as in I talk but sometimes it is still a little hard to for me to talk, as in, you know just being disappointed sometimes when I'm showing happiness and everybody else is just, you know still looking down and out, you know. (P1)

Because with the stress of probation and stuff like that, you know, and like I say, it was a drug charge so, you know extra stress will push me further out there – you know if they could, give a little bit more understanding what, you know, what it really means for me to have to get through this probation. (P1)

Understanding – a lot of understanding, knowing my situation – they know the situation – but I don't know if they actually KNOW the situation. (P1)

When I'm in a good mood and everybody else is just walking around aggravated, hollering, and you know complaining about everything and – me I can't walk around complaining about stuff anymore, you know I gotta because I've got to look past all the negative stuff that I can't – don't get me wrong, I can walk into the house and point out negative stuff – you know – I can get – you know, but with the way I am, I can't, I can not you know, I can't go in there and be negative, I gotta keep my head up – and you know – its, - I don't know – they need to – I say they; but I guess I still need to adjust to that too, because not everybody will change. (P1)

You know because I'm happy – you know – I'm different – you know – why can't you actually – you know they say you feed off bad vibes – you know why can't you feed off my vibes – you know I'm walking in with joy – not whistling, but stuff like that – but you know I'm walking in happy and smiling and – you know feed off that. (P1)

Mainly my wife and my children – you know she – you know complains – kids make a mess – you know, you know I need to hear it; but; not right when I walk through the door. You know, not when I walk through the door, you know and I've been at work, ok its not a hard job, but still I don't need to, you know, I don't need to hear that. (P1)

Just noticing my change and willing to change with me. You know, uh, I guess my family – change is hard – you know change is hard for me, you know I'm changing now after uh age of 9 in drugs and I've been changing now for 9 months

you know and change is hard. You know, and when somebody has lived with the family and as I am an addict, you know they've lived with an addict, so – yes, trust – you know actually just – I guess they just think I'm walking around with you know a mask on, you know, this is a fake smile, this is a fake happiness and stuff like that – you know and sometimes its really hard to just let your family know this is not faking or hiding and walk inside – and say look, I'm really happy today – you know – you don't just walk in, hey I'm happy, you know – ya'll get happy with me – it's not – you know its not – I wish it was that easy – but it's not that easy. You know – you walk into – like – I'm a family of seven – just me, my wife and my children, you know, that's seven people right there – and everybody is walking around with different attitudes and – that can get hard too.... and then – you go in and then you hear your wife complaining about the kids being this way, that way, and stuff like that – and that sort of brings me down too – you know, like I had mentioned before, you know if they could just actually talk a little bit more, you know, I've always been quite and you know, not understanding and now I'm trying to be more open and more understanding and you know its hard for a family to adjust to that. (P1)

Just everybody – wife, children, mother, dad – you know even brothers and sisters – you know because I use to party with my sister you know, she says its great you know that I'm staying clean and stuff – you know – I can see that its sincere – you know and she'll – when we stop at the store from work – she's back and forth with me too – and she'll say I'm gonna get a beer, do you want a water? You

know, to me, that's ok but then she didn't have to put "I'm going to go get me a beer," she could have said "I'm gonna get me something to drink, do you want something to drink?" You know, ok come out with a beer, ok fine, so be it, but don't, man I've been an addict for many many years, I don't – you know – after work who don't like a cold beer you know, if you drink who don't like a cold beer – if you're an addict, who don't like a cold beer – you know and I didn't need to hear that but I didn't express myself either; I didn't let her know – look don't say I'm gonna get me a cold one or anything like that – you know, just "Do you want anything from the store" – that would have been sufficient – but yeah, just – I guess even learning how to talk to an addict – you know. (P1)

Well, me and my boyfriend we have some issues – quite a few issues – a lot of it is my fault; the behaviors that I've done – but he's a very angry person and not very understanding and it's – we have a very difficult time. (P2)

He's (boyfriend) not an addict at all either – he doesn't drink or use any drugs – so I know he does not understand what it is like. He doesn't understand why it is so powerful why I would choose something else over him and my son – he doesn't get that part – he doesn't understand why I can't just stop. (P2)

His part of his anger, his lack of support, his uh, I don't know how to say – he ignores me a lot because he's always on the computer – he does have an addiction, and it's just his computer, and he's chosen that game over me many times – and I've had to walk around and uh when he gets angry at the game – it's just ridiculous – uh, he's very lazy because that's all he does is play on the

computer and these things affect me, they affect my desire to be with him, my desire to uh, you know make him happy and he's not concerned with my happiness – then why am I going to be concerned with his. If I could change one thing it would be counseling – mandatory family counseling and that includes my grandparents – that way we could all get into a room and discuss—this is what I am going thru; this is what I need and then they could say this is what I am going thru—because I think it would be beneficial to me if I understood where they're coming from; watching me on the outside. (P2)

The family here – the least helpful thing; has really just been not being involved – especially with my boyfriend; there's no support—no, hey do you need to do this, or no, lets sit down and discuss what you need to do for probation and lets' work it out with our schedule; you know let's talk about this – no talking, communicating. (P2)

I guess it's when they don't hang around. I am like a family person. I like being a family, going fishing and stuff like that with the whole family. We don't hang out like a family is supposed to do. (P8)

We (girlfriend) were together in \_\_\_\_\_, then I moved here and then eventually she moved here too, but she has been all over my butt about the probation thing. (P10)

I have no support from my husband, none, and that's why I have to separate myself from him. He got off his probation and he was like well I can do whatever I want now. (P18)

The following are comments related to not receiving nurturant support from family members the participant was not living with.

Most of them (other family members) just don't ask. I don't know if it's because I'm the black sheep in the family and its kind of a don't ask don't tell thing – or a, I'm not sure how much they really are concerned. (P2)

Mostly when they are drinking. Nobody else in my family is an alcoholic, so they can have a couple of glasses of wine and I'm always wanting to drink with them, have a couple of glasses, but I can't; so that's probably it. I kind of go back and forth. I wish they would, I just wish they wouldn't have the alcohol, because I don't think they need it. I think it's just kind of a habit, kind of a tradition. My family – nobody gets drunk and acts crazy, we've got a very calm family. But I wish they would take me into consideration and just not have me around. I don't think I would spend the whole time thinking about it. (P2)

I don't think they show a desire to do it, to ask. I think it's partly that they think I need to do this myself, because I've always had some body taking care of me, but I don't think that it's necessary. I don't think its – all the support that you can get; and all the people around you that know about these things and understand these things is better, then trying to do it by yourself – we can't do this by our self – we've tried. (P2)

Probably just be more supportive in anything I try to do or just help me to do what I got to do. (P6)



I do everything by myself. I drive everywhere, I pick up my kids, I drop them off. My sisters have plenty of kids of their own, so I have to do everything myself. (P6)

I think it would be to be more supportive. Like just asking hey how long do you have to go to be off probation, you know. Even that because maybe it would open up conversation a little but I really don't know because I don't want them knowing all my business anyway. Just to ask though to show me they cared about my probation. (P6)

I wish they would show a little more emotion sometimes. I think if they were more encouraging, it would helpful to me. (P6)

I have had my dad still offer me a beer or a rum and coke and he still smokes. (P7)

Not change their lifestyles or take into consideration that I was on probation or that I needed to change my lifestyle and habits and everything. It's always been when I wasn't drinking, I would go back to their house or to their parties or even just spending an afternoon with them, it's still just pop a beer. They would always say it's good that you're not drinking and everything but there was negativity and this is just who we are. It's regular. They can say that I'm not going to quit drinking but that's what they always say. My dad will say that it's good that you're not drinking but he still gets high and he will keep on drinking 'till he dies. He will die with a beer in his hand and getting high. They don't help me but not wanting to help themselves. (P7)

They did not give me any type of emotional support. I am not really around them. I just think they are really just so numb to their position they just go day by day. There's no want to change. There is no direction for them; they're just working and living. There is no want to do better for themselves or the children.

