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Crisp-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA) and Criminology

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Abstract
This article presents Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA; Ragin, 1987, 2000) as a useful methodological approach for criminological research. The aim is to introduce QCA’s logic and assumptions and a step-by-step guide to its application of crisp-set QCA using an illustrative hypothetical example. While QCA is a relatively new method and not widely used within criminological research thus far, it offers a unique approach that is particularly well suited to the field. This article is intended to serve as an introduction to those researchers interested in QCA and to demonstrate how they may incorporate it into their research.

Keywords: qualitative comparative analysis, comparative analysis, methodology, criminology

As with all fields, criminology is host to many analytical techniques and methods. The focus of this manuscript is on Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA; Ragin, 1987, 2000) and is aimed at those researchers within criminology who either have not been exposed to the technique and its benefits, or those who are curious about its advantages and how it might be incorporated into their own research. The motivation for this manuscript arose from the frustration that although there are numerous books and articles available that discuss QCA, the books are lengthy and, therefore, gaining a basic understanding of the method can be time consuming. Furthermore, available journal articles generally lack either the discussion of the logic and assumptions or the clear steps involved. The aim of this article, therefore, is to present the method and its application in a straightforward, step-by-step manner to aid researchers in the understanding and decision of whether to use QCA in future research projects. The steps provided demonstrate a very simple example of an analysis and are not intended to replace formal training or a manual (such as that of Schneider & Wagemann, 2012) but to assist in the decision of whether QCA is a viable option for criminological researchers.

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QCA is a research approach and technique that has become popular within the social sciences, by and large through the work of Charles Ragin (1987, 2000). Since Ragin’s seminal book, *The Comparative Method* (1987) first introduced and outlined QCA, use of the method has seen a marked increase within many disciplines, in particular sociology, comparative politics, business, and economics (Rihoux, Álamos-Concha, Bol, Marx, & Rezsőhazy, 2013). Criminology, however, has yet to fully embrace it as a mainstream method. According to the Compasss website (www.compasss.org) – which is the main information hub for QCA that maintains an up-to-date database of publications having utilized the method – articles filed under the *Legal Studies and Criminology* heading account for only 13 of the 571 total entries (as of January, 2017). This manuscript will present the assumptions and logic that underpin QCA and then present a hypothetical study investigating the causal conditions that lead to a higher homicide rate to demonstrate the steps involved in a crisp-set QCA. It will then conclude with a discussion of the benefits of the method, including a real example of how QCA has been used in criminological research.

**WHAT IS QCA?**

QCA is a holistic and predominantly case-oriented, set-theoretic approach that assumes outcomes are produced by combinations of conditions working together (Ragin, 1987, 2000). It is a comparative method in that it examines whether cases that share the same outcome also share the same conditions and vice versa (Ragin, 2008). This is based on the “Direct Method of Agreement” and “Method of Difference” proposed by John Stuart Mill (1967 [1843]). These methods involve matching cases and removing irrelevant variables to determine common causal relationships (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009).

The goal of QCA is to identify the group of variables, or conditions, that are shared by the cases that display the same outcome in order to understand the way in which they combine to produce it (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). The influence a condition has on an outcome depends on the other variables within the case and the way in which they co-exist and interrelate, which enables the identification of descriptively meaningful patterns of interaction (Ragin, Mayer, & Drass, 1984). QCA is not concerned with the influence single independent variables have on a dependant variable but rather how the conditions combine to produce the outcome. Therefore, QCA moves us towards a deterministic understanding of the world in terms of the consistent patterns that occur (or do not occur) when outcomes are present, or are indeed absent.

Traditionally there are two general methodological approaches to research, qualitative and quantitative, and QCA falls somewhere in the middle with the aim of integrating the advantages of both (Fritzsche, 2013; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). On the one hand, cases are understood holistically and are
defined according to their observed configuration of conditions that they are made up of (Fritzsche, 2013; Ragin, 2000). The integrity of the cases is maintained because they are treated holistically and observed in their causal entirety with the parts of each case being understood in relation to the other parts (Ragin, 1987). On the other hand, the cases are treated in a systematic and variable-oriented manner. Cases are evaluated in terms of their theoretically derived and observed constitutive conditions, which are then systematically and formally analyzed.

QCA should not only be considered a technique for analysis but also as a methodological approach to research. This refers to “the processes before and after the analysis of the data, such as the (re-)collection of data, (re-)definition of the case selection criteria, or (re-)specification of concepts, often based on preliminary insights gained through QCA-based data analysis” (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 11). The iterative nature of QCA allows the researcher to become closely acquainted with, and to obtain an intimate knowledge of the data to make transparent decisions. This formalizes and systematizes the qualitative process and is important for research in that it aids in the development of theory and concept formation and leads to a deep understanding of the empirical associations under investigation.

QCA allows the logic and depth that is associated with qualitative comparison, which traditionally uses smaller case numbers, to be applied to research that employs medium to large sample sizes (Ragin, 2000; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). By incorporating these medium case numbers, QCA provides sufficient variation for cross-case analysis while still allowing for the in-depth, case-by-case understanding that is required to answer certain research questions. It formalizes what comparative research inherently sets out to achieve and, therefore, offers transparency and the ability for replication, which is often withheld in some qualitative research methods (Fritzsche, 2013; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009).

For the purpose of this manuscript, the original variant of QCA, crisp-set QCA, is used. In set theory, a “crisp-set” allows only for full case membership or full non-membership to the set. This requires that all conditions and outcome for each case be dichotomized to in and out, or true and false, depending on the pre-determined set values. Other variants of QCA have been developed for situations that involve conditions that are not ideally dichotomized. One variant employs fuzzy-sets (fuzzy-set QCA), which allows varying degrees of membership to a set rather than the dichotomized treatment in crisp-sets. Others allow for sets with multinomial categorical data (multi-value QCA) and the temporal ordering of conditions (temporal QCA). For more information on these variants, refer to Schneider and Wagemann (2012) who have explored these in detail.
LOGIC AND ASSUMPTIONS

QCA is based on set theory and Boolean algebra in that it tests for set-subset relationships. Dependent on the observed environment, QCA understands the real world in terms of the membership of cases and conditions in and relationships between sets. With these foundations, there are four major logical assumptions that underlie its basis and differentiate it from other traditional statistical methods. These are necessary and sufficient conditions, conjunctural causality, equifinality and multifinality, and causal asymmetry. The following section will outline these concepts. To demonstrate their applicability to criminology, this manuscript will draw upon Polk’s (1993) scenarios of masculine violence, which Polk (1993) defined as homicides involving both male offenders and male victims. Typologies like the scenarios described by Polk (1993; although it should be noted that he used the term “scenario” to denote a more fluid concept rather than the strict dimensions that typologies, categories, or types assume) are useful to evaluate these assumptions because they are inherently, if not explicitly and intentionally, based on set-theoretic principles. They essentially assign concepts to themes in much the same way as cases are assigned to sets in set-theory.

Necessary and sufficient conditions.

Set-theoretic methods share three features: first, they assign case membership to sets which represent concepts; second, relationships between those sets are analyzed; and third, those relationships are explained in terms of necessity and sufficiency, along with causes that can be interpreted from them (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Many social science research questions implicitly, and often unknowingly, address the concepts of necessity and sufficiency but are hidden in verbal terminology that is not common to set-theory (Mahoney, 2004; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012); criminology is no exception. Criminal and rapist typologies, such as those of Groth (1979), Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, and Ressler (1992), and Turvey (1999) are inherently based on the logic underpinning set-theory and the relations of necessity and sufficiency. As can be seen in Figure 1, necessity and sufficiency represent the relationships between the two sets, condition $X$ and outcome $Y$.

![Figure 1. Visual representation of sufficiency and necessity between sets X and Y.](image_url)
In set-theoretic terms, necessary conditions are supersets of the outcome while sufficient conditions are subsets. If condition $X$ is necessary for outcome $Y$, every time $Y$ occurs then $X$ must be present, and is written as $X \leftarrow Y$. In contrast, for condition $X$ to be sufficient for outcome $Y$, then every time $X$ is present, $Y$ will occur, or $X \rightarrow Y$. Stated another way, if a condition is sufficient, it is a guarantee that the condition can, by itself produce the outcome. For example, air is necessary for humans to live – without it, a person would die. However, it is not sufficient because it cannot, by itself maintain human life as there are other factors required for survival, like water and food. Similarly, if an advertised job requires that the candidate holds a Masters degree, the qualification is necessary but will not guarantee they get the job, and is, therefore, not sufficient. On the other hand, jumping from a plane at 20,000 feet without a parachute is sufficient for death; however, there are many other ways one might die and it is, therefore, not necessary. Likewise, being a mother is sufficient but not necessary for being female in the same way that a room being square is sufficient but not necessary for it having four walls (it could be rectangular).

Polk's (1993) scenarios of masculine violence are essentially the search for necessary and sufficient conditions that produce each scenario. As an example, masculine violence can be conceived as the outcome and male offender as the condition of interest to investigate the set relationships between them. The male offender is a necessary condition because for a scenario of masculine violence to occur, there must be a male offender involved, as per Polk’s (1993) definition. The male offender, however, is not sufficient for masculine violence because, as already stipulated, not every incident for which the offender is male involves male victims. There are incidents for which the male offender’s victim is female and the incident is not a scenario of masculine violence. Since the definition of masculine violence specifically dictates that it involves male offenders and male victims, the male offender is a necessary but not sufficient condition of masculine violence.

QCA formally and systematically addresses the degree to which these two set-theoretic relationships exist between the outcome and conditions rather than correlational relationships. By identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for an outcome, QCA offers a deterministic understanding of causality and is ideal for answering questions that are interested in cause and effect. It is this feature that offers a particularly unique and compelling perspective to criminological research.

**Conjunctural causality.**

Ragin (1987) noted that outcomes rarely have an isolated single cause and QCA extends beyond just looking for individual necessary and sufficient conditions and looks for combinations of those conditions. The likelihood of a fight ensuing in a bar, for instance, might depend on factors such as (but not limited to) the level of alcohol consumed by patrons and the dynamics
of the group of people present. The mix of those two factors may increase or
decrease the likelihood of the fight; this is referred to as conjunctural causality.
It rests on the fundamental premise that is characteristic of social phe-
nomena, that in order to bring about an event, its causes must combine in
both time and place (Miethe & Regoezci, 2004; Ragin, 1987, 2000). In other
words, the causal role a condition has is dependent on the other conditions
that it is present or not present with. Consider the statement that “[s]ome
compliments come off like insults; some insults come off like jokes” (Ragin,
1987, p. 23), which means that it is the complex interplay of sender, receiver,
message, and the situation that determines whether a compliment or joke is
funny or insulting. Likewise, the example from the previous section of air
being necessary for human survival additionally suggested that eating food
and drinking water are also necessary. These three factors are individually
necessary but it might be claimed that taken together they are sufficient for
human survival. In other words, human survival is only guaranteed so long
as there is air, food, and water (note that this makes no statement regarding
death – this will be explored in the causal asymmetry section below). This is
an important foundation of QCA in that it looks at the way in which the condi-
tions combine and work together to produce an outcome. Researchers inter-
ested in how several conditions combine to produce an outcome rather than
how much a single variable influences a dependent variable might consider
QCA as a viable and valuable research approach and method.

QCA uses Boolean logic and algebra to assess which combinations of con-
ditions are sufficient and/or necessary for the outcome. A summary of the
simplest set of conditions that explains an outcome is established by way
of logical minimization (Caves, Meuer, & Rupletta, 2015; Miethe & Regoezci,
2004). To do so, QCA uses the Boolean operators logical “AND” (*) and logi-
cal “OR” (+). Consider a case consisting of conditions A, B, and C that displays
outcome D, and a second case, also displaying outcome D that consists of only
conditions A and B (C is not present). This means that the two pathways (A,
B, and C, & A and B) both lead to the presence of outcome D. Consequently,
is does not matter whether condition C is present or not because outcome
D will occur so long as conditions A and B are present (recall Mill’s (1967
[1843]) methods). This process is repeated until no further reductions are
possible. In the above scenario, using Boolean operators, the complex solu-
tion is displayed as \( A^*B^*C + A^*B \rightarrow D \). This expression can be then logically
minimized to \( A^*B \rightarrow D \), which is known at the parsimonious solution.

Conjunctural causation is at the heart of a lot of qualitative research in
that many researchers seek the thematic structure of their outcome of inter-
est. With regards to Polk’s (1993) scenarios, for instance, he suggested that
the confrontational scenario of masculine violence is dominated by homici-
cides that occur between males, in typically “open” areas, and with an audi-
ence of male peers. It is the combination of these conditions that characteriz-
es the confrontational scenario, rather than the presence of any one of them alone. In Boolean terms, this may be expressed as:

\[
\text{male-to-male AND (*) open area AND (*) audience of male peers} \\
\rightarrow \text{confrontational scenario of masculine violence.}
\]

Being based on set-theory, QCA is an especially useful tool for “concept formation, the creation of typologies, and causal analysis” (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 8) which all rely on the exploration of factors that combine to produce an outcome. In a field awash with profiles and typologies, the ability of QCA to formalize conjunctural causation makes the method particularly useful.

**Equifinality and multifinality.**

Equifinality is essentially the idea that “all paths lead to Rome.” It is the notion that different conditions, or combinations of conditions, can lead to the same outcome. The two Boolean pathways from the section above demonstrate equifinality in that they both lead to outcome D \((A*B*C OR (+) A*B \rightarrow D)\). In order to listen to music, for example, it does not matter whether it is performed live from a stage, emitted from speakers, or sent through earphones, only that it is heard. Similarly, consider two highly successful clothing companies. One might sell only via physical store-fronts, have exorbitant prices, and thrives on face-to-face consultancy, while the other is fully online, is cheap, and is successful because of their fast mail service. While they both have comparable profits, these are accomplished in two different ways demonstrating the alternative paths for both companies to achieve the similar outcome. With regards to Polk’s (1993) confrontational scenario of masculine violence, a more variable aspect is the relationship between the victim and offender. Polk and Ranson (1991) originally suggested that these confrontations occur typically between strangers; however, this was expanded by Polk (1993) to also include some friend/acquaintance homicides. Therefore, the masculine confrontational scenario can be produced by the combination of masculine violence with either stranger OR (+) friends/acquaintances relationships, not just strangers.

Multifinality, on the other hand, is the assumption that a condition, or a combination of conditions, can lead to different outcomes. We often observe this pattern in our social world which leads to interesting research questions, like why two people who grow up in the same environment go on to experience very different life paths. One might lead a life in accordance with our social norms while the other goes on to pursue a criminal career. Polk (1993) distinguished between three different homicide scenarios that are characterized by masculine violence – confrontational, conflict resolution, and during the course of another crime. The condition of the male offender and male victim taken together can lead to all three of these scenarios, demonstrating the notion of multifinality. By incorporating equifinality and multifinality, QCA is a flexible method that is reflective of the real world and its contradictions and complexities.
Causal asymmetry.

In set-theoretic methods, there is not always a symmetrical relationship between the presence and absence of an outcome; they may have different explanations that must be explored separately (Ragin, 1987). In other words, the conditions that explain the occurrence of an outcome cannot be inverted and do not have the equal and opposite effect when the outcome is not present. This is in contrast to some traditional correlational approaches, which observe and assume symmetrical connections, meaning a variable’s influence is the same with an equally opposite effect, be it positive or negative, and strong or weak (Caves et al., 2015). For example, in set-theoretic terms, the fact that there are people that drive cars without a license does not undermine the claim that car drivers must legally have a valid drivers license. From a correlational position, however, every instance of a person driving without a valid license weakens the connection between valid license and driving a car. Furthermore, returning to the notion that humans need air, food, and water to survive makes no statement regarding how a person may die (or not survive, that is, the absence of the outcome). Their death may have nothing to do with the lack of air, food, or water, like jumping from a plane with no parachute. Therefore, from a set-theoretic position, no claim can be made or explanation be automatically derived about the absence of an outcome from its presence. This feature is explicitly set-theoretic and will be further demonstrated in the next section.

PERFORMING CRISP-SET QCA

There are a number of computer programs available to use in conducting a QCA. These are obtained, free of charge, via the Compasss website (www.compasss.org) and are available with either a graphical user interface (GUI; as is experienced with the point and click interface of SPSS) or command line interface (CLI; as with the syntax view of SPSS). GUI programs, such as fs/QCA (Ragin & Davey, 2014) and Tosmana (Cronqvist, 2011), are typically more user-friendly, however, are limited in their capabilities. CLI programs, such as RStudio (RStudio Team, 2014), are far more flexible and powerful in their capabilities than the GUI programs, however, are much more difficult to use because they are run using a specific source code which must first be learned.

A crisp-set QCA involves four major steps: calibration of the data, analysis of necessary conditions, construction and analysis of the truth table, and analysis of sufficient conditions. To demonstrate the steps involved in crisp-set QCA, an illustrative example utilizing a hypothetical dataset will be used. Suppose a researcher is interested in what differentiates countries with very high and very low homicide rates, but correlational analyses are inconclusive. Following a review of the relevant literature and theories, they determine that the homicide rate can be explained by several possibilities (equifinality) and is dependent on the arrangement (conjunctural causation) of the level of the median population age, rate of homicide by gun, gross national
income (GNI) level, and amount of infrastructure being developed for each country. By performing a QCA, the researcher can establish the combination of those conditions, or causal pathways, that are associated with both very high and very low homicide rates (asymmetry) to further develop and test the identified and relevant theories. By studying the cases that represent the extremes (very high and very low homicide rates) of the total population is to suggest that they are qualitatively different from one another, which is an assumption that differs from approaches that assume causal symmetry. Once all the data has been collected, the researcher can turn to the first major step – calibration.

**Calibration of the data for high homicide rate.**

The process of assigning set membership to empirical data is called calibration. The researcher’s first step, therefore, is to assign the raw variables to set membership scores for both the outcome and four conditions. The definitions for each condition and outcome set must be clearly determined followed by the outer limits and threshold cross-over points, which indicate whether a case will be fully in or fully out of the set. Ordinarily, the type of variable – binary, interval, or continuous – determines the method of calibration (Ragin, 2008). For the purpose of this demonstration, the original variant crisp-set QCA will be used, and, therefore, all variables will be dichotomized, and each country will be assigned as either fully in or fully out, or one and zero. It is important to note that the numbers assigned to each set (one or zero) are qualitative indicators or descriptors only and do not represent quantitative values. The level, or threshold, at which a country becomes fully in or out should be set from sources external from the observed data rather than the data itself, although there are several ways in which an anchor can be set (Schneider & Eggert, 2014; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). At this point it should be noted that there are many ways a set can be determined or defined and that this is entirely dependent on the research question. The outcome in this hypothetical scenario is the homicide rate for each country, which will become the crisp-set labeled “RATE.” The 16 countries with the highest and lowest homicide rates in the world (World Health Organization, 2016; high $n = 9$ and low $n = 7$) comprise this set, and those countries with the very high homicide rates are deemed as fully in, and coded as 1, whilst those with the lowest are deemed as fully out, and coded as 0.

The first condition for this hypothetical study is the median population age, which is labeled “AGE”. There are a number of ways this data can be calibrated, but for this crisp-set scenario, the cutoff is set halfway between the top and bottom median ages for every country included in *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). Therefore, those countries with a median age 33.1 years and above are considered fully in the set, and those below as fully out.

The second condition is the rate of homicide by gun for each included country, labeled “GUNS.”. The gun homicide rates are all per 100,000 and
were gathered from the Gunpolicy.org (2016) database. The cutoff for this condition was determined by the mean of the gun homicide rates. The countries for which the rate is 16.97 or above are assigned as fully in the set, and those that are below as fully out.

The gross national income (GNI) is the third condition of interest and is labeled “GNI”. The values for this condition represent the gross national income per capita at purchasing power parity in international dollars for 2013. A country is considered fully in the set if their value is 17,240 or above, which is the mean for all countries as compiled by The World Bank (2016).

The last condition is labeled “INFRA” and represents the ranking of each country’s level of infrastructure. The figures were compiled by Statistica (2016) and are represented on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (underdeveloped) to 7 (extensively developed by international standards). The median, or midpoint (4.95), according to Statistica (2016), is set as the cutoff, with those countries above classified as fully in, and those below as fully out.

Table 1 presents the raw and calibrated data for the outcome and four condition sets.

Table 1: Raw and Calibrated Data for Homicide Rate Outcome and Four Conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GUNS</th>
<th>GNI</th>
<th>INFRA</th>
<th>RATE</th>
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<th>GUNS</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( N = 16 \). AGE = median age; GUNS = rate of homicide by gun per 100,000; GNI = gross national income per capita at purchasing power parity; INFRA = ranking of infrastructure level; RATE = homicide rate.
Analyze necessary conditions for the high homicide rate.

Necessary conditions are important to social research because they imply that for the outcome to occur, the condition must always be present. This has important policy and intervention implications because, if that necessary condition can be identified and manipulated, there is the opportunity to change the outcome (Ragin, 2000). Due to the asymmetrical feature of QCA, when investigating necessary conditions, the focus is only on those cases for which the outcome is present, not absent (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). For this scenario, the researcher looks at all the cases for which the homicide rate is high (the outcome is present) and determines if there are any conditions that are consistently present (or absent depending on the calibration). For this particular scenario, there is one necessary condition. The seventh column of Table 1 indicates that the overall younger median age of a country is necessary for the high homicide rate (age ← RATE).

The consistency of this condition is 1.00 meaning that every country that observed a high homicide rate was associated with a younger median age. In reality, perfect set-subsets are not common (Braumoeller & Goertz, 2000; Ragin, 2006) and, therefore, analyses often accept that a condition is necessary if it is present in most cases, or above a threshold of around 0.9 (Ragin, 2006). It is important to evaluate whether or not the condition makes sense as a necessary condition rather than to rely on the output of the analysis since high consistency is not a guarantee that the relationship is meaningful (Ragin, 2006). The coverage score essentially describes how empirically relevant and important the connections between the sets are (Ragin, 2008). It represents how well the particular configuration of conditions fits the outcome, in other words, how many cases that observe this configuration also display the outcome. Coverage, therefore, examines how close the subset is between the conditions and outcome and is analogous with $R^2$ in correlational analysis. This is easier to understand visually; consider the circles from Figure 1 – the closer the circles are in size to one another, the higher the coverage is, and the more the condition accounts for the occurrence of the outcome. In this case, the coverage was 0.75 (or 75%) because, of the total 12 countries that displayed the younger median age, nine were associated with the higher homicide rate (that is, $9/12 = 75\%$). The benchmark minimum value for the coverage for necessity is generally set at 0.5 (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

Truth table construction.

The researcher’s next step is to construct the truth table from the observed data. The truth table looks like a data matrix, the difference lying in the meaning of the rows. Each row in the truth table represents a logically possible configuration of the incorporated conditions and outcome, and, therefore, “denotes a qualitatively different combination of conditions” (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 92). The truth table essentially provides a way of formalizing what comparative research inherently sets out to achieve,
in that its aim is to examine whether cases that share the same conditions share the same outcome and vice versa (Ragin, 2008). Table 2 presents the reduction of the calibrated data from Table 1 into a truth table. The number of possible rows is calculated with \(2^c\), where \(c\) equals the number of incorporated conditions. Therefore, there are 16 possible rows \(\left(2^4 = 16\right)\), although there are only six for which there were observed cases in this hypothetical example. The other 10 possible rows are logically possible, but unobserved combinations of conditions and outcome, and are called logical remainders.

Table 2: Truth Table for Homicide Rate Outcome and Four Conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GUNS</th>
<th>GNI</th>
<th>INFRA</th>
<th>RATE</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Consist</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>15, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>6, 7, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rows 7-16: Logical Reminders

Note. \(N = 16\). \(n\) = number of cases; Consist = raw consistency.

In order to produce the truth table, the information from Table 1 is condensed and summarized, such that cases with the same configurations of conditions are combined forming the same row in the truth table. For instance, row one from Table 2 denotes cases (or countries) 15 and 16 from Table 1. They share the same conditions and outcome and, therefore, the same row in the truth table. Column “\(n\)” indicates how many of the cases exhibited the specific combination of conditions and outcome expressed in that row. Row four indicates that for three countries (cases 1, 2, and 3), the combination of a lower country-wide median age, higher rate of gun homicides, lower GNI, and lower level of infrastructure are associated with a higher homicide rate. The consistency for that row is 1.00, meaning that every instance of that configuration of conditions was associated with the high homicide rate. On the other hand, row one saw two countries (cases 15 and 16) display a younger median age, lower rate of gun homicides, higher GNI, and higher level of infrastructure, which were associated with a lower homicide rate. The consistency is 0.00 because, for this dataset, that configuration never leads to the higher homicide rate (when the outcome is present, but recall that this does not imply anything about the lower homicide rate). Row three presents a contradictory row; the same configuration of the conditions leads to both the higher and lower homicide rate and has a consistency of 0.67 (countries six, seven, and 14). This means that 67% of the countries displaying this configuration of conditions displayed the higher homicide rate \((n = 2\) of 3 cases).
Contradictory rows are interesting in that they reflect the reality of social research and require further investigation and explanation. Post hoc investigation of the countries involved in that row may provide an explanation for the contradiction, such as an important condition having been omitted from the analysis that helps explain the difference in outcome, or the outcome or condition being incorrectly calibrated. These cases that are in conflict need to be resolved before testing for sufficiency by either recalibrating the data or dropping a case from the analysis (all of which is based on theory and by returning to the data, see Schneider & Wagemann [2012] for more details). For this study, the researcher went back to the data and realized that two cases had been incorrectly calibrated and changed the case membership for those cases. Note that this iterative process is based on and justified from prior knowledge and the decisions are completely transparent. Table 3 presents the new raw data matrix and Table 4 presents the new truth table with no contradictions.

**Table 3: Revised Raw and Calibrated Data for Homicide Rate Outcome and Four Conditions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Calibrated Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>GUNS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.57</td>
<td>66.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>36.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22.69</td>
<td>33.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.78</td>
<td>20.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.19</td>
<td>29.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.53</td>
<td>16.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.70</td>
<td>25.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.69</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.40</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>45.43</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.88</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>33.90</td>
<td>29.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>27.35</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.03</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 16$. AGE = median age; GUNS = rate of homicide by gun per 100,000; GNI = gross national income per capita at purchasing power parity; INFRA = ranking of infrastructure level; RATE = homicide rate.
Table 4: Revised Truth Table for Homicide Rate Outcome and Four Conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GUNS</th>
<th>GNI</th>
<th>INFRA</th>
<th>RATE</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Consist</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>15, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rows 9-16: Logical Remainders

Note. N = 16. n = number of cases; Consist = raw consistency.

Reanalyze necessary conditions for the high homicide rate.

Having changed the original raw data, the tests for necessity must be rerun because the configurations of conditions have changed. Following the steps from the section above, only younger median age emerged again as a necessary condition with a consistency of 1.00 and coverage of 0.82 (9/11 = 0.82); therefore the coverage (the empirical relevance) has risen. Had there not been conflicting cases, the data would not have been revised and this step would not have been required.

Truth table analysis.

Having revised the truth table, tests for sufficiency are conducted. There are five rows relevant to the analysis of sufficiency because they display the outcome; rows one, two, three, four, and five. These rows from the truth table can be expressed in Boolean terms using uppercase letters for the presence of the conditions and outcome, lowercase for the absence, and the Boolean operators AND (*) and OR (+). Thus, rows one, two, three, four, and five can be expressed as:

\[
\text{age*GUNS*gni*infra + age*guns*gni*infra + age*GUNS*gni*INFRA + age*guns*GNI*infra + age*GUNS*GNI*infra} \rightarrow \text{RATE}
\]

Therefore, row one (the first pathway) represents countries with a very high homicide rate that have a lower median age, higher gun homicide rate and have a lower GNI and level of infrastructure. This solution from the analysis of the truth table represents the five pathways that are sufficient for the higher homicide rate prior to any minimizing procedures. In other words, so long as one of those combinations is present, the homicide rate is higher for this sample.
Reduce the solution.

In order to express the five solutions from the truth table in a simpler and more economical manner, the researcher subjects the truth table to Boolean minimization, which uses the logic of Boolean algebra and Mill’s (1967 [1843]) methods of agreement and difference. The configurations from rows one and two from Table 4, for instance, both include younger median age, lower GNI, and lower levels of infrastructure, but differ in terms of the rate of gun homicides. Therefore, it does not matter whether the gun homicide rate is high or low with this particular configuration of conditions to produce the higher homicide rate. Further minimization between rows one and three reveals that they differ in terms of the level of infrastructure but share the remaining conditions. Following full minimization procedures, there are two reduced sufficient pathways for the higher homicide rate, as expressed in Table 5. The minimized configurations are called the parsimonious solutions and are logically equivalent to the complex solution, only simpler.

Table 5: Minimized Sufficient Pathways for Higher Homicide Rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathway</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
<th>Raw Cov</th>
<th>Unique Cov</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>age*infra</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1, 2, 3,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 9,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age<em>GUNS</em>gni</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1, 2, 3,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Cov = Coverage.

In Boolean terms, Table 5 can be expressed as age*infra + age*GUNS*gni \(\rightarrow\) RATE. Either of the configurations from Table 5 is sufficient for reaching a high homicide rate. In the first solution, a younger mean age and infrastructure are sufficient for the higher homicide rate, regardless of the rate of gun homicides and GNI. In the second, a younger median age, higher rate of gun homicides, and lower GNI is sufficient, and it does not matter what the level of infrastructure is. So long as the conditions in a country meet either of those two sufficient solutions, the country will experience a very high homicide rate.

Low homicide rate.

As previously discussed, one of the features of QCA is causal asymmetry, in that the opposite effect and relations cannot be assumed for the absence of the outcome from its presence, in this case the low homicide rate. Because the researcher was interested in the differences between very high and very low homicide rates, it is therefore, important to also investigate the necessary and sufficient conditions that contribute to the low rate. By recoding the out-
come so that the cases with the lower homicide rate are considered fully in (low homicide rate = 1), the tests for necessity and sufficiency can be rerun.

Following the recoding, one necessary condition emerges; higher GNI is necessary for a low homicide rate (GNI ← rate; consistency = 1.00; coverage = 0.78). Recall that the necessary condition for a high homicide rate was a younger median age (age ← RATE). There are also two conditions that are very close to being necessary for the lower homicide rate; high level of infrastructure (consistency = 0.86, coverage = 0.75) and low gun homicide rate (consistency = 0.86, coverage = 0.75). While it shouldn't be claimed that these conditions are necessary, they might be of interest to the researcher and warrant further investigation. Subsequent analyses for sufficient conditions for the low homicide rate reveal two pathways: guns*GNI*INFRA + AGE*GUNS*GNI → rate. Again, compare this solution to that produced for the high homicide rate (age*GUNS*gni + age*gni*infra → RATE). Both tests for necessity and sufficiency are not directly opposite to the tests conducted for the higher homicide rate, demonstrating the importance of the asymmetrical feature of QCA. In a real study, these resultant pathways might indicate which conditions should be focused on to reduce the homicide rate for a country.

As a point of difference, had these conditions been investigated via correlational analyses, the researcher would have found statistically significant results between all conditions and the homicide rate (median age, $r = -0.688$, $p < .01$, gun rate, $r = 0.809$, $p < 0.01$, GNI, $r = -0.591$, $p < 0.05$, and infrastructure, $r = -0.529$, $p < 0.05$). However, the results of the QCA are far more nuanced and detailed than these correlations and indicate the causal pathways of condition combinations that account for the higher or lower homicide rate.

Being a qualitative method, it is important that the results of the analyses are not simply reported but that their meaning is interpreted. The pathways by themselves are less meaningful without an exploration and explanation of the context of the cases, which in turn can minimize the relevance and point of the research. The epistemological foundation of QCA is that it is fundamentally case oriented and the data should be treated in a qualitative way. Although numbers are attributed to sets throughout the QCA process, these are qualitative indicators rather than quantitative values. In this hypothetical example, for instance, exploring whether cases cluster for each path (such as type of, or region of country) enables a far deeper understanding of the data than looking at the conditions comprising the pathway alone. Furthermore, examining which conditions are causally relevant to the outcome allows for policy analysis and intervention programming to determine what influences a desired result, such as a low homicide rate. But these must be examined within the context of the data.
Now that the steps in QCA have been outlined, a real example of how QCA has been utilized in criminological research will be presented here. For her doctoral thesis, Parker (2017) employed crisp-set QCA to investigate the qualitative make-up of, and differences between, the seven homicide event motives. The conditions that were incorporated were: relationship between offender and victim; whether the offender and victim were the same gender; location of the homicide; cause of death; and whether the offender was over the age of 35 years. Her analysis for thrill-motivated homicides (defined as “homicides committed for pleasure, curiosity, boredom, or catharsis”; Parker, 2017, p. 103) incorporated 21 cases for which the outcome was always present (the aim was not to investigate the causal role of the conditions but to determine each of the motives’ structure). Thrill produced the necessary condition that the offender and victim were not related to one another (consistency = 0.952). This suggests that, for a homicide to be motivated by thrill, the victim, in most cases, is not related to their attacker. This is in contrast to the homicides motivated by love (that is, “homicides committed in order to remove a person they love from a situation they perceive as being ‘worse than death’ including extended suicides and altruistic reasons”; Parker, 2017, pp. 110 - 111), which found the necessary condition that the offender and victim were related to one another. One conclusion that was proposed is that the bond that connects the victim and offender in the love homicides perhaps protects offender’s loved ones from homicides committed for thrill. Put another way, an offender who is looking to kill for pleasure or excitement, for instance, generally looks beyond the family unit for their victim. Analysis of the truth table revealed two dominant configurations of the incorporated conditions for thrill-motivated homicides (a cutoff of 3 cases per configuration was required for the pathway to be included). QCA’s strength lies in the ability for the researcher to have an intimate relationship with the data, and post hoc investigation of the cases associated with each configuration leads to one of the most interesting and enlightening elements of these homicides motivated by thrill. It was revealed that the thrill cases that involved multiple offenders also mostly involved victims who knew their attackers. On the other hand, in the cases where the victim was a stranger, the offender generally worked alone. The “main correlational effect” from the descriptive analyses for this sample was that strangers accounted for the highest proportion of the relationships observed for thrill, yet as is clear from the QCA results, this was dependent on the other conditions it was presented with, namely the number of offenders involved. The practical implications of such a finding, with further testing, is that it may indicate another avenue of questioning and focus for investigators rather than focusing on and working with the assumption that thrill kills are most often perpetrated by strangers (Holmes & Holmes, 2009; Howard, 2014).
CONCLUSION

The aim of this manuscript has been to demonstrate the procedure involved in a crisp-set QCA so to present it as a methodological option for criminological research. To date, its use within criminology has been limited, but it has many advantages that may benefit the discipline and its researchers. Within criminology, there are so many levels at which research can be focused (macro or individual, for example) and QCA has the ability to handle these differing levels and data types well. Being a bridge between qualitative and quantitative approaches, it allows for a holistic and broader approach as is often desired with social research to consider the context in which the behaviors occur. On the other hand, it also allows for an intimacy with the data that is necessary for a deeper and more refined understanding of the concepts being investigated.

If a researcher’s motivation is to investigate conjunctural causality and equifinality, then QCA can provide a viable methodological approach and research design. QCA is particularly well suited to research that is interested in configurations of causal conditions, such as the assessment of how multiple influences achieve certain outcomes. For instance, it can be useful to determine which conditions (or combinations of) have contributed to a successful intervention. Whereas net effects might indicate that a condition may not assist, it could be that it is dependent on which other conditions it combines with. Similarly, the highly complex nature of our social world means that what influences an area’s crime rate (for example) most likely depends on the combination of conditions in that area rather than one condition alone. The set-theoretical principles upon which QCA is based are also useful for processes such as data analyses, theory development and testing, creating evidence-based typologies, developing causal hypotheses based on empirically observed cases, testing hypotheses, and being used as a robustness test. Importantly, it is systematic and transparent in that it cannot be conducted without following formalized steps that incorporate clear and theoretically driven decisions and definitions, which allows for replication and validity. This is a particularly beneficial advantage with regards to a qualitative approach and data.

There are, of course, limitations to this method which must be considered before QCA is utilized. For instance, in crisp-set QCA, the process of dichotomizing the sets can lead to the danger of losing some of the more complex information. If a case falls into both sets, for example, a judgement must be made as to which set is most suitable. Furthermore, some data is simply not suited to being treating as fully in or out of a set, in which case either another variant of QCA, or another method altogether should be used. Another potential limitation is that all data must be available or the condition or case must be dropped. This clearly may reduce the number of included cases or that a condition which might be important to the research is simply not investigated. QCA is also time-consuming because it is highly iterative.
As was previously illustrated in the broad steps above, the back and forth between analysis and calibration can be a lengthy process and if a condition is changed following reassessment of its value and definition, then the data for the new condition must be recollected for all cases. And lastly, the number of conditions incorporated should be kept to a minimum (ideally between four and six; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012) due to the exponentially increasing number of cases that is required for each condition that is included. Therefore, conditions must be carefully chosen based on theoretically derived decisions rather than testing for every conceivable configuration. This point may, in turn, limit the scope of the research.