(P7)

I tell my dad I wish we all could get together. I say I just wish we all could get along and stuff like that. We ain't ever had a family reunion so why can't we do one of those? We ought to try that one of these days, though. (P8)

The least helpful thing I can see as in the family closest to me is my dad consistently, still using drugs, and drinking alcohol. It keeps you with that discomfort. I haven't been to my dad's house in months. The least helpful thing is thinking because we're family you can bring those influences and narcotics around. That is very not helpful. (P9)

Yeah, I would say in the broader picture, the least helpful thing about my family unit, and I say family unit meaning immediate family, siblings, and then outer family, cousins, aunts, uncles, and all that, the least helpful thing about that whole unit is a mentality that drugs are acceptable, alcohol is acceptable, doing things in front of children is acceptable, and if there's no vision at all in your family, nobody saying hey, I know we're a family and we can be a doctor, we can help cultivate a young lawyer, or a young businessman. We can work together. The lack of a family unit, because if you have that big of a unit you're going to have results. You're going to have someone doing business. You're going to have

someone that's achieved scholastically and I think the acceptances and excepting nothing and being happy with a purposeless existence is what plagues most families that are doing bad. (P9)

My dad, I talk to him on a regular basis and he helps me out a lot. I know he's not happy with a lot of the choices I've made and tells me I've screwed up. I don't know if he holds it against me, but he hasn't let it go. (P10)

My dad, he helps out, but never volunteering. It's like I have to call him and say, "Dad, I need for you to do this" and then he'll say well I have to do this or I have to do that and he can't do it. I mean there is a lot of things he does but he has a once a week limit. I mean, you know, if I have to ask him more than once a week, it's not going to happen. (P10)

I wish my dad would forgive me. I would like for him to talk to me. I talked to him about it when I first got in trouble. Now, I mentioned about going to my probation officer or I have community service to do and he's like well why don't you have money for this and I'll say well I had to pay this, you know. Well what did you do with that money and I say well I had to spend it on this. Just forgive me and understand that I am doing the best I can. (P10)

Yeah, supportive. Not very supportive, but supportive. I feel like my dad doesn't want to get as close to me as he used to. It's like little things like when a job position opens up where he works. I mean I probably wouldn't even have applied for it but he wouldn't dare have me apply there because of my record and I don't think he would want them to know. That kind of irritates me. (P10)

I wish I was still associated with them, I kind of do. I don't associate with them at all now. I don't associate at all with them now because of my husband. When they found out I was seeing him, they cut me off. I am ashamed I don't have the strength to get over my husband and move on like everybody wanted me to. I try to keep it a secret. I love him and I don't care a lot about what other people think. It would be the closeness and emotional support I used to have from them. I still have some contact with my little sister, she doesn't fight with me. If I call my brother, he's there, but I feel ashamed and it's awkward. (P11)

I wish they hadn't supported me doing the drugs. Actually, they were against it but when it was around they would do it with me, my brother, sister, and my mother. (P11)

Following are comments that pertain to both family members they live with and family members they do not live with.

I think one of the most important things would be if they could understand; the addiction part of it and how important the probation part of it is.... (P2)

I just don't think my dad has ever forgiven me. My girlfriend holds it against me all the time. Every time we have a fight she says you're a convicted felon and blah, blah, blah. I say well you don't have to deal with that and you can leave. (P10)

Not helping me with my kids. My girlfriend helps with that. She picks them up and takes them places and does great. I had just seen how great of a father my dad was with me but he's only been to one of their games. He's gone to a practice

but he hadn't been to any of their baseball games. He missed all their summer baseball games. (P10)

I mean they have all done what I've done, I just got caught. My mom, my dad, and my girlfriend have all done the same things I did. My dad not to the extent I did but he was still involved in the same stuff. I think they understand that but I just wish they would understand I just got caught for it and whether it was right or wrong doesn't matter now. I chose it and now I'm paying the consequences for it but that's not who I am. I don't consider myself a bad person and up to a point, I think my dad still considers me one, a bad person, or at least that I did bad things. My girlfriend doesn't hold it against me all the time, just when it comes down to fighting. (P10)

Well some of my brothers and sisters aren't clean. My husband relapsed and that didn't help me at all. We fought about it all the time. (P18)

*Subtheme: Lack of Help with Child Care*

One participant indicated childcare as a major issue. Her husband is currently in prison; therefore she is dependent on family members. A substantial part of her interview focused on the lack of help she received with her children. Another participant wished his dad was more helpful and involved with his children. Here are some statements they made.

She (mother) comes over every now and then and baby sits for a little while, maybe a minute or so, not overnight or anything like that. (P6)

I just want them to know how really, really hard it would be and to just say hey, can I watch them for a little while. If I could just get away for a little while, you know, just a little time for myself. Just let me go to the store by myself or something. I am talking about taking care of my kids by myself and probation because nobody gave me money to help me go through probation. (P6)

It would be baby sitting, because one time during GED I really needed somebody to baby sit and they were all busy. I was like do ya'll not see what I am trying to do here and I'm on probation. Not only that but do I have to be on probation for somebody to watch my kids? Like I said to get off probation, I had to go to those classes and after awhile I said I want to go for myself, I don't care if it's for probation any more. That's what I needed the most was for them to help me with my kids and they never said anything. (P6)

It would be to watch my kids more. All I had to do was go on Mondays and Thursdays and it was like I was bothering people to watch my kids. Some places like that don't want kids running around in there. My husband has to stay another year, at least.... I just wish they would watch my kids for me because they'll say when I go in there hey; you don't need to bring your kids in here. Don't you know what kind of people we have in here and I'll say yeah, but I don't have anybody to help take care of them. (P6)

Probably just be more supportive in anything I try to do or just help me to do what I got to do. I mean I thought dang, if I had this much trouble trying to get somebody to help me watch my kids while I was going to GED while I was on



probation, I would just love for them to be like yeah, we'll watch them. I would love for them to be supportive like that. Yeah, I got 3 kids and they can be a pain in the butt but it's not like they would have to keep them all the time. (P6)

Not helping me with my kids. My girlfriend helps with that. She picks them up and takes them places and does great. I had just seen how great of a father my dad was with me but he's only been to one of their games. He's gone to a practice but he hadn't been to any of their baseball games. He missed all their summer baseball games. (P10)

#### *Subtheme: Financial Concerns*

Financial concerns plagued several of the participants. Lack of financial assistance, for some, along with their financial responsibilities to their families and probation were voiced in the form of frustration, disappointment and/or stress. Following are comments related to participants' financial concerns.