The aim of this manuscript has been to introduce and outline QCA to a criminological audience where the method is not currently commonly used. The steps presented were provided only as a general guide to demonstrate the procedure rather than being stringently followed. When being incorporated into research, the process is far more iterative and specific. This manuscript by no means claims that QCA is the answer to every research question, but that the choice of method is dependent on the question being asked. QCA is based on set theoretical thinking and Boolean algebra, whose logic and assumptions differ from the traditional statistical approaches. It represents a different way to think about and approach data and their meaning. Research designs that involve hypotheses about necessity and sufficiency rather than correlations, focus on conjunctural causation, equifinality, and asymmetry, might, therefore, benefit from QCA as a viable methodological option.

REFERENCES


**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Belinda is currently a PhD student at the Queensland University of Technology. She has attained a Bachelor of Music (Performance) and Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) with honours before turning to her higher education in criminology. Her area of interest is motive, particularly with regards to homicide, and her current research is exploring the situational characteristics associated with the motives in order to determine whether they differ qualitatively in terms of their victim, offender, and offence characteristics.
‘It just be like that’: Young Men’s and Women’s Attributions of Negative Sexual Behavior

Christopher W. Mullins
Southern Illinois University

Daniel R. Kavish
Lander University

Abstract
This paper provides an examination of the role that male peer support plays in negative sexual attitudes and behaviors vis-à-vis women. Drawing on semi-structured interview data collected from at risk high school students in an urban Midwestern town, we are able to qualitatively explore attitudes, behaviors, and experiences within this group of young men and women as they relate to negative sexual behaviors. We integrate routine activities theory with a male peer support theory of violence to to obtain a more holistic view of negative sexual behaviors. Male peer support models provide us with a theoretical explanation of the variation within motivation, thereby filling a serious gap in the routine activities perspective.

Heretofore work on Male Peer Support Theory has focused on explaining relationship violence and abuse. Male Peer Support Theory combines tenets of learning theories (i.e., Sutherland, 1939) and social bonding theories (i.e., Hirschi, 1969). Counter to Hirschi’s (1969) original conceptualization of delinquents as social outsiders and outcasts with weak social bonds, DeKeseredy and colleagues (DeKeseredy, 1990; DeKeseredy & Schwartz 1993, 1995, 2010, 2013; Godenzi, Schwartz, & DeKeseredy, 2001; Schwartz, DeKeseredy, Tait, & Alvi, 2001) assert that if individuals are strongly bonded to peers who hold and/or enact anti-female values, then not only will they be more likely to adopt those values as their own, but they will also receive social support from other males who hold such values and enact such behaviors. Simply, the theory suggests that, in some social contexts, negative attitudes toward women and associated violent behaviors directed at them are not defined as deviant or problematic; rather, they are normative. Thus they are transmitted and reinforced as such. This set of attitudes and social reinforcements may not be limited to intimate partner violence/abuse but might also apply to participation in sexual violence.

In the 1990s many scholars began calling for more theoretical integration in criminology research. Miller and Wellford (1997) specifically implored...
scholars to begin integrating theories in order to explain woman abuse. In response, Godenzi and colleagues (2001) presented an integrated social bond and male peer support model of woman abuse that borrowed from research on masculinities, feminism, control theory, and male peer support. Hirschi (1969) theorized that deviance was the result of weakened social bonds, but Godenzi and colleagues (2001) argued that some types of deviant behavior are more likely a result of strong social bonds with otherwise conventional male peers, specifically woman abuse. Essentially, it is strong, supportive, bonds between men who share specific values and attitudes that encourage violence against women that encourage and reinforce this behavior. As examined in DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2013), there is ample empirical support in the literature supporting Male Peer Support Theory’s explanations of violence against women.

Feminist routine activities theory was first introduced by Schwartz and Pitts (1995) when they examined college sexual assaults. Until then, quantitative tests of routine activities theory were primarily limited to non-sexual and property crimes, and sexual assault was largely ignored. They proposed a feminist routine activities approach to explain the criminogenic convergence of motivated male offenders, available female targets, and an absence of intervention by capable guardians. A key deficiency in existing routine activities approaches to explaining sexual assaults is the assumption of motivation. That is, routine activities theories simply assume that motivation for offending exists, but they do not explain why or how such motivation exists (Cohen & Felson, 1979). This important gap in theory can be filled by integrating male peer support theory with feminist routine activities theories to explain negative sexual behavior and sexual assaults (Schwartz et al., 2001).

In the only paper to jointly test predictions of Male Peer Support Theory and Feminist Routine Activities, Schwartz and colleagues (2001) found alcohol consumption among men (but not women) was positively related to their self-reported perpetration of sexual abuse. Their study also confirmed a strong relationship between receiving advice from peers that encouraged violent behavior and self-reported perpetration of sexual abuse. Importantly, male students in their sample “who drank two or more times a week and who had friends who gave them peer support” were up to 9 times as likely to self-report sexual abuse perpetration (pp. 645-6, emphasis added).

The bulk of research in this vein has focused on college students, and for good reason. A multitude of data sources indicate high levels of sexual victimization in that population. Studies done in the US and Canada produce yearly victimization rates of around 3% of respondents to upwards of 25%, with most studies producing figures of around 10% in a 12-month period (see DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010; Schwartz & Pitts, 1995). The National College Women Sexual Victimization survey found that 12% of incoming female students had experienced either an attempted or completed sexual assault victimization before coming to college. The
National College Health Risk Behavior Survey (NCHRBS) found that among those college-age women who had experienced a sexual victimization, 71% had this experience before college (Fisher et al., 2010).

Clearly, sexual victimization among young women is widely prevalent and strongly interconnected with socializing behavior among college-age populations. Some data suggest these negative sexual experiences extend into the high school environment. However, the interactional contexts of sexual assault within this age group have been less explored than the interactional contexts of their older peers. There is a lack of research on sexual assault in adolescent populations for a multitude of reasons; the primary reason is scholars’ inability to gain access to adolescents for the purpose of studying sexual assault. School boards and Institutional Review Boards, until recently, have made it nearly impossible to study sexual assault issues in junior high and high schools. The tendency to use schools and community centers to assist sampling make it difficult to gather a generalizable sample of adolescents.

While much of this work examines micro- or meso-level situations and experiences, scholars have mainly attributed these outcomes ultimately to constellations of gendered beliefs about women, men, and sex. Masculinity as a cultural force and social construct is central to these theoretical interpretations. Yet, prior research has established that there are differences in masculinities across class, geographical, racial and ethnic lines. This sample is African American juveniles from lower socio-economic urban neighborhoods. African American men in various social contexts appear to hold different attitudes and values vis-à-vis gender than their White counterparts. Konrad and Harris (2002), in a disaggregating analysis of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), found African Americans more conservative and traditional in how they rated the desirability of feminine traits or behaviors. There is also a variation in how masculinity is perceived within African American communities. Hunter and Davis’s (1992) interviews with African American men highlight the multidimensionality of masculinity as seen and enacted by their interviewees, yet found issues of autonomy and control to be central across their sample. Oliver’s (1994) work highlights the availability of “playa” (see also Majors & Billson, 1996) and “tough guy” as alternative masculinity constructs in lower-income African American neighborhoods (see also Mullins, 2006). Anderson (1999), as well as others (i.e., Jacobs & Wright, 2006; Oliver, 1994) have firmly linked these attitudes and self-presentations to extant street crime subculture networks.

Ray and Rosow (2010) explored patriarchal discourses of sexuality as well as the perceptions of women and found that, among fraternity members, White males were more likely to present accounts of their interactions with women that were sexually focused and drew upon patriarchal discourses of sexuality as well as their perceptions of women. African American fraternity members, however, provided more romantic accounts of dating and
interactions with women. They also tended to be critical of the sexually exploitative environments discussed by much sexual violence literature. However, African American males attending a university are not representative of the broader population and we can expect the attitudes of at-risk youth to be different.

This paper draws upon the conceptual frameworks of Male Peer Support Theory and Feminist Routine Activities Theory. It examines young men and young women’s accounts of negative sexual behavior. It builds upon prior research in a number of ways. It examines these issues within an age trajectory previously ignored by this line of inquiry (high school students) and in a different social context (neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage). As Fisher and colleagues (2010) found, 12% of incoming college freshman women had experienced an attempted or completed sexual victimization before going to college. Our data addresses some of the contexts of victimization in this pre-college age group.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We draw upon the analysis of transcripts of semi-structured interviews with at-risk youth in this paper. We focus on interviewee accounts of dispute episodes collected during a broader project on the role violence plays in the life of youth living in St. Louis, Missouri. St. Louis is a moderately sized Midwestern city, which is highly racially segregated, was hard hit by deindustrialization, and has experienced substantial White flight since the 1960s (see Baybeck & Jones, 2004). These forces have generated neighborhoods burdened with conditions of concentrated poverty and disadvantage known to produce strong street-based social networks and elevated violence. In fact, the city has been a productive site for a number of ethnographically inclined studies of crime and violence (see, for example, Jacobs, 1999; Jacobs & Wright, 2006; Miller, 1998, 2001, 2008; Mullins, 2006; Wright & Decker, 1994, 1997).

During this project, 39 boys and 33 girls were interviewed. Ages ranged from 12 to 19, with a mean of approximately 16 for both genders. Sampling was purposive and this data is not generalizable. Interviewees were at risk for or involved in delinquent activities. All had direct and indirect experiences with violent behavior. The interviews followed an open-ended protocol designed to elicit thick descriptions of the events of interest, with interviewers using follow-up probes in order to obtain a fuller depiction of the contexts in which conflicts and/or violence emerged, situational and interactional features of the events (for instance, what happened, where it happened, who else was present and, the role they played), as well as proximate and distant motivations, and the interpretive meanings research participants brought to these events and processes. These discussions were embedded in broader discussions of neighborhood processes in the interviewees’ communities.
The youth interviewed here lived in highly disordered, “highly distressed” neighborhoods. Their neighborhoods were highly racially segregated, low income, with highly disproportionate numbers of unemployed persons, households headed by single females, and households with incomes below the poverty line (Miller, 2008, p.17). Most attended one of two alternative schools designed for students who had been expelled from the Saint Louis public school system. They were exposed to violence directly or vicariously on a daily basis. Gang membership rates were high and illegal narcotics ubiquitous. In short, these youth lived in a highly chaotic and dangerous environment, the effects of which are clear in their narratives (for full discussion of these data please see Miller, 2008, pp. 8-30 and 223).

Research participants were promised strict confidentiality and were provided economic remuneration for their participation. The interview data is very rich, providing extensive and detailed discussions of the interviewees’ attitudes and experiences. Due to questions eliciting information on both school and neighborhood contexts, ample thick descriptions of these interactions’ environments are present allowing for a contextualization of the young men and women’s accounts.

For this project, we engaged in secondary data analysis of the existing interviews. We were provided with cleaned interview transcripts by the original primary investigator on the project; the identities of the original respondents were not known to us. During qualitative analysis, our approach is distinctly informed by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Our initial coding was focused on identifying thematic units (see Krippendorf, 1980) that displayed or informed negative sexual treatment of women in both young men’s and women’s interviews. Excerpts consisted of discussions or descriptions of sexual harassment in schools and on the streets or at parties and other gatherings where women were sexually abused, and individual accounts of personal and vicarious experiences with abusing or being abused. As this is secondary analysis of preexisting data, we were not able to fully implement typical procedures used in grounded theory for the building of understandings; we could not go back to re-interview participants or check our understandings with participants. Yet, our approach to theme identification was carried out by close line-by-line readings and rereadings of the interview materials in an initial process of open coding combined with theoretical memo writing. While we were open to exploration and surprise, our coding efforts were guided by existing theoretical and empirical work in the male peer support and feminist routine activities traditions. Such guided or focused coding is not uncommon in qualitative research (see Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Our second stage of coding primarily involved the use of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to link major themes back to core theoretical ideas and to “test” the main theoretical predictions of male peer support and feminist routine activities theory. This allowed us to identify the extent of
support for the theories within the data as well as to come to a more finely
gained understanding of the variations within the themes, as well as the
general amount of support (or lack thereof) for the concepts of interest. Both
authors coded, wrote memos, and interpreted the data at hand. Inter-coder
uniformity was maintained with frequent discussions and direct compari-
sions of coding work and theoretical memos generated. Where differences
emerged, consensual understanding was achieved through discussion.

While our approach is not classically ethnographic as we were not in-
volved in the field work producing the data analyzed, secondary analysis is
still highly useful in producing thick descriptions of cultural contexts, atti-
dudes, and behavior if such materials are present in the data source. As exhib-
ited by prior work published on this data has shown (e.g., Miller, 2008), the
rich accounts allow for ample identification and exploration of interaction
contexts and emic meanings as reflected in discourse. Further, male peer
support and feminist routine activities processes were identified as topics
of interest during the research design phase and incorporated into the inter-
view protocols (Miller, personal communication, 2011).

FINDINGS

Young Men’s Narratives

The accounts provided are a rich reflection of the gendered lens through
which most of the respondents view their world. They are also full of contra-
dictions and equivocations. When queried about sexual violence, many of the
respondents backed off initial responses to provide a cognitive map of when
such generally undesirable behaviors were in fact tolerated if not expected.

Attributions of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Victims

Far more common than verbalized allowances for physical violence were
narratives that either excused young men’s negative sexual behaviors or di-
rectly blamed women for their own victimization. These findings emerged
from questions about the daily and ubiquitous sexual harassment that oc-
curred in schools (or secondarily in neighborhoods), questions about their
perceptions of sexual assault victims and their own negative sexual behav-
iors, especially “running trains” on girls (two males simultaneously having
intercourse with one female).

Sixteen of the young men admitted to sexually harassing females either
at school or in their neighborhood. This behavior involved sexualized com-
ments as well as touching in a clearly sexualized fashion (i.e., breasts and but-
tocks). While the young men often dismissed the actions as “play,” the young
women in the school did not perceive it as such. This is readily apparent in
looking at both the girls’ and the boys’ interviews (see Miller, 2008 for a full
examination). Seven boys directly identified a specific “type” of girl who was
the target of harassment; of the 34 specific characteristics elicited in probes,
were sexually derogatory stereotypes identified by many criminologists as rape myths or rape-supportive attitudes or perspectives.

Eight suggested only “sexually” promiscuous (in the eyes of the harasser) girls were targets of hallway and lunch room harassment. Andrew explained “some of the girls up here...they wild, they don’t give a care about what they do, or care about what people feel...if I’m disrespecting a female [it is] because they nasty.” Nine specifically identified skimpy or revealing dress as the key identifier. Bibby said he would direct his harassing attentions at girls who were “wearing some real skinny shorts and a shirt that’s real little.” Ricky concurred, “You know how they dress right? ... I mean short skirts, you know, see-through blouses, I mean they wear that...high heel shoes.” Any revealing clothing was taken as code for sexual advertisement, which the boys perceived as an invitation to engage in often unwanted verbal and physical sexual harassment.

In addition to specifically mentioning dress, many of the males claimed their harassing behaviors were directed towards young women who acted in a sexualized way with five pointing toward the girl’s “teasing” or self-comportment. Marcus said, “The boys call ‘em names...’cause they [girls] ain’t got no respect for they self.” Similarly, Raymond pointed to girl’s self-respect as being a way to avoid being treated this way. “Some girls get mad and some girls used to being called that so they don’t say nothing...that one girl respect herself and she’ll defend herself. ...[the other] don’t care really ‘bout themselves or just let dudes call ‘em out their name.” As with most of the boys, the onus was on the young women herself to act in a way so as not to draw harassment attention.

Six boys claimed that the girls liked the attention, though some admitted that some girls do while others might find the “attention” and “play” as disrespectful. The following exchange with DeWayne is a case in point:

Interviewer: How do the girls respond if they get grabbed or touched?
DeWayne: They don’t say anything. They be laughing or smiling or something.
Interviewer: All of them are okay with it?
DeWayne: Not all of ’em. Some of ’em be yelling and screaming and stuff. Most of ’em be laughing and smiling.

Daniel provided a similar description,

They [young women] like it....They smile. I mean they don’t show no sign of they don’t like it. Like they being touched... I mean some of ’em don’t like to be touched, some of ’em do...[can tell by] they way the female carries herself. What they have on....like tight clothes. Small clothes. Exposing too much....They act more freaky...they wanting to get touched. Want somebody to touch ‘em. Probably just want attention...I
don't know. [but if you ? like that] You go[ing to] get touched on. She set herself out like that.

While these young men provide token acknowledgement that many targets of their behavior find their actions problematic, these accounts attempt to reduce or eliminate the potential negativity of their actions through not only suggesting complicity of girls with the harassment but by definition inverting the situation by saying that most of the victims “enjoy” the experience—a set of attitudes clearly identified in past work as rape supportive attitudes (see especially Scully, 1990).

Trains

As we explained in the methods section, following Miller (2008) we define “trains” as innately coercive sexual interactions. In analyzing narratives of these events, we get a strong sense of how the young men in the data are defining them [before and after the events] and thus understanding their own participation within them. In total, eleven of the boys claimed to have participated in at least one train. Two characteristics of these discourses warrant close examination: views concerning the willingness of the young woman in the event and verbalized attitudes about girls who engage in such behavior. These themes were so strongly interconnected, that once the young men insisted the female was a willing participant, they then segued into providing attributions as to why someone would do it. The demands of gender-appropriate sexual behaviors seemed to strongly shape the worldviews that emerged.

All eleven boys who described participating in trains insisted that the woman was a willing partner, some even going out of their way to do so. Most of these assertions were tied to views of sexual consent and participation that were broadly held within the community. Antwoin provided the most direct statement in saying that, “don’t no dude force no girl to do nuttin.” Such a blanket denial of victimization was not uncommon here. Dave similarly insisted the female participants were willing but then drew upon an essentialized discourse often used to justify negative male sexual behavior to explain female behavior.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think girls were involved in that [train]?

**Dave:** I don't know, 'cuz they was freaky... they did it 'cuz they wanted to. I guess they was just like that... 'cuz they be horny. They be horny. You know how you got some of these little young girls out here that be hot and just want it, think they handle it.