He really hasn't done much – uh, financially speaking he hasn't really been able to keep a job for very long; and something we need to work on, - his tickets and his things tend to be more prioritized then my fines; because I've gotten away with not paying them for so long – I don't think he understands the full extent of what happens if you don't; I could be revoked, basically. The clerk can just say, ok she's been on probation for 3 years and hasn't paid hardly anything so we're going to revoke her. I don't think he understands that, and I've tried to explain to him that we've got to get these paid and he just says well how are we going to pay them. Whereas his tickets always gets paid – you know if he's got a speeding

ticket or something, its priority – and I don't know why, I don't know why; you know, he doesn't see how important that is. (P2)

I think it would be great if, you know – I wish I could have a lot more financial support about it. (P2)

What I would like is if they could just pay enough to catch me up – and then I could work on paying them back. My grandparents did pay for my lawyer and uh I haven't paid them back. So they have helped, its not – I just wish that they could; I mean it is just so hard financially. (P2)

I think that it could be as simple as financially, helping me take care of the financial aspect of it so there was not that looming part, oh I'm going to be revoked if I don't pay my fine, because it's a lot of money. (P2)

I guess I could back up as far as on the least helpful, and maybe even go along with this –with my 5<sup>th</sup> child – we found out we was pregnant within 2 weeks – or 2 weeks after we found out we was pregnant when she uh, you know, come clean and put me out of the house – I was bitter with her, she was bitter with me, but at the same time to get a SS# for my youngest uh, and she didn't want to do it – and I had to because I was putting him on my medical insurance where I work, and, so she was mad at me, I had been paying her cash for child support because to me, I was talking about my dad not supporting us – and I wanted to do the exact opposite – and I lived practically homeless you know for a month or so just so that they could be taken care of, things like that – paying in cash – I was telling her I should be doing this through the courts or whatever through the state you

know, I know in the world I should be doing it like that – but it takes so long to get her the money – things like that – I was giving her cash and things like that, well she turned around said that I didn't – and to me that was the biggest you know again punch in the stomach that, you know debilitated me you know it made me declare for a second not wanting you know then I was reminded – maybe dad was bitter at mom the reason he didn't help – I can't do my kids like that – so her unsupport in that way and just lying. (P14)

The following are comments regarding financial responsibilities that create a source for stress.

I know financially there's been times I thought I needed to hold money back to pay on my delinquency, but we have had to use it, not really for a necessity but it's been for, the family comes first. Yet in my mind I thought I need to pay this or I'm going to have to go spend some time in jail or something like that. That's where that would be the only thing is prioritizing where the money should go. I just started this new job at the beginning of the year but before that, I wasn't making as much so we were very limited on our budget and so I would get behind a month or two on my payments and you know in my mind I would think not that they don't need new clothes I mean diapers and all that came first but maybe I need to pay this off before we pay that. It's just that so I can make sure that they don't say we need your money and then we're stuck and then we have to go in there and explain myself and get a delay on the payment. I want to stay under the radar where I am not a problem to them because I know they have to do it.

Certain deadlines have to be met and they are under pressure too so that is why I do my best to be open in communication with them. So if it would be anything, it would be may be we should pay my fees before we fill up the car. (P4)

It's not on their part but sometimes things have just been out of control. There's been times while I've been on probation that sometimes I'm up and sometimes I'm down when we're in a real financial bind. You know, we'll miss pay something or something like that, but other than that, and then it's we'll catch up on it next week but other than that, no. (P5)

Sometimes my relationship with my wife is good but sometimes she asks how are you going to pay the bills. Sometimes she asks how are you going to pay the house payments, how are you going to pay for probation. I say I don't know, I just have to work around it. (P8)

One day I didn't have any place to get money from or anything and I said well I'm going to take the easy way out, I'll suicide. I had some steroids the doctor gave me and I was thinking about it, where I am going to get money from for my kid's clothes and stuff like that and to pay my probation officer? I said you know what, I'll take the easy way out and I could take the steroids the doctor gave me or hang myself. (P8)

Sometimes when I get depressed I feel like get her (wife) away from me and I can tell it affects her too. She wants to keep her emotions to herself like she used to. It would have helped me out. I try and keep my faith up and I'll say we can find something to do. Don't worry about that bill. I say if it gets cut off, it really ain't

an important bill. We worked around it before and we can work around it again. So, it's like all right as long as we have our lights and water, its okay. It's really when she is feeling down. (P8)

#### *Theme 4: Family Ties*

The un-spoken theme of family ties emerged. Families are a natural source of support; therefore family ties become a critical component to the well being of its members. Not one participate indicated a “cut off” of family due to their crime and/or being placed on probation. In fact, all participants indicated, in some degree, the importance of their family and the ties they have with them. According to a few of the participants, some family members were disappointed while others were happy.

Following are statements that illustrate this concept:

They were disappointed in me because of the situation and stuff like that, and then I came out, lost some trust and I’m trying to build back trust with them and I feel its working. (P1)

My mother was there for me, barely, because she was really mad at me. I hadn’t officially screwed up but I was headed in the right direction so she was officially giving me tough love. Every time I would talk to her and tell her this is the situation. I wasn’t trying to give her excuses, but I wanted her to see it form my point of view to try and give her and understanding from where I was coming from and I think that helped because she did stick with me as it all turned out. (P4)

My dad, I talk to him on a regular basis and he helps me out a lot. I know he's not happy with a lot of the choices I've made and tells me I've screwed up. I don't know if he holds it against me, but he hasn't let it go. (P10)

The following are examples of participants who stated their families supported their change. This awareness was for their ability to "get clean."

I used to party with my sister you know, she says it's great that I'm staying clean and stuff and I can see that it's sincere. (P1)

My dad will say that it's good that you're not drinking. (P7)

They just, well happy...they are proud of me, they like the change in me because I was on probation before and I did not make it, I kept drinking. (P15)

I don't feel like I was judged or belittled in my family. (P18)

Another demonstration of family ties is with two female participants who have their husband in prison. Both participants stated part of their probation conditions were not to have contact with their husband/boyfriend, although both drive out of town weekly to visit them. For P11 marrying her boyfriend while serving time in prison has resulted in her family breaking ties with her and her feeling shame from it. This is what she stated.

I don't associate at all with them now because of my husband. When they found out I was seeing him, they cut me off. I am ashamed I don't have the strength to get over my husband and move on like everybody wanted me to. (P11)

### Summary

Eighteen moderate and high risk felony probationers were interviewed regarding their family's role during probation. Four major themes and nine subthemes emerged that



answered how felony probationers perceive the role their family plays during their probation. The first major theme, family networks, described their perception of who family consisted of, and the quality of those relationships. Subthemes of family networks included family composition, perceived quality of the family relationship and family formation. Those things deemed most helpful to the felony probationer account for the second major theme of providing focus, direction and meaning to life. Children as motivation, nurturant and instrumental support, and structure in daily life are the subthemes. Family as a source of frustration, disappointment and stress emerged as the third major theme. This theme focused on those things deemed least helpful to the felony probationer and were demonstrated through the lack of nurturant and instrumental support. The final theme was family ties. Participants' strong ties with family members were demonstrated throughout the interviews. Themes and subthemes were presented and supported by quotes from the felony probationers. The overall data provided a description of the phenomenon of the family's role from the perspective of the felony probationer.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study utilized a qualitative study to explore the role of family during probation from the perspective of the felony probationer. In-depth interviews with 18 felony probationers were conducted to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the role of family during the felony probationer's probation?
2. What aspect of family is deemed most helpful during the felony probationer's probation?
3. What aspect of family is deemed least helpful during the felony probationer's probation?

The data analysis process uncovered four themes and nine subthemes. These themes, along with their subthemes provided insight into how the felony probationers perceived the role of their family during probation.

The first research question was designed so participants could describe their perception of who family consisted of, and the quality of those relationships. The theme family networks will be discussed within the subthemes of family composition, perceived quality of the family relationship and family formation. The second research question focused on those things deemed most helpful to the felony probationer. In relation to this question, the theme of providing focus, direction and meaning to life were demonstrated through the subthemes of children as motivation, nurturant and instrumental support and

structure in daily life. The third research question focused on those things deemed least helpful to the felony probationer. Family as a source of frustration, disappointment and stress emerged as the theme that was demonstrated through the lack of nurturant and instrumental support. The final theme that emerged was family ties. Participants' strong ties with family members were demonstrated throughout the interviews. These ties were maintained through contact, dependency and affection.

### Discussion of Findings

The data analysis process uncovered four themes and nine subthemes. These themes, along with their subthemes provided insight into how the felony probationers perceived the role their family played during probation. This section discusses the themes in relation to the current literature.

### *Phenomenological Framework*

A phenomenological approach was utilized for this study. Phenomenological research is a strategy associated with the qualitative approach. Smith (2005) defined phenomenology as a discipline concerned with the meanings things have in one's personal experience, or understanding a conscious experience subjectively. Creswell (2003) defined a phenomenological study as one that describes the meaning of human experiences. A phenomenological study describes the phenomenon under study from the perspectives of individuals being studied. The study of the role of family during probation from the felony probationer's perspective explored and described the human experiences related to the phenomenon of role of family and its meaning.

Gubrium and Holstein (1993) discussed three core assumptions that establish phenomenology as a research approach: subjectivity, language and meaning, and indeterminacy. Subjectivity focuses on everyday knowledge. One method used to gather subjective data about behavior and experiences is in-depth interviews. Interviews can provide a fuller understanding of the experiences of those interviewed (Weiss, 1994). The significance of language and meaning in everyday knowledge as reported by Gubrium and Holstein is the second core assumption of a phenomenological approach. Language brings meaning to individuals' experiences which in turn make it possible for them to sort those experiences. The use of language can help describe and provide meaning to individuals' subjective perspectives of experiences. The third core assumption deals with the concept of objects having an indeterminate quality. Since individuals construct meaning, objects, as well as behavior and relationships, can mean a variety of things. Therefore, a phenomenological approach seems most appropriate in capturing the meaning and understanding of the role of family from the felony probationer's perspective during their probation experience. The researcher in this study utilized open-ended questions, prompts and probing to gather information regarding the role of family during probation. Research findings were supported by participants' direct quotes.

### *Theme 1: Family Networks*

The overall purpose of this study was to explore the role of family from the perspective of the felony probationer during his or her time on probation, therefore it was

necessary to determine what is meant by the term “felony probationers’ family.” This study accepted the participants’ definition of the family. Most participants described their families as a combination that included their biological family, extended family and family of origin, although some also included deceased family members, an ex-wife, a girlfriend, a lady friend, and a roommate. Much of the criminal justice literature regarding prisoners’ families focuses on a narrower perspective of family, mainly wives and girlfriends, and prisoners’ children (Mills, 2005), although surveys of prisoners indicate that prisoners’ family networks are much more complex and diverse than these subgroups suggest (Hairston, 2001). This study emulates this complex and diverse description of family networks and relationships. The narrow perspective of family utilized in much of the criminal justice literature negates the growing population of females under criminal justice supervision, as well as those individuals not married, not involved with a partner, or that do not have children. In this study, specific family members that received the most verbal mention or attention were mother, spouse/partner, children and siblings. Fathers received some attention from four participants. Mothers were given priority attention in many of the participants’ accounts regarding family support; even more than spouses in some cases. This mirrors findings from prisoners’ reports that mothers are their most important sources of support (Hairston, 2001).

Felony probationers described their family relationships and these descriptions were grouped into the categories of positive, improving, neutral, and negative. Most participants overall described positive relationships. Some participants described all family member relationships as good while others used a mix of descriptions depending

on who they were speaking about. The description of the focused family member is what determined the category of family relationships. For example, P10 described his relationship with his family, except for his older sister, as “it’s all good enough to speak with everybody,” although his family relationship was categorized as neutral because much of his interview focused on his father. This is what he had to say about his father: “My dad, we get along but not like we use to. We used to be buddy, buddy but now it’s more like a father and son relationship. I wouldn’t say it’s friendly.”

Inconsistencies in relationship descriptions were evident in a couple of the interviews as they progressed. In particular, P2 described her relationship with her boyfriend towards the beginning as “very difficult,” “not helpful” and “selfish,” while towards the end described it by saying “he’s turned around completely.” These various descriptions, within and between participants, emphasize the nature of a phenomenological study; by describing the phenomenon under study from the perspective of the individuals being studied. Each description given is based on each participant’s account of their family relationships.

Several of the participants’ timing of their current family structure was formed after receiving probation. This entailed getting married and having children. According to Farrall and Calverley (2006), Laub and Sampson (2001), and McNeil (2006), family formation is one of several factors associated with the desistance process. Hughes (1998, p. 144) reported “if social roles change and life takes on structure and meaning, then deviance should decline accordingly.” According to Farrell (2004) this process functions



by structuring individuals' lives away from offending. This finding was echoed from several of the participants. Two examples illustrate this concept.

Because without them (wife and children), I'm back to my old self. That's what I live for and basically without them, I would just be crazy. (P5)

My wife and my daughter are reason enough to stay out of trouble. Basically, all of my family would be a good reason to stay out of trouble and that's what I've been doing. I love them all. (P12)

Seven male and one female participant indicated the above transition process, which illustrates that the desistance process was underway by the time their families were formed. This transition process may lend more strength to the maturation concept, which basically follows that with age, offenders make the shift to a conventional lifestyle and then they can come to appreciate the value of family life (Wright & Wright, 1992). This transition process follows the basic assumption behind maturational reform theories that maintains ageing "causes" desistance (Maruna, 1999). Maruna (1999) reported as individuals move through the life cycle, they will (a) shift from self-absorption to concern for others, (b) increasingly accept societal values and behave in socially appropriate ways, (c) become more comfortable with social relations, (d) increasingly reflect a concern for others in their community, and (e) become increasingly concerned with the issue of the meaning of life. Participants who met their wife and had children after receiving probation were able to form relationship patterns that contributed to their desistance process. Family life then acts as the catalyst that continues the desistance process by providing meaning to their life.