**Carlos's attributions were similar:**

**Carlos:** They do anything, they freaks. They horny, they hormones real high...

**Interviewer:** But you do it with 'em.
Carlos: So? ...my hormones not that high...I know I can control mine.

Tony’s discourse also highlights the blindness many of the young men showed to the potential that a female might not be a willing participant in a sexual encounter while also immediately moving into attribution statements. When asked why a girl would participate in a train, he responded:

Tony: ‘Cuz that [running a train] mean she a freak...that mean she wouldn’t be faithful...

Interviewer: Are you saying that she would have allowed it to happen to her?

Tony: Yeah, she would’ve had to....

Interviewer: Why do you think a girl would want to do that?

Tony: I don’t know, stupid?

Andrew claimed to have participated in a train one time, framing his narrative to show the young woman in control of the entire encounter. “My friend he knew her so....He already knew she was a freak or whatever so they came in the room or whatever then she got to playing with him and she pulled down his pants and start... you know...And she came over and did me and while she be doing me he was having sex with her.” Immediately asked why a girl would participate in this act, he explained, “For a girl to do something like that [run a train], that’s nasty....[Boys] even nastier for doing it. They aint got no respect for themselves. Sometime a girl can do that ‘cuz they got a broken home or what ever and they just feel they need some attention so they do it like that.”

When asked if he would ever date someone who had been a participant in a train, Tyrell consciously grapples with the contradictory social demands of the sexual double standard:

I don’t know, man. I wouldn’t be attracted to her. I’d probably wanna have sex with her, but I wouldn’t wanna....I don’t know man, I can’t really say. ‘Cuz like, if a girl run a train on one dude, but like if I had sex with two girls, I’d want a girl to go with me. I don’t see nothing wrong with it, but when a girl do it, it’s different....‘Cuz it just be like that. It just be like that. If a girl...if a dude got it like that he straight ___, but if a girl do it, it’s like she a rat, she a straight rat. She a hoe. It’s just be like that. But if I had sex with two girls they [his male peers] gonna give me my props, be happy for me, but if a girl tell another dude that she let somebody run a train all they gonna think is, like, ‘Let’s go with me and my homies then.’

Tyrell’s ambivalence is easy to see and mirrored in the interviews of many of his peers. He forthrightly identifies the tensions between respecting women and the way in which he can earn reputational capital from his peers.
As we discussed earlier, Miller (2008) established the reduction of choices and control girls felt in these situations. Boys' discourses which suggested that females were either unwilling or not in control of the event were rare; they went to great linguistic lengths to establish the women as willing partners, if not the aggressors. Tyrell's account of a train he participated in clearly displays the typical themes.

This girl was just like...I ain’t even know her, but like I knew her ‘cuz I had went to work last year. I talked to this girl...on the phone or whatever. Then my boy when he started working there he already had knew her ‘cuz he said he had went to a party with her last year and he was gonna have sex with her then but something about they momma came, the grandmomma came home or something so they ain’t get to do it. So one day, he was just like, we was all sitting watching this movie and it was real dark or whatever and she had came in there or whatever and he was just talking to her and he was like “Let’s all go head and run a train on you.”

She was like “What?” and she started like, “You better go on” then [his friend was] like “for real, let’s go over to my house” and then, you know what I’m saying, she was like “naw” and then we got outside after work she was walking over there to the bus stop and he like “You coming over to my house?” She was like “What it look like?” That’s how it happened. We got over there [to his friends house] [and] just did whatever. ...

Later, the interview returns to the same event:

Interviewer: You were telling me before about the girl that you and your friend...the girl that you all ran a train on, do you think she felt bad about what she did after the fact?

Tyrell: I can't even say, I don't even know her like that. I can't really say. She do that kinda stuff all the time.

Interviewer: She does?

Tyrell: No, I’m just saying I don’t know. If she don’t she probably did feel bad, but if she do she probably wouldn’t feel bad. She probably be so that she wouldn’t trip off it no more. She go to my cousin’s school now and she be talking all stuff like “I hate your cousin,” but I don’t care, I mean I don’t even care. She shouldn’t have did that. ...'Cuz that’s bad man. I mean, I don’t know. I can’t really say it’s bad or nothing ‘cuz....

Interviewer: Do you think it was bad that you all did it?

Tyrell: Naw....I don’t know. I can’t really say it’s bad for real. I mean it’s bad, but if she didn’t really wanna do it she shouldn’t have did it.
Interviewer: Do you think she really wanted to do it?
Tyrell: I can’t really say ‘cuz at first she was like laughing and stuff like “don’t,” but we didn’t pressure her, I didn’t say nothing to her for the rest of the day. I probably talk to her, but I say nothing about like that and then she just came with us so I mean she had to want to. If she was thinking we’d be mad at her if she didn’t do it, I don’t know.

Interviewer: Do you think she really liked your friend?
Tyrell: A little bit, yeah. I think she liked him.

Interviewer: Do you think she did it because she liked him?
Tyrell: I don’t know. I can’t even really say ‘cuz after that she act like she ain’t even....I don’t know, I can’t really say. I know she didn’t like him after that, I know she didn’t like him. She’ll talk to me, but she don’t even talk to him at all. Every time they see each other they’ll argue.

Interviewer: Do you think she seriously thought that she was coming over there to have sex with both of you all or just one of you?
Tyrell: Both. She knew....

Interviewer: Did you all talk to other people about what happened?
Tyrell: Uh, he did. I ain’t even say nothing. We going to work the next day, he telling everybody. I’m like damn you shouldn’t do that girl like that. He telling everybody, I’m not saying nothing to nobody....She missed like a week of work after that.

While he insists he and his friend did nothing wrong, Tyrell’s account reveals otherwise. The young woman missed work for a week and at the time of the interview was clearly still disputing with his friend. Other elements in the accounts tied train experiences to party experiences, with almost every description of a train event involving the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs being used.

Sexual Assault

Universally, every interviewee in the data stated that forcing sex on a woman was wrong. No young man admitted engaging in such behavior, though several could point to instances where peers had done so or told them it was acceptable to do so. Many described situations where they thought some level of force or coercion would be acceptable though they admitted no direct experience with it. For example, Bibby relates a common assumption of what women “owe” their dates when talking about why some men might force women to have sex. “Let’s say you took her to the McDonalds, you know, alright I can’t understand that [forcing sex on a date], but if you took her to a...real expensive restaurant and you spend a lot of money I think that you should...if you spend all this money [o]n her, then you gotta get something...just to get something in return.”
While the research participants seemingly agreed to the general wrongness of sexual assaults, 12 used strong victim blaming language in their discussions about real or hypothetical incidents. Some insisted on women’s agency in order to deny the existence of and the harmfulness of the violence. When asked if a woman has a right to say no to a sexual advance, Jamal said, “Yes. If she don’t then she just weak-minded. Just doing it to be doing it.” His unstated assumption is that the reason girls get victimized is their failure to stand up for themselves; he assumes that men will listen to a female’s protestations. Wayne presented a similar attribution, “[S]ome girls be, you know, stuck at they auntie house or something and trying to hurry up and get home and then they get caught up in temptation. All different kinds of ways, anything can happen.” The express usage of the language of sin reaffirms the sense of victims’ agency for their own victimizations. While it is a weakness and can be forgiven, temptation is something that is “given into” voluntarily. Similarly, when James Terrance was asked if he knew any girls that had been taken advantage of sexually, he responded by rejecting the very existence of “taking advantage” of women by men. “Naw, not for real. What people might see as takin’ advantage of, I...that was of they own free will....Like when we ran that train on that girl...people might see that as takin’ advantage of her,” but he did not.

When asked about ways to improve his neighborhood to make things safer, especially for women, Walter explained:

The thing that should be done for women is this....if a girl don’t try to think that they all that and think that they too good to try to talk to certain guys, and then if a girl just come outside with nothing on, your skirt’s all the way up here and you got just a bra on, that’s telling the guy that you probably want something done to you. It’s just a certain way that guys think and if you come outside with a skirt all the way up your butt and you can see all your legs and you can see your stomach and all that stuff and got all that make-up and ain’t nothing wrong with your body, that’s a key right there that you want guys to look at you like you good and all that stuff.

Interviewer: So you think basically that women are partly to blame for what they call over to themselves?

Walter: Yeah. ‘Cuz like everybody says to the dude, the dude shouldn’t wear all those baggy clothes and like that a girl shouldn’t go outside with no types...not no types, but a girl shouldn’t go outside if a girl have a big butt or something like that, with dude like a girl and they got what they want a girl know they shouldn’t go outside wearing that type of stuff if they don’t want nothing to happen to ‘em. ...

Interviewer: And if you wear tight skirts and shirts all the way up?
Walter: Something probably happen to you yeah. It's more like if a
dude do it, it's they fault too and if the girls do it it's they fault too. It's
both of they fault so the dudes know better than to do it and the girls
know better than coming outside or walking around with something
like that on.

Walter sets the problem firmly on the shoulders of the victims here. He
blames women's strong self-esteem (thinking she's 'all that'), her body type
(big butts) and dress as reasons for victimization. He does provide a token
acknowledgement of the blameworthy roles males play in such events, yet his
discussion is clearly focused on females' public presentations, even things
that cannot be controlled by the person (i.e., having a desirable body type).

The young men's narratives clearly show the role that negative attitudes
and beliefs toward and about women play in the ways in which they perceive
and interact with women. They also make expressly clear the group-context
of these beliefs and of the associated actions. To provide a broader image of
these attitudes and actions, it is also necessary to examine the narratives of
young women in the data.

Female Narratives

While our main interest here is the views and norms that structure the
perceptions and actions of the young men in the sample, as DeKeseredy
(1990) pointed out, women's viewpoints are critical to understand these
processes. Thus, we now detail the key themes which emerged in the young
women's accounts of these incidents.

Victim-blaming

The females universally claimed there was no acceptable reason to sexu-
ally assault a woman. They were also unsurprisingly highly critical of the
boy's harassing behavior. Yet, like the boys, many of the young women also
provided accounts and descriptions filled with victim-blaming attributions
and assumptions. As shown by Miller (2001) and Kandiyoti (1988), here
women were some of the strongest policers of emphasized femininity.

Discussing sexual harassments and whom the males target, Tamika said:

It depends like, the girls that got like bad names...for they-
self, cause like...boys they friends stay in the girl neigh-
borhood and they come to school sayin' the girls do this and the
girls do that and stuff, so since that's what they say the girl
name is in the neighborhood, so they'll come to school and
whatever, bring they business and whatever. I don't know
like, if it be true. It don't have to be true, they'll come to
school and say all kind of stuff, be like, “This girl, she do this
and she do that” and all that stuff and they'll touch on 'em.
Some of the girls like, the really, really fast lil' girls, the ones
who know what they talkin' 'bout, they'll let 'em touch on 'em
and then sometimes, when you don't want them to touch you and stuff, they'll get mad, hit the girl and all that stuff, and they (the girl) don't be doin' nothing.' ... that's disrespectful to the girl so they just [let]...the boys they disrespect them and stuff. I mean, that don't mean they have to but they just should just make that girl feel confident and build up herself, not lower her self-esteem more, though. But I mean, it just some boys that don't care and don't think and the girl she don't care, really she do, but whatever she doin’ I think she just do it for attention.

While she acknowledges the disrespectful nature of the boys’ behavior, Tamika is far more condemnatory of the failure of those girls who are harassed to “respect” themselves (by not engaging in sexual interactions) than she is of the boys doing the harassing.

Destiny, in witnessing a party-based sexual assault, maintained the victim as the focus of her blame attributions.

Destiny: At a party, it wasn’t no party, it’s like, it was a group of us and they brought some friends and people brought some friends, and we was just sittin’ there chilling and the girl drunk too much and stuff and was lettin’ them feel all over her and stuff. ... I mean they was drunk, I mean they wasn’t drunk, but they was high too, but they know what they was doin’ and to me she know what they was doin’ to her. I don't care what nobody say, she knew how to stop that. ... I don't care what nobody say, she was too drunk, she wasn’t too drunk to know that that boy was feelin’ on her. We drunk the same as much and smoked and nobody, I was like myself. ...

Interviewer: Did you talk to her about that after the fact?

Destiny: Yeah and then she was like “I ain’t know, I ain’t know.” I was like, “how you ain’t know when you were talkin’ like everybody else.” Man I don’t care, I still think she want them to do that to her.

Destiny rejects the possibility of incapacitation through intoxication as long as the woman in question is still able to move or talk. Especially through reference to her own behavior and self-control, she derides the woman for lacking similar strengths. Even if we give her accounting of the situation full credence, through witnessing one girl allowing herself to be treated negatively, Destiny is able to discount this entire category of victimization.

Just as some of the boys claimed changing the behavior of victims was the easiest way to make their school and neighborhoods safe, many of the females did so as well. Some boys and girls outright suggested teaching young females how to dress and “carry themselves”. Cleshay’s response is typical:

I: How do you think we could reduce the kinds of violence against young women that we have been talking about?
Cleshay: Well, women could start wearing them clothes, learn they seasons. They be coming up in here in mini-skirts up to they butt and it’s cold, fifty degrees outside. Then they bending over in front of these boys. Sometimes women do bring it on theyselves, you know what I’m saying, they throwing messages and then once a boy get the, he got a message already in his mind, she wanna act like that ain’t the message that she gave him. They can dress like, you know, like ladies and women. Act like young ladies and women. Stop, you knew how the boy was when you first met him. You knew he wasn’t about nuttin’ [not serious about a relationship], you knew as soon as you went with him he wasn’t about nuttin’ so don’t act like you gonna go into this relationship changing him and all this other stuff.

The main condemnation here seems to be ignorance of the streets and how they work. As other studies of street life subculture have shown, there is little tolerance for and no forgiveness of fools or the uninitiated.

**DISCUSSION**

Male peer support theory suggests that woman abuse in various forms is catalyzed through normative attitudes held by peer groups; it distinctly frames negative treatment of women as something defined by social networks as positive and reinforced as desirable. Negative attitudes toward and sexual harassment of females was ubiquitous throughout the narratives examined here, with much reinforcement from interactional peers. Young men and women alike wove accounts depicting intensely gendered interactional patterns and normative structures. This manifest in a wide variety of behaviors, from sexualized harassment of girls in schools and the neighborhood by boys (and men) to coercive sexual encounters. Most interviewees here minimally acknowledged the problematic nature of these behaviors, laying responsibility at the feet of the harassers. Yet, young men and women alike provided a host of attributions that placed some, if not all, of the blame for these experiences on the recipients of the harassment. Such neutralizations allow the behavior to be normalized and denuded of perceived harmfulness.

As shown, even when acknowledging the central role of young men’s attitudes and peers in the maintaining of these scripts, the data is flush with neutralizations reducing or eliminating the responsibility many young men thought that they held. Most commonly, young men attempted to systematically deny the harmfulness of their behaviors. Framing the sexualized harassment as “play” (a sentiment not echoed by the female interviewees—see Miller, 2008), the seriousness of the behavior is mitigated in their perceptions. Further, this frame serves to cognitively disconnect the daily verbal and physical sexual harassment from sexual and physical abuse and violence visited upon young women. These actions are interconnected, forming a continuum of negative sexual behaviors, with behavior ranging from verbal ban-
ter and inappropriate touching on one end with coercive sexual encounters and sexual assaults on the other. Patriarchal attitudes shared by young men and women in the interviewee peer groups provided extensive normative enforcement of negative attitudes toward women in general and attitudes which encouraged such negative behaviors specifically. This is confirmed in our correlational analyses showing that associations between sexist attitudes and sexist behavior. This is supportive of one of the central causal factors in a male peer support approach—not only are such attitudes transmitted and reinforced within the peer group, but individual negative sexual behavior is positively reinforced by those peers as well.

As prevalent, and in some ways more socially powerful, young men often framed accounts of their negative sexual behavior and that of their peers in a way that blamed the young women themselves for being targeted. Drawing on well-heeled motifs of dress, comportment, and reputation, many of the young men made it clear that they blamed the young woman herself for catalyzing the behavior. While in no way surprising, the ubiquity of this discourse suggests that formal and informal social messages attempting to undermine such attitudes have had little influence among this population. This lack of influence is not from a lack of exposure to, or an understanding, of norms of equity; many young men initially responded to questions about negative sexual treatment of women by first providing a socially acceptable response condemning such actions. Yet, more detailed questioning as well as open-ended description of activities (both done and witnessed) showed that attributions of equity co-existed with sexist attributions. These findings extend a male peer support approach in specifying the exact content of the social messages which promote and reinforce such behavior. DeKeseredy (1990) emphasizes the role that peers play in encouraging conformity to sexist attitudes and actions through mundane interactional reinforcements. Our work specifically identifies these messages but shows that they derive from pre-existing norms in US culture. It further reinforces the broader points made by a male peer support model and by feminist routine activities that the encouragement and enactment of woman abuse is ubiquitous and derives from quite banal processes. Simply, daily interactions among men (and women as seen in these interview accounts) draw upon widespread cultural attitudes about women to reinforce negative attitudes and behaviors.

Initial support of gender equity (or at least some levels of inter-gender respect) could be an interview artifact, with some of the interviewees telling researchers what they thought the interviewers wanted to hear. Yet, such subsequent accounts were often little more than a thin veil hiding strongly negative attitudes. Other interviewees presented what appear to be genuine contradictions in their attitudes, vacillating between narratives focusing on respectful treatment of women and disrespectful treatment. This is likely the product of multiple social influences providing contradictory messages. Some of the young men clearly experienced cognitive dissonance, especially
when their narratives provided ample contradictory evidence of women's ascen
t or ability to exercise agency. This is clear in Tyrell's account of the train
he participated in with his friend. His narrative vacillates between insisting
the girl was a willing participant, yet he provides clear indication that she
wasn't and suffered emotional distress from the event for some time (she
missed work and still dislikes Tyrell's friend).

In its most extreme form, denial of victimization manifests as asser-
tions that women were always in control of their actions and any negative or
unwanted sexual attention was avoidable if the girl simply asserted herself
and her desire (or lack thereof). Dismissing the existence of sexual coercion
clearly allowed the males to construct narratives framing their behavior as
at least normal and at the most accepted. Combined with the rape-support-
ive attitudes expressed by many of the interviewees, this created hostile
cultural terrain for young women to navigate. Seeing women as able to end
a potentially negative sexual encounter at all times and drawing on frames
that highlight women's own culpability in initiating the action create an at-
titudinal recipe for woman abuse, the effects of which are strongly visible in
the data and strongly supportive of a male peer support process.

The young men were not the only ones to provide accounts that denied
harm or blamed the victim for her own mistreatment. As many scholars be-
fore us have noted (Miller, 2001, 2002; Kandiyoti, 1988), women are often
stronger policers of masculinist attitudes vis-à-vis women's behavior than
men. As examined above, both in reference to their own experiences and the
experiences of others, young women's accounts were also rich with victim
blaming assertions, producing the same themes and neutralizations seen in
the accounts of the young men. The young women did not exempt their own
actions or experiences from these overall frames. Self-blame was a common
component of girls discussing their own victimization experiences. Even
here the role of male peer support is relevant as typically those girls who
expressed the strongest masculinist attitudes toward women's physical and
sexual victimization considered young men central members of their peer
groups. While male peer support models highlight the influence of men on
other men in establishing a set of behaviors as normal and expected, this
same process appears to be working within young women's attitudes to
further support the emically perceived correctness of woman abuse at the
hands of men. Thus, young (and older) women are less likely to define such
actions when committed by their peers as problematic, especially if it is not
directed at them specifically but in some cases even when it is.

Our explorations of the narratives also confirmed an association be-
tween specific interactional contexts and female victimization. As Feminist
Routine Activities theory suggests, certain environments will create much
greater possibilities for women to be victimized by physical or sexual abuse.
As work on college environments has shown, here parties and other interac-
tions which combined the mingling of a number of people with the use of al-
alcohol or illegal drugs formed a frequent context of female victimization. The young men here acknowledged both using and witnessing “drinking to a yes” behavior—intoxicating a female to reduce her ability to deny sexual consent; all but one of the narratives concerning trains mentioned drugs or alcohol as part of the situational context. Further, accounts of behavior experienced by females or witnessed by either males or females highlighted the role that the victim’s drug and or alcohol consumption played in setting up the event. As with work on sexual assaults among university-aged populations, sexually predatory men use women’s intoxication as part of their calculus of target selection. While not surprising, this serves as an essential acknowledgement that the routine activities of leisure in general frame sexual assault events, especially the combined mingling of men and women with drugs and/or alcohol providing opportunity for men use intoxication in identifying targetable women or to intoxicate a given target to increase her suitability for an assault. It is not unique to college populations, but more broadly grounded within social structures.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the role of male peer support in shaping adolescent men’s negative sexual behaviors towards women. Through exploring narratives and survey responses of young men and young women, we established that negative sexual treatment of women was common throughout the data analyzed. Sexual harassment, which involved verbal banter and unsolicited touching, appeared a constant form of inter-gender interaction, especially in narratives about school-based occurrences. For many of the interviewees, personal and vicarious experiences with female abuse went beyond harassing conversations. Coercive sexual experiences were common, both in the direct and the vicarious experiences of the interviewees. They were clearly understood in an attitudinal context that combined extensive use of neutralizations that denied the harmfulness of such actions as well as that which blamed the victim for their own victimization. In sum, the findings here cast a dim light on the efficacy of school-based programs to engender views of equity among students. The interviewees, regardless of gender, were able to repeat core aspects of these messages when queried about their behaviors, and the strength of attitudes they are exposed to in their peer groups and neighborhoods clearly outweighed whatever effect school-based programs produced.

There is much work in criminology about the lives of young African American men but little rich, qualitative understanding of social networks and roles of peers outside of gangs. The intersection of peers, social bonds, and attitudes remains largely unexamined. While there is generally a lack of male peer support work done on African American men overall, as a reviewer pointed out, this is less a conceptual blind spot of those working in the area and more an artifact of most data being collected in Canada—a population
with a very small African American component that is largely comprised of more recent Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Those of us working in the US, especially those studying urban populations, do not face this problem. Hopefully more research on peer support and “deviant” behavior in such populations will further enrich our understanding of life in those communities and give us better insight into how peer support processes work.

REFERENCES


**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES**

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Employment Pathways: How Former Offenders Navigate to Employment

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Abstract
Employment is one of the most critical dimensions of reintegration, and much research documents the barriers formerly incarcerated persons experience in seeking out steady work. However, most offenders are ultimately successful in obtaining some form of employment. Less research discusses how offenders manage these barriers or examines the practice by which offenders navigate employment pathways, and even less examines whether particular offense categories further challenge the process. The current research utilizes qualitative data to examine the methods by which ex-offenders seek out and obtain employment, with an emphasis on the function of self-motivating practices, access to services, and the utilization of social capital. The analysis further differentiates between sex offenders and non-sex offenders in these experiences. Our findings suggest ex-offenders rely on many types of resources in seeking out employment, and that these differ by offense type, but underlying motivation and persistence are key components in their search. Understanding these methods is important, as a comprehensive understanding of successful navigation to employment can inform policy in relation to improved guidance on advising employment searches.

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INTRODUCTION

More than 1.6 million individuals are incarcerated in state and federal facilities, with another 5 million under some form of community supervision (Cullen & Jonson, 2012). Approximately 600,000 offenders are released from custodial care each year (Carson, 2015; Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003) and more than two million offenders serve time in the community under felony probation supervision (Kaeble & Bonczar, 2016). Many of those under correctional supervision are optimistic in reflecting on their future, though myriad studies demonstrate the continuing challenges a felony background presents for successful reintegration. Importantly, these do not comprise a homogenous group of individuals, but differ greatly by criminal history and social experiences. In particular, individuals convicted of sex offenses face numerous legal and stigmatic challenges post-conviction, and may have unique experiences during the reintegration process.

Obtaining adequate employment is one of the most important yet challenging tasks an ex-offender will face upon release (Holzer et al., 2003; Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst, & Bratton, 2011; Pager, 2007; Visher & Travis, 2003). Typically mandated as a parole condition, employment also provides economic stability, demonstrates a commitment to conventional activities, and fills free time that could otherwise be used for criminal behavior. While much research illustrates the many barriers felons face when seeking out employment (Harris & Keller, 2005; Pager, 2003; Petersilia, 2003), many scholars find that a number of ex-offenders do rejoin the labor market upon release from incarceration in spite of such obstacles (Ray, Grommon, & Rydberg, 2016; Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2008). Although the sustainability and quality of such employment remain in debate, passing the initial threshold of employment is promising in understanding successful paths to reintegration. Recent advances – both quantitative and qualitative – do showcase some insight into how some successfully traverse through barriers or how employment success is achieved, but our knowledge remains limited. For example, the impact of specific offense histories has yet to be examined, and broad inductive processes of identifying pathways are atypical. Sex offenders face numerous legal restrictions, impacting many facets of the reentry process, including housing and employment. Further, stigma issues are particularly intense for sex offenders and may enhance employment challenges. Having better comprehension of post felony conviction employment navigation will better inform policy and aid in developing more successful reentry plans.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Theoretical Perspectives

Scholars characterize employment as one of the most important components of reintegration, often tied to reduced recidivism (Holzer et al.,
EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

2003; James, 2015; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001; Visher et al., 2008). For example, Skardhamar and Telle (2012) found that former inmates who were employed have a substantially lower rate of recidivism than those who remained unemployed after incarceration (33% versus 71%). Sex offenders similarly benefit from employment, as research demonstrates employment to be specifically associated with a reduction in sexual recidivism (Kruschnitt, Uggen, & Shelton, 2000). Research consistently highlights the benefit of employment, though theoretical explanations of the mechanism by which this occurs remain myriad and diverse. Some scholars contend that employment provides economic stability, linking it to a strain perspective in which not having income may result in criminal behavior (Agnew, 2003). Others argue that employment also fills idle time and produces more structured routine activities for an individual, thereby reducing their general opportunity for criminal behavior (Miller, 2013; Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996). Still, others suggest employment acts as a signaling mechanism, demonstrating a recommitment to society and conventional lifestyle (Mears & Mestre, 2012; Solomon, Johnson, Travis, & McBride, 2004), which fits within a desistance framework. Life-course criminology provides further support for the saliency of employment for ex-offenders. Specifically, employment has been found to be a turning point from criminal to conformist in life trajectories of career criminals (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Uggen, 2000). Given the vast support for these theoretical underpinnings, the importance of offender pathways to legitimate and sufficient employment cannot be overstated.

Employment Experiences

Looking beyond criminology specifically, a broader sociological literature focuses on labor market experiences, including job-seeking tactics. Largely noted is the importance of utilizing broad social networks as well as formal strategies (Elliot, 1999; Granovetter, 1985; Lin, 1999). In his pivotal work, Granovetter (1973; 1985) thoroughly describes the relationship between social ties and a variety of societal institutions, including economic and employment markets. In particular, informal networks have been documented as especially effective in accessing the workforce, over and above more formalized mechanisms such as employment agencies or responses to job advertisements. Chapple (2006) echoes this observation, noting that social capital becomes increasingly crucial when formal job-seeking mechanisms or individual motivations are absent or unsuccessful; subsequently, social or professional contacts who can link job seekers to potential employment gain even greater importance in a competitive job market. Moreover, these intermediaries may also aid in overcoming barriers such as discrimination, which affects numerous marginalized populations, including ex-offenders (Chapple, 2006).
Former Offenders and Employment

Much knowledge exists regarding general employment search strategies. However, formerly incarcerated persons likely face a markedly different labor market. Research suggests otherwise marginalized populations differ in their employment experiences, due to social isolation or lack of opportunity to engage in normative job-seeking behaviors (see Elliott, 1999; Lin, 1999). Former offenders constitute a marginalized population, facing numerous barriers to successful employment. Disadvantaged backgrounds that include limited exposure to legitimate work, histories of unstable employment, compromised interpersonal communication skills and/or education deficits, health issues, insufficient housing, inadequate transportation, and substance abuse, among other challenges, make ex-offenders less desirable employees (James, 2015; Travis et al., 2001; Visher et al., 2008). In addition, having a history of incarceration acts as an additional stigmatization that makes potential employers hesitant to hire ex-offenders (Pager, 2003; Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009; Ray et al., 2016; Travis et al., 2001; Visher et al., 2008). Pager (2003; Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009) found individuals with criminal records were 50% less likely to receive an offer of employment than their similarly situated peers without records. Those who are further marginalized by race or criminogenic factors may face additional disadvantage, as Pager (2003) demonstrated both criminal and racial penalties. Similarly, the pervasive label of a sex offender is particularly stigmatizing in the eyes of employers (Brown, Spencer, & Deakin, 2007), and the public nature of the offense makes maintaining employment difficult (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). Finally, most states impose blanket bans that prevent ex-offenders from working in certain professions including "law, real estate, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, and education" (Travis et al., 2001, p. 31; see also Hickox, 2016), which often extend beyond the period of supervision.

Barriers to employment are well established, but most ex-offenders obtain employment post-incarceration (though notably, at a lesser rate than non-offenders, and in less stable environments). Visher and colleagues (2008) found that nearly half (43%) of their sample secured employment two months post-incarceration, and nearly two-thirds (65%) reported employment eight months post-release. Similarly, Ramakers and colleagues (2016) indicated more than half of those employed prior to incarceration were able to regain employment within six months of release. Although employment stability varied over time (Ramakers, Wilsem, Nieuwbeerta, & Dirkzwager, 2016; Visher et al., 2008), it is still critical to understand how this population navigates to employment. The limited research that considers employment pathways for ex-offenders documents a wide range of the use of social, human, and community capital (Ramakers et al., 2016; Ray et al., 2016; Visher et al., 2008). Ex-offenders often use a combination of strategies; Visher and colleagues (2008), for example, found that 86% of interviewees used mul-
multiple avenues in their employment search, with social capital being a key element in their queries.

**Social Capital**

Social capital has long been understood as either social connectedness or the ability to use social ties in a productive way (Lin, 1999; Walker, Hemptel, Unnithan, & Pogrebin, 2014). Walker and colleagues (2014) purport that social capital serves as an anchor or gateway to assistance, either through the direct provision of material or emotional needs, or through access to resources such as transportation or employment. It is important to note though, that the use of, and access to, capital varies by population. For example, Elliott (1999; 2001) demonstrated the importance of social capital for disadvantaged and minority populations, noting that social capital and employment access work differently for those of varying social positions. Specifically, Elliott (1999) first showed that the social isolation of individuals who reside within impoverished neighborhoods faced greater job market segregation, which led to increased reliance on informal contacts or social connections. He found these effects to have a more profound impact on less-educated job-seekers. In a later study, Elliott (2001) found that immigrants and native-born black populations relied almost exclusively on internal referrals for their employment opportunities.

Similarly, social ties have been identified as essential in many areas of prisoner reentry despite concern that incarceration itself degrades both social and human capital. Among the most fundamental reentry contributions of social ties are the provision and maintenance of stable housing (Walker et al., 2014), emotional support and prosocial influence (Hochstetler, Delisi, & Pratt, 2010), and immediate needs such as clothing, transportation, and financial aid (Morani et al., 2011). In addition to these needs, social capital often momentously benefits post-incarceration employment. In one of the few comprehensive studies in this area, Visher and colleagues (2008) identify the use of social ties to gainful employment. Specifically, 72% of the parolees in their sample sought help from family or friends in seeking out employment. Other studies have similarly found offenders often utilize social networks to access employment markets (Farrall, 2004; Ramakers et al., 2016; Ray et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2014). Ray and colleagues (2016) indicated social networks often function as leads and provide employment opportunities in more ambiguous ways than other pathways. Word of mouth, references, and having an inside track to employment opportunities all functioned to boost employment, but their respondents were less certain in describing the value or utilization of the social network, though much of the sample still cited this pathway (Ray et al., 2016). Although little research examines differences in social capital by offense, it stands to reason sex offenders may receive less assistance from social networks. Some research indicates sex offenders report damaged relationships as a result of their specific type of conviction
and may face legal barriers in accessing forms of social support (Robbers, 2009; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006).

However, most ex-offenders are generally able to use a combination of human and social capital, relying on prior experiences and employers to gain steady work. Visher et al. (2008) indicated that 21% of their sample contacted former employers in seeking out a job. Ramakers and colleagues (2016) found incarceration often disrupted employment ties, but nearly one-third of their sample was able to return to their prior employer immediately after release. Ray and colleagues (2016) similarly found their sample to anticipate returning to previous employers, particularly when those employers considered them good employees prior to their incarceration.

Pre-imprisonment experiences are also important to consider. Ramakers and colleagues (2016) found formerly incarcerated persons who had worked for prior employers for a longer duration were able to recapture employment with the specific employers. As skill sets became greater and more specialized, these effects heightened (Ramakers et al., 2016). In other words, it was not only a reliance on the relationship between employer and employee, but the accumulation of human capital gained in that position. This suggests formerly incarcerated persons often require both social and human capital in negotiating employment experiences.

**Human Capital and Signaling**

Much research documents the lack of human capital ex-offenders display (i.e., limited skills or experience), making employment more difficult to obtain. Subsequently, other pathways to successful employment are those that help strengthen marketability. Specifically, individualized programs include things like substance abuse counseling, treatment for mental and physical health, housing and transportation assistance, and education and/or technical training (Visher et al., 2008).

Many technical and vocational training programs offered in incarcerated settings also contribute to prison industries, both dedicated to the maintenance and operation of the prison itself and in manufacturing products like furniture, textiles, and automobile parts for outside consumer markets (Chang & Thompkins, 2002). Participating in these types of training programs allows inmates to utilize their acquired skills in an environment that mirrors the outside workforce. For example, the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP), which operates on both state and federal levels, seeks to provide inmate work opportunities that approximate private-sector employment (Hopper, 2013). PIECP offers inmate production that simultaneously contributes to society, offsets costs of incarceration, and assists with victim compensation and support for inmate families, all while preparing inmates for labor success upon release (Hopper, 2013; U.S. Department of Justice; 2004). The Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan (MCORP) assists reentering offenders by providing collaborative case man-
employment with institutional caseworkers and community supervision agents to promote a smooth transition from prison to community (Duwe, 2012). Before an individual leaves an incarcerated setting, their risks and needs are determined through motivational interviewing and LSI-R assessments in addition to reviews of their case files. These assessments are then used to develop SMART (small, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) reentry plans that target the specific goals and needs of individual offenders (Duwe, 2012). Duwe’s (2012) evaluation of the MCORP program demonstrated that, in addition to having decreased recidivism, participants had higher employment rates than those in the control group. Moreover, Duwe (2012) noted that MCORP broadened social support networks for participating offenders, and increased their level of participation in community support programming.

In addition to gaining social and human capital from program content, successful completion of programs that strengthen ex-offenders’ marketable skills and knowledge can also help them “signal” their employability to potential hirers. Bushway and Apel (2012) describe the importance of this within the economic field. In the labor market, education is often marked as an important signal for employers. In the reentry context, ex-offenders can often signal their efforts to become employable through completing programs, particularly those that are voluntary in nature. Bushway and Apel (2012) situate such program completion in a signaling framework as employers will view this participation as efforts toward desistance and as evidence of motivation. In addition to, and sometimes in lieu of, participating in programs to supplement their employment readiness, many individuals incorporate more formal efforts in their job-seeking strategies.

Self-Reliance and Formal Efforts

The use of formal avenues to employment, such as agencies and employment advertisements, tends to surface in both general and offender-specific job searches. Visher and colleagues (2008) found nearly half (45%) of their sample used formal employment agencies in seeking employment, though approximately a third (30%) relied on help-wanted advertisements by local businesses and more than 61% scoured newspapers for job postings. Ray and colleagues (2016) found employment agencies to be the most frequently cited pathway to steady work. A number of ex-offenders also attempt to forge their own way in the job market. In Visher et al.’s (2008) sample, 58% of ex-offenders simply “pounded the pavement,” and an additional 12% looked through the Yellow Pages for relevant employment opportunities. Ray and colleagues (2016) similarly found a heavy self-reliance in job seeking, even among those reporting broad and strong social networks. One reason for the perhaps unexpected choice of ex-offenders not to utilize available social resources is a phenomenon known as “defensive individualism” (Ray et al., 2016, p. 349). This strikingly self-reliant approach to job-seeking stems from an effort to maintain one’s reputation and limit shame. In order to ensure they will not be viewed negatively in the eyes of their social contacts, defensive individualists
avoid relying on them for fear of being burdensome or straining already tenuous relationships. Ex-offenders who are defensive individualists also find the failure to obtain gainful employment to be a personal deficiency (e.g., lack of motivation), rather than social or structural factors that may influence their negative labor market experiences (Ray et al., 2016).