### *Theme 2: Providing Focus, Direction, and Meaning to Life*

Overall, most participants had positive perceptions concerning their family's role during probation. Many of the positive responses were related to those family members the participant was currently living with. Responses were related to the concepts of providing focus, direction and meaning to life, as illustrated above. These concepts were also found to be important in Rex's (1999, p. 375) study, where 21 desisters explained their reasons for ending their offending by noting they had found some "direction and meaning in life." Factors, from the present study, that contributed to these concepts involved positive support, their children, and living in a structured environment. Much of the support deemed helpful was in the form of nurturant support—caring, understanding, encouragement and concern. In Rex's (1999) study of experiences of probation for desisters, encouragement from probation officers figured prominently in the probationers' accounts for turning them away from crime. In Farrall and Calverley's (2006) longitudinal study of probationers, they reported that when probationers found themselves praised, trusted and encouraged by others, it led to feelings of self-worth and happiness that gave them motivation to continue desistance. Participants in the present study displayed accounts of their family providing them with encouragement, care, happiness and other positive emotions. Cutrona (2000) noted a general principle of providing support is that the source of support is critically important. Support coming from those who share close emotional bonds with the offender will be most effective. This corroborates the analysis of nurturant support being deemed as one of the most important things family provides.

Another form of support deemed helpful by participants was instrumental support. This form of support was primarily accomplished by providing financial assistance, transportation and child care. Instrumental support is most beneficial when it can help solve a problem or lessen its consequences (Cutrona, 2000). For example, if probation fees and/or other fines related to the criminal behavior are not paid, then there remains the possibility of having one's probation revoked. Many of the participants noted one of the most helpful things family did was pay, or help pay, their probation fees/fines.

Transportation, accommodations and child care were other aspects of support deemed helpful. One participant indicated that his father helped him get an apartment. He reported that since he was on felony probation he would not be able to lease one in an area of his choice. Another participant relied on his boss and family for transportation. His family provided transportation for him to be able to visit his children. A few participants reported their family members helped with child care. Two female participants stated their mothers helped watch their children while they worked. Although a few indicated these sources of support were very important and needed, it did not appear to be more beneficial than overall nurturant support.

Many of the participants indicated that there was not anything they would change about the role their family plays during their probation. They claimed everything they do is helpful and they would not change anything.

All these above concepts reflect the desistance literature findings that proclaim informal social controls are more effective than formal social controls in the maintenance

of “good order” (Farrall, 2004; Farrall & Calverley, 2006), and that “help may be more crime-reducing than treatment” (Bottoms & McWilliams, 1979, p. 174).

### *Theme 3: Source of Frustration, Disappointment and Stress*

According to Farrall (2004), resolving obstacles appears to be associated with the desistance process. In his interviews with 199 probationers, 101 reported one or more obstacles they faced. The two most cited were their own use of substances (drugs and alcohol), and their friends and family. This study’s participants indicated the above obstacles as well as finances and child care. These obstacles were voiced in a variety of ways, although one consistency was they appeared to evoke feelings of frustration, disappointment and stress. These feelings were generally not directed or caused by all family members. Emotions surrounding those who have once been involved with crime, and now ceased, are lacking in the criminology literature (Farrall & Calverley, 2006). When participants were asked what were some things family did that was not helpful, the overall census centered on nurturant and instrumental support. Accounts of this included: not considering addiction; not forgiving; relationship struggles; negative lifestyles; distance; not helping with child care; and finances. Participants perceived these actions as not caring. In a 1996 study that evaluated a family-centered cognitive skills program for prison inmates, Klein and Bahr found a common emotion shared by most inmates is that others do not care for them. This not caring was indirectly voiced by some of the participants in this study. Negative emotions, such as frustration, disappointment and stress can have direct negative consequences on one’s behavior. This is evident in daily

accounts of crime reports. For most participants in this study, their negative emotions were countered by more positive emotions from other family members.

Three of the 18 participants indicated relationship problems, two with their spouse and one with their boyfriend. These problems were present prior to their arrests, as well as during probation. The quality of these relationships can impact the desistance process. A negative relationship may create distress and reduce any support and/or motivation needed for a noncriminal lifestyle (Wright & Wright, 1992). One participant directly indicated the stress and indirectly stated the frustration he goes through everyday. Relationships formed prior to arrest which remain after the sentence, appear to have more obstacles to overcome. This finding lends strength to the formation of families after probation that can lead to and/or maintain desistance (Farrall, 2004; Farrall & Calverley, 2006).

Two of the three participants indicated several obstacles within their relationship: trust, no understanding of their addiction, and overall no support. The other one indicated her spouse continued drug use after completing probation, therefore lending no support to her. All three indicated their children were a source of motivational support. In Farrall's (2004) findings, he noted that motivation and social and personal circumstances were the overwhelming factors that determined how and if obstacles were resolved. In this particular study, relationships that formed after beginning probation fared exceptionally better than the three just described. One factor that may account for these differences is the relationship structure. The above three relationships were formed during the addiction phase of the participants; therefore the dynamics of the relationships most

likely will change after treatment. This change process can be difficult as one participant indicated: “I know I’m supposed to change and my family, they just got to get use to me actually changing. You know, it can be difficult.” (P1). When asked if there was anything else he would like to add, as far as what he would like to see change with his family, stay the same; what has been the most helpful, least helpful, he responded:

Just noticing my change and willing to change with me. I guess my family—change is hard—you know change is hard for me. I’m changing now after age of 9 in drugs and I’ve been changing now for 9 months, and change is hard. When somebody has lived with the family and as I am an addict, they’ve lived with an addict, so, yes, trust, you know actually just—I guess they just think I’m walking around with you know a mask on, you know, this is a fake smile, this is a fake happiness and stuff like that—and sometimes its really hard to just let your family know this is not faking or hiding and walk inside and say look, I’m really happy today. You don’t just walk in, hey I’m happy, you know—ya’ll get happy with me—it’s not—you know its not—I wish it was that easy, but it’s not that easy....(P1)

This statement also provides some insight into their family not understanding their addiction and not providing the nurturant support needed to sustain their ongoing progress towards desistance. Laub and Sampson (2001) contend that persistence in crime is due to a lack of social bonds, structure, routine activities, and healthy human relationships. The above three participants’ circumstances illustrates the difficulties of “getting clean” and returning to the same environment prior to becoming clean.



Other participants that implied feelings of frustration, disappointment and/or stress directed them towards members of their family not residing with them. Situations included, not helping with child care, not forgiving, negative life styles, physical distance from family, lack of financial assistance, no family contact and no emotional support.

One participant complained that her mother, in general, was not helpful, especially with her children. She also noted that her mother, brother or sisters do not provide any support to her—"I don't get anything from my mother, brother or sisters." What she would like to see change is for them "to be more supportive," "be more supportive in anything I try to do or just help me to do what I got to do," "I wish they would show a little more emotion sometimes. I think if they were more encouraging, it would be helpful to me." This is an example of family not providing nurturant support. Although she stated they do not provide her with any support, she also stated they (her sister and mother) helped her by taking her children when she "got sent off to that place." She also stated the only person that provided emotional support to her was her husband (in prison). Another participant also stated her husband (in prison) provided emotional support and encouragement, while her family has since "cut me off." For another participant, his feelings came as a result of his dad (living here) not forgiving him and his mother and siblings living several states away. Another participant also indicated her disappointment in not having her sister and grandparents living close by. Two brothers voiced their feelings about their family of origin and extended family, stating they continue to live their life with drugs and alcohol. One made the following statement when asked to describe things their family has not done to help them.

That one is pretty easy. Not change their lifestyles or take into consideration that I was on probation or that I needed to change my lifestyle and habits and everything. It's always been when I wasn't drinking, I would go back to their house or to their parties or even just spending an afternoon with them, it's still just pop a beer. They would always say it's good that you're not drinking and everything but there was negativity and this is just who we are. It's regular. They can say that I'm not going to quit drinking but that's what they always say. My dad will say that it's good that you're not drinking but he still gets high and he will keep on drinking 'till he dies. He will die with a beer in his hand and getting high. They don't help me by not wanting to help themselves. P7

Others indicated that family members did not consider the lifestyle changes they were trying to make; especially those with addictions. Another subject causing frustration, disappointment and stress was financial concerns. Participants that responded in terms of not receiving support demonstrated feelings of stress. Some participants indicated their source of stress was not due to anything from their family but came from their past crime(s) that now required financial obligations, which in turn took away from their family.

#### *Theme 4: Family Ties*

Most participants reported positive and strong family ties. These ties extended, for many, beyond those they currently lived with. Mothers, spouses, children and siblings were mentioned most often. Ties to mothers were critical for most all participants, even for those whose mothers had deceased. Strong ties to spouses were

reported by all participants who married after receiving probation. Laub, Nagin and Sampson (1998) reported that social bonding in the form of strong ties to family is one of the informal social controls that can facilitate the move towards desistance. Strong family ties have the ability to promote conformity, redirect routine activities away from inducements to crime, deliver effective handlers who can reduce involvement in high-risk behaviors, and assist in cognitive work that reinforces an identity consistent with a non-criminal lifestyle (Savolainen, 2009, p. 3). These above properties of social bonds reflect the role family plays. This was evident in the following statements:

My mom being clean with me. She helped me stay clean by showing me how to stay clean. (P18)

Keeping me out of trouble....My wife is very proud and gives me a lot of support and vice versa. We're best friends. I have been very lucky, that's all I can say....I think just the support, just being there, and somebody for me to talk to and keep me on my schedule....We don't drink or stay up late at night other than with the baby. I mean we are real family oriented. I have more fun with my kids than with anything that's my adrenaline. (P4)

She (mother) has helped me from making the same mistakes as before. I've noticed my mom has stopped me from fighting again and my husband has basically done the same thing like look over when people are trying to start fights. (P17)

My family, since I went on probation has really encouraged me and they've told me how proud they are of me and they just want me to continue to do well, and

that just makes me feel so happy you know, now that I can communicate with them because before I got on probation they wouldn't have much to do with me, because they didn't like the way I was. Today they talk good about me and proud of me and that makes me feel good. (P15)

They ask me have you made your meeting or if things get sort of chaotic she'll say you need to go to your meeting right now. There are times, especially when we first married, she was like why you gotta go do this, why you gotta do that. I said honey that's the best way I can stay free. The person I was before you met me was totally different than now. When I was doing drugs, it was crazy. I don't know how I survived. I basically isolated myself from anybody, all hopped up, and nothing to care about. As long as I was doing what worked for me, that's what I did. Now, it's honey you need to do this or you need to do that and that's why now my priorities have shifted. Every day is new and I'm looking at it through new eyes from that perspective. I guess I feel I love life and I don't know any other way to describe it. (P5)

Hairston (1991) and Codd (2008) emphasized the importance of family ties during imprisonment. Hairston (1991) reported the three major functions of family ties include the maintenance of the family unit, the enhancement of the well-being of individual family members, and the facilitation of the prisoner's post-release success. Codd (2008) concurred and included two additional functions of family ties—during the sentence and to prisoner well-being. These functions of family ties should easily translate to felony probationers.

## Conclusions

Conclusions regarding the role family plays for felony probationers during probation can be drawn based on the findings of the study. Research is limited on the role of family from the perspective of the felony probationer; however, felony probationers in this study reported the importance of what family provides from both an overall perspective and day to day interactions. From the participants' perspective, families provide nurturant and instrumental support—at varying levels. The level and type of support provided significantly impacted the felony probationer's perception of the relationships. What the participants desired and what they were provided determined their reactions to the support. In most all cases, nurturant support was valued most. Cutrona (2000) compared the effectiveness of emotional versus instrumental support with a group of study participants to determine what types of support would be most beneficial in stressful circumstances. Findings indicated that when both tangible assistance and emotional support are desired, emotional support was rated more valuable. When the stressed person wanted emotional support, tangible support was viewed as a poor and unacceptable substitute. However, even when the stressed person expressed a need for tangible assistance, emotional support was viewed as a valuable resource and was evaluated as an acceptable substitute for tangible assistance (Cutrona, 2000, p. 114). This finding supports what many of the participants indicated and is again supported in the work of Klein and Bahr (1996) where they found inmates more interested in learning about family relationships and less on how to deal with tangible concerns.

Four themes emerged from the present study: family networks; providing focus, direction, and meaning to life; source of frustration, disappointment and stress; and family ties. Taken together, two over arching themes emerged: nurturant support and instrumental support. The level of support was determined from participants based on what they desired from their family and what was provided. Based on the work of Cutrona (2000), findings from the present study categorized support at four levels: optimal, acceptable, helpful, and minimal. If participants received what was desired, then participants demonstrated overwhelming satisfaction with their family, or in other words received optimal support. This was the case for several of the participants who claimed everything their family did was helpful and they would not change anything. The emphasis of support was nurturant. Acceptable support can be conceptualized as receiving what is desired from immediate (those one lives with) family, but lacking from other family members. For example, P7 was very satisfied with the support he received from his wife, daughter and two brothers, but not from his parents and other extended family members. When support is desired and provided but not at the levels preferred, then family can be perceived as being helpful. A few participants described their support received as helpful. For example, P10 stated his family was “not very supportive but supportive.” He reported his mother (living several states away) was supportive but could be more if she were close by. He also stated even though his father (living here) has been supportive in some instrumental ways, he is not emotionally. He stated a few times he wished his dad would forgive him, but has not. Minimal support is conceptualized as receiving little or no nurturant support and little or no instrumental support. A few



participants fall into this category. P6 is a good example who received minimal support. She stated she received emotional support from her husband (in prison) but none from her mother, brother or sisters. She stated the only instrumental support she received from her mother and sister is when she “was sent off to that place” and they took her children until she returned.

The desistance literature reports that informal social controls are more effective than formal social control (Farrall & Calverley, 2006). One key element of informal social controls is the role of family. The role of family, and other elements of informal social control, is “more important for the prolonged maintenance of ‘good order’ (at macro, meso and micro levels) than is the input from, for example, probation officers” (Farrall & Calverley, 2006, p. 194). Bubolz and Sontag (1993) reported family being conceptualized “as a life-support system, dependent on the natural environment for physical sustenance and the social environment for humanness and for giving quality and meaning to life” (p. 423).

In summary, felony probationers provided insight into the role their family plays during probation. Perceptions of family’s role were described in a variety of ways due to each participant’s unique perspective, however some common themes emerged.