One of the consistent themes attributed to defensive individualism, and documented elsewhere (see Pager, 2003; 2007; Visher et al., 2008), is stigma. As discussed previously, bearing a felony conviction creates numerous informal challenges for entering or reentering the labor market (Petersilia, 2003; Travis et al., 2001). Many of the offenders in Ray and colleagues’ (2016) sample identified stigma from their criminal record as a potential obstacle in obtaining post-release employment, and, while such concerns are prevalent among all types of offenders, the anticipation of stigma is something felt especially keenly by those convicted of sex crimes.

**Sex Offenders**

Sex offenders constitute a special population of offenders, one that elicits a significant amount of societal anxiety which policymakers have answered with a number of “community protection policies” designed to protect society from sex crimes (Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007, p. 1). As such, sex offenders face a greater degree of stigmatization and employment difficulties compared to other classes of offenders. In Georgia, for example, sex offenders are subject to some of the toughest laws in the country (Shepard, 2012). Specifically, when applicable offenses are committed, offenders face restrictions in employment and residency locations, as well as sex offender registration requirements. In July of 2014, then Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee signed legislation that bans sex offenders from employment in “child-safe zones” (Bogdan, 2014, para. 2). Such zones are defined as “child care facilities, elementary and secondary schools, playgrounds, health-care facilities for minors, and any place intended primarily for use by minors” (Bogdan, 2014, para. 6). Sex offenders face legal restrictions to diminish the possibility of interaction with potential victims, such as retail or service-oriented employment (CSOM, 2007). They also face heightened stigma in employment markets as employers are reluctant to hire former sex offenders (Brown et al., 2007) and some former offenders report losing their job due to their presence on the sex offender registry (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). In sum, ex-offenders with sex crimes on their record currently face magnified barriers to community reentry and in rejoining labor markets.

Ultimately, it appears employment plays a significant role in successful offender reintegration by not only providing income and increasing quality of life, but also by establishing stability and a “sense of structure and responsibility” (Visher et al., 2008, p. 6). However, in the course of seeking employment, ex-offenders face significant barriers including stigmatization. Sex offenders are particularly affected by such issues and are thus more difficult to
employ. Despite these somewhat bleak prospects, research has established some pathways that offenders can utilize to increase their likelihood of obtaining employment in a legitimate labor market. This is especially important when one considers that research also demonstrates that such interventions aimed at helping offenders obtain employment and a living wage provide benefits for not only the offenders themselves, but also their families and the larger society (Solomon et al., 2004).

THE CURRENT STUDY

Research has documented the vast challenges to employment many ex-offenders face, and there has been some preliminary insight into strategies for managing these barriers. Social support and relationships play an integral role for ex-offenders, often providing housing, financial aid, emotional support, and many other beneficial interventions. Visher and colleagues (2008) give some documentation of how offenders acquire employment, but less is known about different offense groups in terms of utilizing those strategies. The current study seeks to add to the existing body of literature by investigating pathways to employment for both ex-offenders who have committed sex crimes and non-sex offenders. By using qualitative methodology, narrative accounts provide more insight into the process of employment searches and related reasoning, highlighting the important role of networks and services in establishing employment.

Data and Methods

Data come from in-depth interviews conducted between 2010 and 2012 with persons under correctional supervision for having a felony conviction. The interviews were conducted as part of larger studies broadly evaluating the experiences of reentry. Respondents described their experiences with employment as well social support, housing, and treatment histories. To evaluate pathways, we draw from 109 interviewees who were actively seeking (or had sought) employment. Data were collected at seven sites throughout a Midwest state, primarily at probation and parole offices, but also included a community residential facility and treatment center. We scheduled interviews primarily on report dates to facilitate higher and more varied participation. Each agent provided an explanation of the research project to their client and offered the opportunity to participate; respondents were compensated $20. With this type of research design, gathering information from a target population as opposed to random sampling is a key strategy. As these participants were serving time under correctional supervision, they met our criteria of examining the social and structural experiences post-felony conviction. Interviews were conducted on-site and lasted approximately one hour. The overall interview guide was modeled after prior research of this nature (see Visher et al., 2008). The interviews were semi-structured, following a general pattern of questioning but permitting extensive probing
and open-ended follow-up questions, which allowed the respondents’ pathways to employment to emerge. A large portion of the interview focused on employment experiences both prior to and after incarceration. Appendix A represents a sampling of the employment-related questions utilized in the interview guide. Each question allowed for probing and follow up, which varied by participant and interviewer in how these were utilized. We recorded audio for each interview and later transcribed the narratives.

The final sample consisted of 109 ex-offenders convicted of a felony: 71.7% personal crimes ($n=76$, 57 of which were sex crimes), 14.7% nonviolent crimes ($n=16$), and 12.8% drug crimes ($n=14$). Just over half of the participants reported that their most recent incarceration was not their first time in prison (58.7%, $n=63$), and the average number of times in prison was 1.92. The vast majority of interviewees were male (97.2%, $n=106$) and on parole (78.9%, $n=86$), and the average age of participants was 38.86 years. Approximately a third of the sample was nonwhite (29%, $n=32$) and most had no more than a high school diploma or GED (67%, $n=73$). Sex offenders were older and more educated than their counterparts. Sex offenders were also more likely to be under parole supervision, had been under community supervision for a longer period of time at the interview, and had spent a significantly longer time period incarcerated than non-sex offenders. Criminal histories were varied, and most had experienced prior incarceration. The time spent in prison ranged widely, but approximately two-thirds of the sample spent less than three years in prison under their current sentence. Similarly, time under community supervision ranged from one month out to more than ten years; however, the majority of the sample (61.4%) had been out for less than one year. Table 1 presents a description of the sample.

At the time of the interviews, 51 participants currently held jobs, but almost three-quarters of the interviewees reported that they had been employed at some point post-release (71.6%, $n=78$). A majority of interviewees reported a perception of discrimination during the employment process (57.8%, $n=63$), though there were no statistical differences between sex-offenders and non-sex offenders in these employment experiences (not shown). Of those who were employed, the time it took them to secure a job varied widely. The average search length was approximately one year (11.38 months), but a handful of participants reported having work within a few days ($n=9$, 12.2%) while others took 18 months or more ($n=8$, 10.8%). Sex offenders appeared to find work more quickly than their counterparts ($p < .05$). Table 2 provides an overview of these employment experiences.
Table 1: Sample Descriptive Statistics (n=109).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sex Offender</th>
<th>Non-Sex Offender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender ( (1 = \text{male}) )</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age*</td>
<td>38.86 (11.24)</td>
<td>38.45 (11.53)</td>
<td>32.11 (8.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race ( (1 = \text{nonwhite}) )</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/Partnered</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12th</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. Equivalency</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College or More</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offense Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Crime</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Personal</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parolee*</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Incarceration</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Length***</td>
<td>52.78 (68.99)</td>
<td>74.29 (79.55)</td>
<td>20.51 (27.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Since Release*</td>
<td>17.58 (23.44)</td>
<td>23.61 (29.67)</td>
<td>11.55 (12.53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of Pearson's Chi Square test: † \( p < .10 \) * \( p < .05 \), ** \( p < .01 \), *** \( p < .001 \)

Table 2: Employment Descriptive Statistics (n=109).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Variables</th>
<th>Mean/Frequency (S.D.)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed Post-Release</td>
<td>71.6% (1)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>employed at any point post-release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Length</td>
<td>11.38 (31.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of months it took to find a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Unemployed</td>
<td>46.8% (1)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Employed at the time of the interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>57.8% (1)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>reported discrimination during job search</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the broader nature of data collection, the current study includes a higher proportion of sex offenders than is found in general offending populations, as well as an older and more educated sample. While sex offenders
are often considered a unique subset of offender, those convicted of a sex crime also reported involvement in a variety of criminal activities, indicating they may be representative of a “typical” offender. However, we took care during the analysis to compare employment experiences of sex offenders versus those convicted of other types of crimes and found their differential histories and life experiences did have some impact on the utilization of employment pathways. This adds to the current literature and presents additional questions about the relationship between offense types and employment experiences.

Analysis

To analyze the data, we independently coded the data with the assistance of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program. Data had been initially sorted into broad themes such as any references to housing, employment, or social support experiences. From the larger employment file containing all references and experiences of employment, we evaluated the data by broadly coding types of employment searches, guided by prior literature. References fell into three general themes (discussed in the results), from which we continued open coding. Open coding refers to the process of assigning words or phrases to small pieces of data, from which particular themes and experiences can be grouped to understand general outcomes. The specific experiences of non-sex offenders and sex offenders were then comparatively analyzed to determine if these groups utilized different methods in their employment search. Overall, there was very high inter-rater reliability, with over 90% initial agreement on assigning offenders to a specific pathway. We met to discuss any discrepancies and came to an agreement on where the individuals best fit.

FINDINGS

Much like Visher and colleagues (2008), we found ex-offenders employ a multitude of methods when seeking out employment. Although not described in detail here, the participants experienced a variety of typical barriers many ex-offenders express. This includes stigmatization – which was particularly prevalent for sex offenders – as well as lack of marketable skills for employment and sporadic work histories. Despite these barriers, nearly two-thirds reported that they were employed at some point post-conviction, and just under half reported employment at the time of the interview. Given the relatively high accessibility of employment (at least temporarily), follow-up questions during the interviews inquired as to how these participants navigated existent challenges to employment. The results demonstrate that pathways and methods of obtaining employment varied a great deal among the ex-offenders, but centered on service provision, the use of both formal and informal social ties, and self-motivating practices which highlighted offender agency. Most employment efforts were in some way intertwined with
an effective utilization of social capital, which seemed to mediate common employment barriers.

The way in which interviewees used job-seeking mechanisms was not uniform among all ex-offenders, which emerged throughout the qualitative narratives. In particular, differences emerged when comparing sex offenders – who experience greater legal and stigmatic challenges – to non-sex offenders, who, despite facing less post-conviction social stigma, still found difficulty in accessing legitimate and sustainable employment. Table 3 summarizes the frequencies and differences among the sample in their utilization of identified pathways. Pearson’s chi-square tests revealed that non-sex offenders were significantly more likely to use programs or agencies than their sex offender counterparts ($\chi^2=3.99, p<.05$). Additionally, sex offenders were less likely to report being a self-starter ($\chi^2=5.98, p<.05$), but no significant differences were found between the groups for the social network pathway. Though these empirical analyses are useful to an extent in demonstrating that differences occur, they are largely incomplete, as they cannot provide information on why such differences are observed. Thus, narrative accounts of the ex-offenders’ employment-seeking experiences obtained through qualitative interviews provide much greater insight for participants’ pathways to employment and are presented in more detail below.

Table 3: Employment Pathway Frequencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathway</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
<th>Non-Sex Offenders</th>
<th>Sex Offenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 109</td>
<td>n = 48</td>
<td>n = 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Starter</strong></td>
<td>57.8% n = 63</td>
<td>70.8% n = 34</td>
<td>47.5% n = 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services/Program Use</strong></td>
<td>39.4% n = 43</td>
<td>50% n = 24</td>
<td>31.1% n = 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency</strong></td>
<td>21.1% n = 23</td>
<td>27.1% n = 13</td>
<td>16.4% n = 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Program</strong></td>
<td>16.5% n = 18</td>
<td>20.8% n = 10</td>
<td>13.1% n = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Participation</strong></td>
<td>10.1% n = 11</td>
<td>16.7% n = 8</td>
<td>4.9% n = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Network</strong></td>
<td>51.4% n = 56</td>
<td>41.7% n = 20</td>
<td>59.0% n = 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior Employer</strong></td>
<td>15.6% n = 17</td>
<td>12.5% n = 6</td>
<td>18.0% n = 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family or Friend Network</strong></td>
<td>43.1% n = 47</td>
<td>37.5% n = 18</td>
<td>47.5% n = 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple Pathways</strong></td>
<td>41.3% n = 45</td>
<td>47.9% n = 23</td>
<td>36.1% n = 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of Pearson’s Chi Square test: † p<.10 *p <.05, ** <.01, ***<.001
**Self-Starters**

Although employment is also a typical condition of parole, most of the respondents (57.8%, n=63) suggested they started off with their own motivation and drive in their initial employment search. Within this theme, persistence emerged as a key component as well as a wide scope in terms of type of employment. It was not uncommon for offenders to continually apply to the same job, often attempting to speak directly to the hiring manager. Joel simply stated, “Just applying everywhere I can…Basically going from store to store to store and asking are you hiring? Craig's List, anything I can do to find out who’s hiring. And how I can apply.” When given the chance to speak to a potential employer, ex-offenders were able to explain who they were and often took the opportunity to explain their criminal history and their renewed commitment to legitimate employment. Interviewees reported breadth in application targets, noting the importance of any employment as a first step.

Search efforts for a number of participants were general, starting with legitimate job advertisements but often broadening to more random and informal encounters. The breadth of job search approaches was consistent across offenders, unrelated to length of time served, length of job search, and type of offense, despite sex offenders often having more specialized skills. Clifford described his job search as, “I go around…papers, I ask so many people. I even ask people standing in the lobby, I’ll go any place.” Marvin similarly recounted, “Where I started was me walking around asking people if they need help.” Another interviewee, Andrew, had expanded his search range to apply for jobs that he felt most qualified for, but mostly focused on opportunities that had few required qualifications. He described his job search process as first seeking out employment, “and then you go out, and just pound the pavement. So that’s what I’ve been doin’. I mean, nobody’s bitten, but I’ve been putting out applications.”

The participants exercised their own wits and efforts by going door-to-door in attempts to access formal employment but also gaining informal employment for an afternoon or a week. Participants favored this method of in-person application over online application processes. This preference was partially accountable to a lack of capital in terms of computer access or transportation and geographical limitations, yet many participants also felt being face-to-face to explain their felony convictions would lead to better success. Glenn explained, “Know what? I just pounded the pavement…I went from using a computer online – it’s a joke, that’s my personal opinion – to goin’ straight out and knockin’ on people’s doors. Knock on business doors and ask them personally.” This strategy was not without success, as the attitude of “why not?” translated into happenstance circumstances or participants simply being in the right place at the right time to have an otherwise nonexistent opportunity. Marcus provided an example of this, explaining, “I stopped, I was downtown putting in applications. And ran across it.” Also within this
group were those already employed but continuing their persistence to gain better opportunities or advancement in their employment status.

While the majority of respondents in the self-starting pathway were non-sex offenders, there were also a substantial number of sex offenders who were particularly vocal about the stigma and barriers they faced due not only to having a felony past, but also because of their specific offense type. Gaining access to employment that was otherwise considered “felon friendly” was not as available for sex offenders, and they reported putting in a lot of effort and self-starting behavior in order to access employment opportunities, as did those who had served a longer incarceration sentence. For these groups, there seemed to be a long-trailing stigma that employers were less willing to overlook. William explained, “Keep filling out applications, keep calling. And a lot of people obviously don’t want to hire a sex offender, or a felon, period. They don’t want to have nothing to do with it.” Though this stigma was not unique to sex offenders, they expressed more specific examples within this pathway.

Most of the individuals who expressed self-starting also utilized other pathways (67%; n=43), though it is important to note their personal initiative, as it illustrates basic determination and initial efforts from many of the ex-offenders to gain employment on their own. The participants generally expressed a great deal of pride in obtaining employment of their own volition, and many did not credit leads given by others or their aid in accessing resources that helped them obtain or seek out these jobs. What generally emerged in the narratives, however, is that many times these respondents did, in fact, receive help from others (services, official contacts, or social networks) but explicitly stated they found the job themselves, dismissing any involvement of employment agencies or referrals. This was generally a result of inadequate job placement or the perceived lack of responsiveness from those that tried to help. These respondents felt they had done everything right in gaining employment, and felt those who struggled with employment were not trying as hard to actually obtain a job. Importantly, the use of multiple pathways was not uncommon – but notably present in this group was a very strong sense of their own agency, persistence, and determination in their employment efforts even when assisted by others.

Though self-motivating pathways were an important and common part of the search for employment, it was not always a successful endeavor. This was enhanced when considering time served as well as length of time in the community. Although determination remained, the level of optimism and belief in self somewhat decreased as time went on in the community without obtaining legitimate or sustainable employment. In response, most participants reported utilizing a variety of outside resources in their search for employment in addition to self-motivated practices. Two major themes emerged: employment services or other officials, and a reliance on social capital. Each of these also broke into subthemes specific to each pathway.
Use of Services and Programs

First, official contacts and community agencies emerged as a critical assist to finding employment, or at least placing the participant in a position to be able to seek out employment ($n = 43$). Often this was an immediate measure taken post-release, and in some cases led to permanent employment. Although employment agencies act as more of a universal advocate in the general employment market as compared to familial or other social references, the establishment of a recommendation of any sort benefitted the individual. These services provided a twofold effect, either providing the participants a position or resources to seek out employment, or directly placing the individual in a job. One of the main benefits of this pathway was the improved accessibility to opportunity, through access to resources (e.g., computers, the internet, transportation) or providing knowledge of employment that historically seemed willing to hire ex-offenders, and thereby bypassing the potential stigma of a felony conviction. Overall, sex offenders were less present in the immediate use of employment agencies or other community resources. As a group, this seemed mainly related to more difficulty in gaining access to these services given their specific record of having committed not just a felony, but a sex crime. Regardless of time served or time in the community, a substantial number of respondents, particularly non-sex offenders, reported utilizing temporary employment agencies ($n=23$). Troy described, “I’m out here every day, I’m going to several temp services a week. I’m gonna get some type of employment.” While popular, the level of success in transitioning to permanent job placement through temp services was less clear. The findings indicated that the lack of efficacy was due to two related reasons. First, ex-offenders are competing in an already crowded job market. Reporting a felony conviction remains an issue for many employers. As temporary employment agencies are not specifically designated for formerly incarcerated persons, there were still legal and stigmatic barriers to navigate on the parts of both the employment agency and respondent. Participants felt their felony background acted as a disadvantage and made them less competitive among non-felons who were also dependent on the agency for employment. Relatedly, and noted in particular by non-sex offenders, was a weakness due to a lack of education and/or skill development, particularly in relation to technology. David provided a clear example of these related issues:

Well, I go through a temp service. And they usually find jobs pretty, pretty...all the time. And then, yeah, they haven’t really had anything lately. But, like they usually, pretty steady on finding jobs and everything....And there’s a lot of jobs that I haven’t been able to get. Because I was eligible for, because I have my high school diploma and I have a little bit of college and stuff, I can weld and stuff like that. I have things that I can do, you know, that some other people can’t. And that’s
actually affected me not getting three or four jobs. Because of my felonies.