#### Limitations

This study gives understanding into how felony probationers perceived their family’s role during probation; what aspects of family are deemed most and least helpful. However, these results will not generalize to other settings due to the following factors:

1. The sample size was limited to 18 felony probationers assessed medium to high risk, at least 21 years of age and on probation for a minimum of three years.
2. The participants in the study were limited geographically to one Central Texas county.
3. The respondents may not have been representative of the felony probation population since descriptive demographics were not collected.
4. Information on criminal background was not collected, therefore it was unknown if participants were first time offenders or persistent offenders.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered for future research:

1. This study explored how the felony probationer perceived the role of family during probation. Felony probationers were asked questions that described what aspects of family were deemed both helpful and not helpful. An essential piece that was not explored in this study was the family's perspective of their level of involvement during probation for the felony probationer. Future study could explore both the felony probationer's and their family's perspective for comparative purposes.
2. Future research could explore family members' perspective of having a loved one on probation and how that affects the family member's life.
3. Felony probationers could be asked about their perception of the impact their probation has on their family.

4. Future study could compare levels and types of family support with recidivism rates.
5. Longitudinal data could be beneficial in the study of family influences on felony probationers from the time of arrest, through sentencing and probation. What is the level of family involvement from the onset of criminal justice involvement; does it exist, increase, decrease, etc.?
6. Conduct a similar study with felony probationers based on their probation and family status. Examples include: those with drug charges living with spouse/partner and children; those forming families after receiving probation; and those with partners in prison. The relationship structure had an impact on the reported levels of support desired and received; therefore comparing these various structures could provide additional information.
7. To increase transferability, utilize stratification sampling techniques to proportionality represent the probation population with possible regards to age, race, gender, socioeconomic and family status as well as criminal charge.
8. To increase response rate and diversity, an incentive more than ten dollars may need to be offered.

### Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of family from the perspective of the felony probationer during probation. A qualitative approach was utilized to uncover what aspects of family were deemed most helpful and least helpful for the felony

probationer. Implications useful for researchers, family life professionals, parent educators, family therapists and criminal justice professionals can be drawn from the study's conclusions.

Consequences associated with felony probation are serious and widespread; therefore it is imperative that probationers receive support from the onset. Throughout the desistance literature, informal social controls have been shown to be more effective in reducing recidivism than formal social controls. Support coming from those who share close emotional bonds will be most effective (Cutrona, 2000).

Researchers have the opportunity to learn more about the impact families can have on felony probationers as well as learn about the needs of family members living with offenders. Currently, limited research exists on these concepts. This study took an overall broad approach toward understanding the role of family from the perspective of the offender. Although family relationships were described as diverse and complex, those living with the offender had the most impact, therefore future studies may only choose to focus on those family members.

Research results could have implications for family life educators in their development and implementation of family enrichment programs. Results indicated the importance of family members providing nurturant and instrumental support. Most relationships that involved those living with the offender were described as very positive. Participants reported there was not anything they would change about their relationships. Overall, the emotional aspect of family relationships was deemed most helpful. For participants that perceived family as a source of frustration, disappointment and stress

reported receiving very little to no emotional support. Without positive family support, the rate of failure while on probation is significantly greater than those who had positive family support (Hepburn & Griffin, 2004). Therefore, educational programming efforts from family practitioners need to emphasize the importance of nurturant support in family relationships.

According to Travis (2005), family networks of prisoners exhibit high rates of criminal involvement, substance abuse and family violence. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Annual Review 2006 (2007b) reported children of offenders have a 70% greater likelihood of becoming involved in the criminal justice system; therefore opportunities for parent education programs are needed. Nine participants reported their children were living with them at the time of their crime. Most involved drugs and/or alcohol. State child welfare records indicate that substance abuse is one of the top two problems exhibited by families in 81% of reported child maltreatment cases (Prevent Child Abuse America). Felony probationers living with children should be required to attend parent education classes as a condition of their probation. Parent educators and probation and parole departments should collaborate and work to provide needed parent education.

Felony probationers are given financial obligations to meet and restrictive guidelines to follow that often create family hardships. Their status as convicted felon also creates barriers to various resources, employment, accommodations, and educational tracks. To help meet these requirements and reduce barriers policies should create merit based programs, especially for non violent offenders. Merit based programs could be



designed to provide incentives to probationers and their families that would result in reduced fines, restrictions, probation time, and barriers over a period of time. These programs could serve many purposes; encourage good behavior, promote healthy relationships and reduce the probation population.

Probation is the largest and fastest growing segment of the criminal justice system. Research has shown that strong family networks reduce recidivism; therefore, probation policy procedures and practices need to include families. Working with families provides probation officers the opportunity to understand the context in which the probationer functions; therefore, programs and services can be offered to benefit the whole family. Farrall (2004) noted one of the most critical obstacles for offenders to overcome is those related to family and friends. This approach of working with families allows the emphasis of probation to shift away from offending-related to desistance focused, or as Shapiro (2002) stated, one from the individual offender as the unit of analysis to the family as the focus for analysis. Opportunities to engage families at every level of the criminal justice process should be included in policy issues. Families are a natural source of support for the offender; therefore it would be in the best interest to involve them at every stage of the criminal justice process.

Traditionally, criminal justice policies and practices have not recognized or included family as a source of support to the offender. These policies and practices have more often impeded, rather than supported family involvement. Therefore, the research results could have implications for criminal justice collaborations among institutions in the development of family focused interventions. Interventions can be both broad and



specific based. The development of both broad and specific based interventions could take guidance from the Army's pre-and post-deployment programs. These programs are developed not only for the soldier, but the soldier's family. The Army recognizes family well-being as one factor that is essential to mission success (Doyle & Peterson, 2005). Their programs focus on a variety of concerns that pertain to separation, sustainment, re-entry and reintegration. Each phase addresses issues that impact the well-being of both the soldier and family members. This comprehensive process provides needed information and tools to soldiers and their family for successful deployments (Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler, 2008). This military concept could be adapted by the criminal justice system to help offenders and their families during periods of community supervision, incarceration, re-entry and reintegration.

Many of the same factors that impact military families when their soldiers are deployed are the same or similar for families who have a loved one in prison. For example, one training developed by the Army is entitled Spouse Battlemind Training. This training provides information at two different points in time; first, preparing for deployment, and second transitioning from deployment. Each provide basic information regarding several areas of concern: social support; adding/subtracting family roles; taking control; talking it out; loyalty and commitment; emotional balance; mental health and readiness; independence; navigating the Army system; and self-sacrifice. This information pertains to both the spouse and soldier and provides information on potential concerns, and actions that can be taken by each (Spouse Battlemind Training, 2007a, 2007b). Reunion or reintegration training is provided to both family members and

soldiers prior to the soldiers return. Training objectives include: establish realistic expectations about reunion; recognize symptoms of stress; and identify helpful and reliable sources of assistance. The Army's pre-deployment, deployment, and post deployment programs and procedures are comprehensive and provided to improve communication, mitigate distress and resolve crisis during the deployments (Doyle & Peterson, 2005).

These concepts could translate to offenders/ex-offenders and their families. Only through broad collaboration, can maximal benefit to the offender/ex-offender, family members and society be realized.

#### Summary

This study utilized a qualitative study to explore the role of family during probation from the perspective of the felony probationer. Eighteen moderate and high risk felony probationers were interviewed. Four major themes and nine subthemes emerged that provided insight into the role their family plays during probation. Felony probationers reported the importance of what family provides from both an overall perspective and day to day interactions. From the participants' perspective, families provide nurturant and instrumental support—at varying levels. The level and type of support provided impacted the felony probationer's perception of the relationships. What the participants desired and what they were provided determined their reactions to the support. In most all cases, nurturant support was valued most.