The narratives demonstrated that temporary agencies still require effort and qualifications of the applicant: interview processes, persistence in following up, and being "placeable." Again, in a competitive market, there was a feeling among ex-offenders of not only being least eligible in the broad context of employment, but also least qualified. Despite these challenges, temporary agencies did have success for many ex-felons in immediate and frequent employment, if not permanent placement. Alexander demonstrated the instant benefit of temporary agencies, stating, “The first job, the temp service job, I was working the first week that I was out.” The balance of the access to some form of employment against its longevity or appropriateness was a struggle that many respondents hinted at, as they continued to utilize other methods to find sustained employment. For example, although Alexander experienced immediate work, he had not found a permanent placement in two years with the agency, and had independently sought out a more stable job.

Beyond temporary agencies, the respondents also reported the use of more offender-specific resources ($n=18$), particularly older offenders and those who had served a longer period in prison. In contrast to employment agencies, these contacts were more personal and individually focused, and came from veterans’ assistance programs, parole officers, and community caseworkers. These types of contacts were often used in combination with other application procedures, particularly in terms of building up skills and services. The ex-offenders who reported access to services that targeted specific backgrounds, or had parole officers utilizing a more individualized case management approach, described success in their employment search, though access to these benefits was quite inconsistent across offenders. Surprisingly few respondents noted direct help from their parole officer, but were able to access agencies with some practitioner assistance. These agencies had more experience in interacting with felon populations and were better equipped to provide practical resources, though non-sex offenders were more prevalent in this pathway. Mario described spending a great deal of time at these agencies, indicating, “It gave me something to do. Midcity Club. St. John’s Center. I be down there all day. Because they have a lot of programs, and they try to help people find jobs and stuff like that. People that, companies that are tolerant.” These agencies had some leads to direct employment opportunities, as well as lists of "felon friendly" employers. Bradley explained, “Oh, they give me some sheets that got different jobs on it that hire convicted felons.” Community services also fulfilled a critical role in providing greater access to employment by means of computer availability or assistance with transportation to apply or arrive at an interview. Having a service provider often acted as a foot in the door, whereupon motivated individuals could take advantage of the opportunity and turn it into longer-term employment. Jose explained:
They wasn’t someone to basically, like St. John’s Center to represent me. They sent a letter of recommendation with me when I went to the job interview. That’s like, we need somebody to reference you, so we’ll say that you’ll come to work.

The difference in the utilization of these agencies by offense type was unclear, but due to the limited resources at the often non-profit or faith-based resources, there was likely a prioritization (or specific criteria) for whom they were able to serve. An alternative explanation may be that the needs of sex offenders are potentially fewer, as this offense group often reports higher qualifications (such as education) as well as access to resources.

Finally, a small group noted access to training or services designed to better equip offenders for employment ($n=11$). Given the decreasing presence of rehabilitative programming available either in prison or through parole supervision, it is unsurprising that relatively few reported using these services to aid employment searches. Those who had experienced some type of programming expressed high praise, while those who did not lamented having missed the opportunity. Robert stated, “And them classes teach me how to be a better man at the same time [as skills]. So I got a little skills, I’m trying to take it and run with it.” Consistently noted, especially by non-sex offenders, was a dearth of employable skills, which many wanted to rectify. Kyle described, “I was going through HOPE, and they were sending me through computer schooling to bring me up to date with society.”

Relatedly, there was a demand for improved guidance on the job search process. More structure from parole officers or other agencies was valued, such as access to “felon friendly” employment opportunities, and the participants indicated that more instruction would be welcome. A notable example was how to navigate applications that ask about criminal history, and what appropriate responses would be. Aaron responded, “He [program provider] should have just told us what to expect when we go in there [for jobs]. Exactly what to say.” While training and education are not necessarily direct pathways to employment, the participants indicated better preparation would ultimately help in employment navigation. In particular, rectifying technological and skill barriers of this population would help make ex-offenders more competitive in general agencies and job markets.

**Social Networks and Capital**

Unsurprisingly, social capital emerged as a critical aspect of gaining employment ($n=56$). Entwined with housing, financial, and transportation support, the participants described a variety of ways in which their social networks benefitted their search for employment. Types of assistance that social networks supplied included emotional support to boost confidence or motivation, offering rides to interviews or applications, and acting as a reference. In addition to ex-offenders’ reliance on pre-incarceration employment history, these support mechanisms contributed to the emergence of social
capital as a prominent and successful pathway to employment. This theme broke into two general paths: use of former employers or employment history, and social ties that consisted of family, friends, and community.

First, prior employment experiences were exalted in terms of success ($n=17$). This often aligned with a fairly long time investment or history with the agency (e.g., multiple years of experience) prior to incarceration as well as a shorter term of incarceration (e.g., less than a year). Justin (eight years with company prior to incarceration) explained, “It didn’t take me long at all [to find employment] because when I got locked up they told me whenever I got out to come back to work.” The invested time was likely significant in establishing greater credibility and more contextual knowledge of the offense and offender. Lance demonstrated this:

I’ve been with this company, AP, for like six years before I went to prison. I done that straight with ‘em before I even went in, you know. With the DWI, that’s what I went in there for, and I done had that straight with ‘em before I went in. I said I’m probably gonna do prison time over it, so he’s all cool with it.

Others had more general experience in the company – often fast food or franchised companies with a well-known corporate presence, which also acted as a voucher. Don, for example, returned to McDonald’s after “I just happened to call and ask if they were hiring. Just told them that I used to work there, and so they just called me in for an interview.” Similarly, Brandon had been steadily employed since his release, attributing his success to his work history, noting, “I was in the landscape industry before I went in.” Although there were not statistically significant differences between groups for this pathway, sex offenders particularly relied on prior employers, and greatly benefitted from this second chance. Steven exemplified this, explaining a long history with his employer, “The manager, I worked there all through high school. I’m a distant relative of her and she supported me through my experience.” The established relationship aided in overcoming the potential stigma resultant from a conviction.

A substantial portion of respondents utilized their social networks in more expansive ways than reliance on history ($n=47$). Friends and family provided both direct and less tangible aid in the employment process. Similar to the use of agencies, it was not uncommon for these individuals to act as a reference or vouch for the ex-offenders’ reliability regardless of conviction experiences. The respondents relied on social networks both immediately upon return from prison as well as having years in the community job searching, and were often a returned-to method of job searching. Eugene found a job through his stepfather’s place of employment explaining his employer felt comfortable hiring him because, “Your stepdad does a good job and I don’t care about your past.” This aided in overcoming the felon status
and, much like the community agencies, provided an access point that employers seemed to find dependable. Alan had an intimate partner who accounted for him, stating “My girlfriend, she worked there, she talked to the boss and he allowed me to come in.” Social capital also directed the participants to employment opportunities, both through word of mouth and acting as a motivator. Vincent described relying on friends to get started in his construction business, stating “It’s kind of a network type deal. More word of mouth.” Familial and friend connections also served as a direct access point into employment, particularly for those who had served more than a year in prison. Craig was able to join a construction crew, through a “buddy of mine. He’s got a crew. I got lucky”; in Frank’s case, he had an inside track to employment by “Knowing someone...who owned a company.” Those who had served less time often utilized social networks as references and support through the process rather than receiving direct placement.

Non-sex offenders utilized much broader networks, highlighting the idea of “the strength of weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1360). Their use of both immediate social networks (e.g., intimate partners, immediate family, close friends) and more distant ties was notable. Calvin exemplified this, stating, “My kids’ mother, her mother told her about it and told her to give me the information.” Similarly, Edwin described, “I went out, last week, I got a call from one of my aunt’s old girlfriends.” Sex offenders, in contrast, primarily relied on closer social connections. One notable exception, however, was the inclusion of religious bonds, which only sex offenders referenced. Willie described the help his church gave him, explaining, “I was going to church, and a gentleman at the church actually had the – he was the director of the program, and he told me he had a computer lab and would allow me to come in and get online.” Without this access, Willie had fewer application options given the changing nature of employment applications. Overall, however, despite sex offenders facing greater stigmatic barriers, non-sex offenders were far more expansive in their utilization of social capital.

Interestingly, both sex offenders and non-sex offenders found employment through their criminal experiences, by accessing employment through individuals they had known in prison. This was not particularly common (n=4), but it was noted that these individuals knew where “felon friendly” employment existed. For example, Jesse explained, “one of the people that I’m in [DOC] class with actually told me to go to this place and put an application in. And he helped me get the job there.” Don similarly had a friend whom he was incarcerated with and, “[h]e told me about that job. I just called him, and he called me in for an interview.” Collectively, this suggests that ex-offenders rely on expansive systems consisting of those in the criminal justice system – including inmates – in addition to more traditional social networks.
Multiple Methods

Finally, it is important to note that few respondents fell singularly into specific pathways. Often, it was understood that the challenge of successfully navigating to employment required a broad mind. Alfred explained his use of services in addition to needing to be self-motivated. His account of finding employment suggests this is necessary:

Beat the streets. Pretty much I was going through putting out applications online and everything like that. And once I got all that done – it took a couple weeks to do that – I got set up with HOPE, Greater Outreach, New Expectation, so I could get computer access….Employment Association, yada yada yada. I say that like because I keep trying to tell people “Look, you can’t rely on that, get out and beat the streets.” So after that was done, then I set out and start putting out applications.

Specifically, many self-starters employed multiple methods, perhaps by way of getting a temporary placement while they were working to seek out more desirable employment or by learning of a job lead from a friend and, as Ernest says, “Just putting in the footwork following up.” In this sense, even with help from others, whether agencies, social contacts, or supervisors, it was essential that the participants acted of their own volition in successfully gaining the job. It was not a guarantee, but a stepping stone and an important component of the job search.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Within the ex-offender interviews in the current study, three primary pathways to employment emerged: self-starting, reliance on social networks, and use of programs and services. It is important to note that individual agency was often utilized in conjunction with utilizing social resources and human capital, exemplified by the use of resources by a motivated person to follow-through or sustain the employment. Sex offenders were more likely to use self-guided job search strategies, non-sex offenders accessed more employment programs and services, and both groups seemed to rely equally on informal social connections while trying to find employment, albeit in somewhat different ways.

Taken as a whole, the findings illustrate the complexities of the job search, particularly in the context of navigating a conviction history, as many participants experienced a number of obstacles including perceived discrimination, long periods of unemployment, and lack of requisite skills or knowledge for available work. The results of the current study substantiate prior studies, and reaffirm how employment continues to be a challenge for formerly incarcerated individuals. Importantly, in understanding how ex-offenders navigate to employment, several important conclusions and policy implications come to light.
First, the redemption-oriented narrative interweaves the importance of offender agency in seeking out employment. In the face of abundant obstacles and challenges, the respondents showed determination to assert their own efforts in finding employment and confidence in their prospects, not unlike prior studies revealed (Hlavka, Wheelock, & Cossyleon, 2015; Ray et al., 2016; Visher et al., 2008). The self-starting behavior and motivation may provide a positive signal to potential employers, by offering insight into a positive attitude conducive to law-abiding behavior and a commitment to a normative lifestyle (Bushway & Apel, 2012; Reich, 2017). The findings suggest employment was valued not only for the sake of satisfying parole requirements or getting money, but also for fulfilling a desire to rejoin conventional society. Prior research notes some ex-offenders show discouragement and eventually self-select out of employment pools (Apel & Sweeten, 2010) or express a passive attitude toward employment searches (Hlavka et al., 2015; Ray et al., 2016). Maruna’s (2001) seminal study of ex-offenders in Liverpool demonstrated chronic offenders disliked their position in life and were tired of offending and being incarcerated, but were also very inactive in attempting to change their own circumstances. Rather, the responses from the current study may reflect a level of intrinsic motivation among ex-offenders indicative of their true desire to desist from crime, which would undoubtedly have positive effects for the interviewees, their loved ones, and the greater community. These types of positive changes can be situated within Maruna’s (2001) rhetoric of redemption, the counterbalancing narrative to condemnation scripts, and provide further evidence for the reinvention narrative identified by Hlavka and colleagues (2015), where perseverance and motivation were key elements for shedding the criminal identity (see also Brown et al., 2007). These redeeming narratives emphasize the ways in which ex-offenders are “making good” (Maruna, 2001, p.7) and disconnecting themselves from past identities centered on criminal activity, transforming themselves into contributing members of society.

This intrinsic motivating behavior was substantiated by the overwhelming preference for face-to-face applications, to better communicate their offense history or demonstrate their determination to find a job, which some research shows to be beneficial in employment outcomes (Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009). Unfortunately, this pathway may be endangered in a changing employment landscape that offers fewer opportunities for in-person signaling efforts. Kelly and Fader (2012) note companies are rapidly shifting to online applications (see also Vuolo, Lageson, & Uggen, 2017), which may weaken employment outlooks for offending populations. Over and above limitations in what ex-offenders are able to positively signal, it also demands resources such as computer access, time to apply, and a differential skill set that are not included on in-person applications (e.g., personality tests; Kelly and Fader, 2012). The changing applications effectively add steps to the screening process and ease the ability to collect a broader range of information from appli-
cants, which could result in ex-offenders perceiving a greater disadvantage in these types of application processes.

Second, the findings demonstrate access to both social and human capital as critical in accessing employment. These dimensions take on notable importance given the changes in employment processes, which may minimize the effectiveness of self-starting behaviors. Among the most salient themes revealed by ex-offenders in the current sample was the use of social connections. Comporting with prior research, the findings show social capital acts as an anchor for successful reentry, particularly in employment experiences as well as in providing housing, direct financial assistance, and transportation (Chapple, 2006; Ray et al., 2016; Visher et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2014). Those with more stable and comprehensive social networks were able to more effectively navigate through the many challenges of reentry. The findings show social networks adopt various roles during employment searches, including emotional support, as direct employers or in rehiring decisions, and intermediary roles in broad job search patterns, paralleling prior research (Chapple, 2006; Ramakers et al., 2016; Ray et al., 2016). A number of interview participants in this study expressed the need for someone to take a “chance” and act as either an employer or a reference to overcome barriers of stigma, which has also been established in extant literature (Ramakers et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2014). Elliott (2001) suggested that when people are excluded from formal job openings, as many marginalized populations are, increased use of personal contacts emerges in light of that social isolation and insulation. The current study indicates this experience may also be common among ex-offenders, particularly sex offenders. Winters and colleagues (2017) indicate sex offenders likely face greater disruption in their social bonds and face limited access to positive employment experiences; the current findings demonstrate differential reliance on social ties, which may take on greater importance in navigating social exclusions and legal restrictions in employment searches (Brown et al., 2007).

It is also critical to build resources and systems of support beyond social capital, as the results demonstrate not everyone has the same type of access to such networks. Specifically, the findings indicate a deficit of human capital, with prevailing themes of needing better job training and more marketable qualifications. In studying the impact of incarceration on employment, Apel and Sweeten (2010) note the time spent incarcerated not only results in stigma, but also diminishes the ability to accrue valuable and marketable skills. As Kelly and Fader (2012) note, many applications inquire into “hard skills” (such as computer or cash register proficiencies), and the lack of such skills prevents ex-offenders from being viewed as qualified employees (Reich, 2017). While the current findings indicate employment to be relatively accessible, it was often low-skill and unstable work, and many continued searches for something more suitable. Few respondents reported programming or service access to improve employment skills, particularly as they
would be applicable in the real world and lead to more lucrative employment efforts. Inadequate efforts to rebuild human capital may cause employment deficits to continue to grow over time (Apel & Sweeten, 2010); rather providing opportunities for individuals with felony convictions to develop the necessary human capital to be competitive in the current labor market is critical to empower them in obtaining gainful employment (Brown et al., 2007; Cook, Kang, Braga, Ludwig, & O’Brien, 2015; Reich, 2017). This becomes particularly important given the heavy reliance on temporary employment agencies that the current findings document. A greater focus on building human capital may also help transform temporary placement into more permanent employment, an experience many who utilized this pathway failed to achieve.

Finally, employment must be recognized as a reciprocal process, much like overall redemption (Maruna, 2001). The findings demonstrate the relative instability of employment as well as the perceived unwillingness of employers to allow ex-offenders into some job markets. Simply expecting self-motivating behaviors (e.g., agency) or providing individuals the tools (e.g., social capital) they need to gain appropriate skills and training for gainful employment (e.g., human capital) will not sufficiently mitigate the stigma of a criminal conviction (Pager, 2003; Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009). Not all employers are willing or able to hire (or rehire) those with a criminal record (Ramakers et al., 2016; Reich, 2017), particularly in cases of those convicted of a sex offense (Brown et al., 2007). As Reich (2017) demonstrates, employers must also participate with an openness to hiring individuals with criminal records, hopefully for stable jobs that allow ex-offenders to become self-sufficient. Thus, an immediate necessity is identifying which employers may fit such criteria. Although Walker and colleagues (2014) concluded limited benefit from agentic help, the current findings illustrated the usefulness of “felon friendly” employment avenues provided through parole officers or community agencies. Identification of such places will collectively benefit returning offenders, particularly sex offenders, who face enhanced stigmatic barriers and less familiarity with labor markets given residential displacement (Brown et al., 2007).

While important to consider, this and other findings are limited in a few ways. First, as with all social science research that involves subject-researcher interaction, the current study is potentially influenced by social desirability. Social desirability reflects the tendency of research participants to provide responses that they perceive as socially acceptable, while distancing themselves from responses they believe will be viewed unfavorably (Nederhof, 1985). This type of bias is especially prevalent in data collection that includes controversial topics or asks people to divulge sensitive details. In the current research, social desirability bias may be of greater concern than in some other studies due to the fact that many participants had already faced a degree of discrimination and stigma related to the topics covered in the interviews. Thus, it is possible that participants were more mindful of how
interviewers might perceive them and may have responded according to this acute awareness. Some participants may have overstated their own involvement in job seeking in an attempt to appear more motivated or interested in being active in conventional society, or may have minimized the roles of others in their job searches to avoid being seen as dependent or unable to fend for themselves. Further, the sampling procedure encompasses those who are abiding by terms of their supervision by maintaining meetings and other conditions such as employment searching, perhaps producing a more highly motivated sample. However, despite these concerns, the current methodology revealed numerous insights that would not have been exposed through remotely administered surveys without researcher-participant contact. Therefore, although a degree of caution is warranted, the overall benefit of using semi-structured interviews for the current study outweighs the potential for social desirability bias in ex-offender responses.