Probation is the largest and fastest growing segment of the criminal justice system. Research has shown that strong family networks reduce recidivism; therefore,

probation policy procedures and practices need to include families. Families are a natural source of support for the offender; therefore it would be in the best interest to involve them at every stage of the criminal justice process.

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## APPENDIX A

### Recruitment Letter

## Recruitment Letter

July 1, 2008

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Linda Russell and I am a doctoral student at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, but living in \_\_\_\_\_. I will be conducting a research project where I will be asking you about the role your family plays during your time on probation. If you have been on felony probation for at least three years and are at least 21 years old, then you are invited to participate in this study. Your participation will help to better understand what role family plays during the felony probation process.

This research project will consist of one face-to-face interview with me which will last approximately one hour. The interview will also be audio taped, although no name will be used on the tape. All the information shared in the interview will be confidential and all data will remain anonymous. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ to set up an interview at your convenience and answer any questions you may have. The location of the interview will take place at the probation department. As an incentive to participate and an appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$10.00 discount store shopping card upon completion of your interview. Thank you in advance for your time and willingness to participate in this research project.

Sincerely,

Linda Russell

**APPENDIX B**  
**Interview Protocol**

## Interview Protocol

**Title:** The Role of Felony Probationers' Families

**Time of interview:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Interviewee:**

**Interviewee assignment code:**

**Position of interviewee:**

**Warm up questions:** (to help establish rapport)

1. Have you ever participated in a research study?
2. Tell me something you like to do.
3. Do you like sports?
  - a. If yes, which ones?
  - b. Who is your favorite team?
  - c. If not, what do you like to watch?

**Demographic information:** (off record)

1. How old are you?
2. Are you married, single, divorced cohabitating, etc.?
3. Who do you live with?
4. Do you have any children?
  - a. Is so, how old are they?
  - b. Do they live with you?
5. Is there anything else you would like for me to know about you?

## APPENDIX C

### Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Role of Felony Probationers' Family in the Desistance Process

Investigator: Linda Rains Russell.....  
Advisor: Lillian Chenoweth, Ph.D.....940/898-2688

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Ms. Russell's dissertation at Texas Woman's University (TWU). The purpose of this study is to learn about the role family plays during one's time on felony probation. In particular, this study will explore felony probationers' perspective on what the family provides in terms of support during the probation experience.

Your participation will involve a face-to-face interview that will last approximately one hour. This interview will take place at the probation department. With your permission, the interview will consist of two parts; one part audio taped, and one part not audio taped. The non audio taped portion will gather general information. The audio taped portion is for transcription purposes only.

Potential Risks

Potential risks related to your participation in this study include loss of confidentiality, coercion, fatigue and emotional discomfort. The following measures will be taken to reduce these risks.

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. To assure confidentiality, the investigator will assign an identification code to your data, therefore, your real name will not be used on the audiotape and transcription. Only the investigator, her advisor, and the transcriber will have access to the tapes. Paper documents and audio tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet, and computer files will be stored on computer disks and stored in a locked file cabinet as well. Following the completion of the study, audio tapes and computer disks will be erased. Paper documents will be shredded within 5 years of collecting. The results of this study will be published in the investigator's dissertation and may be published in other research publications as well. However, no names or other identifying information will be used in any publication.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Initials  
Page 1 of 2



To continue confidentiality and reduce coercion, your probation officer will not have access or knowledge in your decision regarding participation in this study. Their only responsibility was to identify, contact and distribute recruitment letters. Therefore, whether you participate or not, your probation status will not be affected.

To avoid fatigue, you may take breaks during the interview, if needed. If you experience discomfort, at any time, related to the nature of the topic, you have the right to not answer all the questions and/or discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

The investigator will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the investigator know at once if there is a problem and she will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

#### Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this research study is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without penalty. Two direct benefits of this study to you are: (1) at the conclusion of today's interview you will receive a \$10.00 discount store shopping card as appreciation for your participation, time and information, and (2) upon completion of the study a summary of the results will be mailed to you upon request.\*

#### Questions Regarding the Study

If you have any questions about the research study you may ask the investigator; the phone number is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at [IRB@twu.edu](mailto:IRB@twu.edu). You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

I have read the above consent form and consent to participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, please provide an address to which this summary should be sent:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX D

### Interview Questions

## Interview Questions

Thank you for participating in this research project about the role your family plays during your probation time. The questions I will be asking have to do with your thoughts, ideas, and feelings from the time you started your probation time until now. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. This portion of the interview will be taped. Do you have any questions before starting?

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. What is the role of family during the felony probationer's probation process?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about your family.</li> <li>2. How much contact do you have with your family?</li> <li>3. Whose pictures do you carry around with you?</li> <li>4. The day you received probation, where was your family?</li> <li>5. Describe your relationship with your family.</li> <li>6. With family in mind, tell me what a typical day is like for you while being on probation.</li> </ol>
2. What aspect of family is deemed most helpful during the felony probationer's probation process?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Describe some things your family has done to help you during your time on probation.</li> <li>8. If there was one thing you wish could stay the same about the role your family has played during your probation, what would it be?</li> <li>9. What has been the most helpful thing your family has done for you during your time on probation?</li> <li>10. With family in mind, tell me what a really good day is like for you while being on probation.</li> <li>11. What would you like your family to know, so that they could help you?</li> </ol>

<p>3. What aspect of family is deemed least helpful during the felony probationer's probation process?</p>	<p>12. Describe some things your family has not done to help you during your time on probation.</p> <p>13. If there was one thing you wish would change about the role your family has played during your probation, what would it be?</p> <p>14. What has been the least helpful thing your family has done for you during your time on probation?</p> <p>15. With family in mind, tell me what a really bad day is like for you while being on probation.</p>
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## APPENDIX E

### Participant Profile

### Participant Profile

CODE	GENDER	AGE	STATUS	# CHILDREN AGE	SAMPLE
P1	Male	30	Married	5 - 7,6,4,3,2	Pilot
P2	Female	30	Cohabiting	2 - 8,3	Pilot
P3	Male	25	Married	1 - 3	Random
P4	Male	40	Married	2 - 3, 6m	Random
P5	Male	42	Married	2 - 5,1	Random
P6	Female	28	Married	3 - 8,3,2	Random
P7	Male	27	Married	1 - 2	Random
P8	Male	30	Married	3 - 8,7,5	Snow Ball
P9	Male	24	Married	1 - 6m	Snow Ball
P10	Male	31	Cohabiting	3 - 11,11,8	Random
P11	Female	30	Married	2 - 10,8	Random
P12	Male	28	Married	1 - 2	Random
P13	Male	61	Cohabiting	5 - 40,38,27,13,12	Random
P14	Male	37	Divorced	5 - 14,12,9,6,5	Random
P15	Female	50	Divorced	5 - 30,28,23,18,17	Random
P16	Female	35	Single	2 - 15,12	Random
P17	Female	30	Married	3 - 10,7,3	Convenience
P18	Female	27	Married/Separated	2 - 5,2	Convenience