An additional limitation is the bounded geographical region from which participants were drawn. The sample for this study is not nationally representative, and their expressed experiences may not be indicative of those in other parts of the United States or abroad. For example, in areas with fewer job programs or services, offenders will presumably rely on self-starting or social networks. Future research may wish to capitalize on a more generalizable sampling pool or do comparative studies with additional locations. Relatedly, future studies would be prudent to consider gendered and racial effects on job seeking strategies and barrier navigation. It is likely that formerly incarcerated females have markedly different experiences upon release than their male counterparts (see Cobbina, 2010; Richie, 2001), and subsequently have different employment experiences. Similarly, research has previously documented racial differences in the employment market (Pager 2003; Pager et al., 2009; Vuolo et al., 2017). The current findings indicated a preference for seeking out employment in person, an effective strategy substantiated by prior research (Pager et al., 2009). Examining these effects by race and offense type (particularly with regard to sex offender stigma) is a worthy avenue of future research.

Despite limitations, several specific policy recommendations emerge in light of the findings. Given the reliance on self-determining strategies, better instruction on how to navigate the job market, including the stigma of a conviction seems important. Past criminal behavior remains a popular inquiry on job applications (Kelly & Fader, 2012; Pager, 2003; Vuolo et al., 2017) and effective ways to explain the felon status and communicate positive change is critical for employment success (Reich, 2017). The current sample similarly expressed a desire for more specific direction on how to navigate the employment process, particularly in terms of felon disclosure. Relatedly, “ban the box” legislation continues to grow in moderate popularity, allowing for better initial access to employment. Despite some cautions in discriminatory processes these bans can cause (see Sugie, 2017), minimizing the breadth
of criminal history disclosure will benefit reentry processes. Limiting disclosure to a certain time period or restricting questions to offenses that relate to employment qualifications or performance both maintain employer rights as well as open the door for job-seeking ex-offenders (Agan, 2017). Further, continuing to develop resources to point ex-offenders in positive directions, such as maintaining lists of “felon friendly” workplaces, would aid the efficiency of an employment search and likely keep motivation for finding employment at higher levels. This would involve the supervising officer more closely in the employment process and be a universal resource for the returning offender. Although these were identified, they were inconsistently available and not a prominent provision by caseworkers. For those in both immediate and long-term search patterns, these resources are highly valuable, and supervising officers could make these more accessible.

Second, programs and reentry initiatives with a focus on employability could allow ex-offenders to learn interview strategies, job skills, or a trade, which in turn increases the likelihood they will secure a position in the workforce. Many respondents lamented the lack of programming available to build skills that would benefit employment outcomes while those few with the opportunities praised their experiences. The broader literature demonstrates the success of such programming efforts both in prison (Chang & Thompkins, 2002; Hopper, 2013) and as an important part of reentry preparation (Duwe, 2012). In particular, continuity of services that begins in prison and extends to the community to offer comprehensive skills are promising in boosting employment outcomes (Cook et al., 2015; Duwe, 2012; Travis et al., 2001).

Finally, as Granovetter (1973; 1985) established, having ties with acquaintances as well as close friends and family members can provide rich opportunities for job searches. Felon-friendly community meetings or mentorship programs would provide an avenue for ex-offenders to meet other community members who may have access to social networks with which they are not yet familiar themselves. The current findings also indicate connecting to ex-felon peers may be productive. Prior research shows peer mentorship between ex-offenders to be valuable in expressing shared struggles and successes (Pleggenkuhle, Huebner, & Kras, 2016). Bolstering these positive relationships, with more official guidance, may have some added employment benefits. Finding ways to connect to social networks is critical, as the current participants noted the importance of such relationships. Though some offenders may elect to eschew these potential intermediaries because of fierce self-reliance (akin to Ray et al., 2016), having social connections to fall back on is a proven strategy for many ex-offenders.

Ultimately, the current study highlights the need for continued and increased attention to reentering offenders and their goals and needs, particularly job-seeking. Securing gainful employment is and will continue to be a challenge for those with criminal convictions in an increasingly competitive job market. By developing and evaluating effective programs that seek to
connect formerly incarcerated individuals with employment and the social and human capital required for success in the labor market and workforce, both scholars and practitioners can improve the climate for ex-offenders and community members alike.

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**ENDNOTES**

1. The majority of the data (n = 79) come from a large study evaluating sex offender residence restrictions. Other interviews are part of a project that evaluated participants in a housing program and a final set that were selected to add more non-sex offenders to the sample for better comparison. All projects used very comparable interview guides, particularly in relation to employment experiences.

2. We eliminated 26 interviews due to their status of retirement, sole reliance on disability or supplemental security income, or because they provided no information on the research question.

3. In the case of probationers, we asked about experiences prior to and during supervision.

4. This provides a basic guide of the questions asked, though specific wording and probes varied by participant. These were general prompts but the flow of the interview tended to dictate how these questions emerged.

5. Six participants are probationers who were never incarcerated. The associated table lists 0 as the minimum number of incarcerations to reflect these respondents. We analyzed the results in comparison to the probationers, but their employment experiences were remarkably similar to those who had been released from prison. In many cases, the probationers had had at least one prior incarceration experience.

6. Appendix A displays how the participants were asked of their stigma experiences in the employment process; most felt their offense played a role in decisions to interview or hire though we are unable to verify this occurrence.

7. We performed analyses to compare by crime type in addition to length of time since release and time in the community. The latter comparisons yielded some differences, though fewer than expected. This was due to the complicated criminal histories of the respondents, and their reflection on the totality of their post-conviction employment experiences.
(e.g., some on probation had previously served time; those more than 12 months out reported employment experiences immediately after release in addition to their current search patterns).

The agencies that the ex-offenders referred to comprised of a variety of local, often nonprofit agencies. Many of these had religious ties, or federal grants to aid in assisting offenders. To maintain confidentiality, names have been changed.

Appendix A. Employment Relevant Questions and Probes

Since your release, have you been employed?

How many jobs?

After release from prison, how long did it take to find a job?

Did you have any help in finding this job?

Have you experienced discrimination or stigma as part of the employment process?

Have potential employers expressed negative view toward ex-offenders?

What are you currently doing to locate a job?

Why do you think finding a job has been hard?

Did you participate in any job programming while in prison?

Can you please describe? Was this helpful?
“Losing the Humanity of the Street”: Retired Police Officer Narratives of the Evolution of Low-level Enforcement in New York City

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Abstract
Low-level enforcement activities such as pedestrian and traffic stops, the issuance of criminal court summonses (tickets or citations), and misdemeanor arrests comprise the vast majority of police-citizen encounters relative to the policing of more serious, felony-level offenses. The complexities of these activities – particularly from the perspectives of the police officers who carry them out – have received relatively little scholarly attention. In an effort to more fully understand the nuances of low-level enforcement, in particular how such activities have changed over time and how police officers have experienced such changes, in-depth interviews were conducted with a small sample of retired New York Police Department (NYPD) officers. Findings shed light on how officers understand and experience proactive policing tactics and the pressures associated with data-driven accountability. The implications of this research for improving police-community relations are explored.

Keywords: Policing; misdemeanor arrests; criminal summonses; New York City Police Department.

I think what it’s accomplishing is alienating policing. You can’t have community policing if the community doesn’t trust the police. It’s not gonna happen... How many times do you hear people saying, “The police are like an occupying force”? And

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they don’t see them as being there to protect them, they see them there as to check and see if they’re doing anything that they can get a summons for. One of the terms I heard is low-hanging fruit. Because that’s what police are gonna do. You put them in the situation and say, “You gotta bring up your numbers. You gotta get numbers.” And so, okay, there’s the easiest number to get, that’s the one I’m gonna get.

—Will, retired NYPD officer, active 1964 to 1990

INTRODUCTION

Misdemeanors account for the vast majority of arrests conducted by police officers and thus the cases processed in the courts. Approximately 10 million misdemeanor cases are processed annually in the United States, in contrast to 2.3 million felony cases (Natapoff, 2015). Furthermore, the number of misdemeanor cases processed nationally more than doubled between 1972 and 2006 (Boruchowitz, Brink, & Dimino, 2009; Roberts, 2011). In New York City – the focus of the present study – official statistics indicate that misdemeanor arrests increased by 190 percent between 1980 and 2013 (Chauhan, Fera, Welsh, Balazon, & Misshula, 2014).

In spite of these trends, the research literature has paid considerably more attention to the policing and processing of felony offenses. This focus is understandable, given the precipitous growth of incarceration in recent decades and the extensive collateral consequences of a felony conviction. However, as evidenced by both recent scholarship and highly publicized police-citizen encounters, the proliferation of low-level enforcement activities – misdemeanor arrests primarily, but also criminal court summonses (often called tickets or citations in other jurisdictions), and pedestrian stops – has far-reaching implications and thus is in need of careful scholarly examination. Likewise, recent research offering important insight into officer perspectives has largely relied on survey methodology. There exists scant qualitative work, which can provide in-depth insight into the meanings officers ascribe to their work, as well as their understandings of the policy and political contexts within which they operate.

This study seeks to address this gap by presenting findings from in-depth interviews with retired New York Police Department (NYPD) officers. I examine officers’ perceptions of low-level enforcement activities and the substantial changes over time in both crime rates and departmental mandates regarding low-level enforcement. Analysis of officers’ narratives reveals how they understand policy changes oriented toward proactive policing tactics and the pressures associated with the advent of data-driven accountability. These efforts to bolster accountability, I conclude, have contributed to of-
ficers’ sense of alienation, not only from the policies they carry out, but perhaps more importantly, from the human service aspects of their work.

THE LOW-LEVEL ENFORCEMENT CRISIS

Rates of low-level enforcement have increased considerably in recent decades, and this trend has been experienced most intensely by individuals in certain demographic groups and communities. Black and Latino people comprise the majority of individuals who experience pedestrian and vehicle police stops in American urban areas (Rojek, Rosenfeld, & Decker, 2012; Rosenfeld, Fornango, & Rengifo, 2007; Worden, McLean, & Wheeler, 2012). More police contact begets a higher likelihood of arrest. In New York City, for example, the rate of misdemeanor arrests for young Black men ages 18 to 20, the demographic group most likely to be arrested, nearly tripled between 1990 and 2013. At the peak in 2010, Black men in this age group had nearly a one-in-three chance of being arrested for a misdemeanor. The misdemeanor arrest rate for young Latino men in this same age group more than doubled over this 23-year period, with a peak likelihood of a one-in-six chance of a misdemeanor arrest in 2010. In contrast, arrests for young White men in this age group also more than doubled, yet at the peak in 2010, the likelihood of arrest for this demographic group was less than one in ten (Chauhan et al., 2014; Golub, Johnson, & Dunlap, 2007).

The demographically uneven distribution of low-level enforcement, as well as the extensive consequences of such contact, has contributed to the erosion of police-community relations, particularly in urban communities of color. The work of Rod Brunson and his colleagues has shed light on how Black young men accumulate direct and vicarious experiences with police which deleteriously affects their perceptions of the police (Brunson, 2007; Brunson & Miller, 2006; Brunson & Weitzer, 2011; see also: Stoudt, Fine, & Fox, 2011). Scholars have likewise found that Latino young men's perceptions of the police are shaped by order maintenance policing strategies that claim to be “race neutral,” but which nonetheless are fueled by the typical concerns about gangs and drugs in Latino communities, and which differentially target recreational and cultural behaviors in these communities (Vera Sanchez & Gau, 2015; see also: Rios, 2011; Solis, Portillos, & Brunson, 2009).

Worse still, justice of any sort is elusive in the processing of low-level offenses. In the vast majority of cases, misdemeanor arrests result in neither a finding of guilt nor any formal punishment (Kohler-Hausmann, 2013, 2014; Natapoff, 2012, 2013; Solomon, 2011). There are also numerous collateral consequences – from debt accrued from fines and fees to eviction from public housing to denial of employment – that can befall an individual convicted of a misdemeanor offense (Natapoff, 2012). The same managerial form of social control is visible in the processing of what are known in New York City as criminal court summonses issued in lieu of a misdemeanor ar-
rest, or “C-summonses.” The city has seen explosive growth in the number of C-summonses issued in recent decades, yet only about one out of every five criminal summonses issued results in a disposition of guilty (Chauhan, Welsh, Fera, & Balazon, 2015).

Unsurprisingly, the accumulation of negative experiences of proactive policing tactics and their consequences has contributed to a profound crisis in police legitimacy (Armaline, Vera Sanchez, & Correia, 2014; Gau & Brunson, 2010). For young people in New York City, the proactive police tactic of stop, question, and frisk has been associated with an erosion of trust in and willingness to report crime to the police (Fratello, Rengifo, & Trone, 2013; see also: Howell, 2009). A recent rash of well-publicized incidents, many precipitated by low-level enforcement activity and some resulting in citizen deaths, has brought these issues into sharp relief, highlighting what Brunson (2015) has referred to as the “sizeable rift between police departments and many communities of color” (p. 510; see also: Okafor, 2015).

**Distinguishing broken windows from zero-tolerance policing**

Much of the criticism of low-level enforcement practices centers around order maintenance policing as a driver of police-perpetrated injustice. Yet it is crucial to distinguish broken windows from its later iteration, zero-tolerance policing. The central feature of order maintenance policing is the proactive enforcement of misdemeanor laws that prohibit offenses which deteriorate “quality of life,” such as drinking alcohol in public, urinating in public, loitering (often synonymous with panhandling), and subway turnstile jumping (Harcourt, 2001; Wilson & Kelling, 1982). This style of proactive policing, now popularly referred to as broken windows policing, first came to prominence through the work of James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, who posited the thesis that crime prevention and order maintenance are inextricably linked:

> The citizen who fears the ill-smelling drunk, the rowdy teenager, or the importuning beggar is not merely expressing his distaste for unseemly behavior; he is also giving voice to a bit of folk wisdom that happens to be a correct generalization—namely, that serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked. The unchecked panhandler is, in effect, the first broken window (1982).

It is important to note here that Wilson and Kelling’s original argument, that serious crime can be prevented by addressing disorder in communities in “the downward spiral of urban decay” (Skogan, 1990), did not indicate that mass misdemeanor arrests – nor the issuance of criminal summonses or even stop, question, and frisk – were the solution. As Wilson and Kelling continue,

> Patrol officers might be encouraged to go to and from duty stations on public transportation and, while on the bus or subway car, enforce rules about smoking, drinking, disorder-
ly conduct, and the like. The enforcement need involve nothing more than ejecting the offender (the offense, after all, is not one with which a booking officer or a judge wishes to be bothered). Perhaps the random but relentless maintenance of standards on buses would lead to conditions... that approximate the level of civility we now take for granted on airplanes.

As Kelling (2015) has recently reiterated, the original idea reflected in the passage above emphasized crime prevention through police *problem-solving*. Such an approach, he writes, is “highly discretionary, easy to abuse, but when conducted properly contributes enormously to the quality of urban life” (p. 628). Thus, much of the criticism of broken windows policing (see Camp & Heatherton, 2016 for an exception) is not of the original spirit of the idea, but rather how it was subsequently applied in New York City and by police departments across the country (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006; Stuart, 2013).

While couched in the rhetoric of community policing that was at the heart of Wilson and Kelling’s original argument, scholars like Manning (2001) and Harcourt (2001) have traced how the application of broken windows in New York City rapidly transformed from one of problem-solving to one of zero-tolerance. During the high-crime periods between the late 1970s and early 1990s, police leadership in New York City invoked a “war-tinged metaphor” of “taking back the streets” from criminals (Manning, 2001, p. 321). As Manning and others have observed, zero-tolerance policing, unlike broken windows, “assumes making arrests for misdemeanors reduces more serious crime” (p. 321; see also Harcourt, 2001). The zero-tolerance approach targeted a set of “quality of life” offenses, including prostitution, panhandling, and, perhaps most notably, the possession of marijuana and other drugs (Golub et al., 2007; see also: Solomon, 2011).

The zero-tolerance policing style was augmented by new accountability measures implemented during this time, primarily via crime mapping and weekly COMPSTAT meetings. COMPSTAT has been celebrated by policing practitioners (Bratton & Knobler, 1998; Bratton & Malinowski, 2008; Police Executive Research Forum [PERF], 2013), while scholars have taken a more critical look at its effects on police behavior. Eterno and Silverman (2010), for example, found that NYPD managers (at the rank of captain or above) felt intense pressure to lower crime once COMPSTAT was implemented, and that they often felt pressured to sacrifice their professional integrity to do so – namely, by making unethical “statistical adjustments” to show a reduction in crime (see also: Eterno & Silverman, 2006; Harcourt, 2001; Weisburd, Mastrofski, McNally, Greenspan, & Willis, 2003). Though some scholars have argued that the advent of COMPSTAT and the accompanying zero-tolerance approach have functionally reduced front-line officer discretion in dealing with low-level offenses (Harcourt, 2001; Manning, 2001), others have suggested that such arguments are overstated (Sousa, 2010).
The need for understanding police perspectives on low-level enforcement

While extensive scholarship now exists on the effects of order maintenance policing on police-community relations, the voices of police officers are less audible. Quantitative methods dominate in the field of criminal justice (Copes, Brown, & Tewksbury, 2011; Tewksbury, DeMichele, & Miller, 2005) and in studies of policing in particular, it has been argued that there is a methodological overreliance on surveys (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015). This trend exists despite the fact that, as Manning (2001) points out, some of the most influential studies of policing in previous eras have used qualitative or mixed methods (see: Bittner, 1967; Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Skolnick, 1967; Wilson, 1968). This is not to discount important insights that survey research, particularly on the NYPD, has recently offered on topics such as officer perspectives on COMPSTAT (Eterno & Silverman, 2010) and variations in officer job satisfaction across race/ethnicity and gender (Cooper, White, Ward, Raganella, & Saunders, 2014; White, Cooper, Saunders, & Raganella, 2010). However, the highly structured nature of surveys means that they can only capture information planned in advance by researchers. An inherent strength of qualitative approaches is the flexibility to account for the element of surprise, or “serendipity” (Fine & Deegan, 1996), during data collection, allowing researchers to capture knowledge that they otherwise would not have known to anticipate.

Some reasons for the relative lack of qualitative policing scholarship may be that surveys are far less labor-intensive to conduct, can yield considerable statistical power and thus facilitate generalizability of findings, and may also be seen by police departments and police unions as less invasive and potentially damaging than qualitative methods such as in-depth interviewing or participant observation. Nevertheless, if police-community relations are to be repaired, the perspectives of police officers must be part of the scholarly conversation.

Current study: Contextualizing trends in low-level enforcement in New York City

This qualitative study was initiated based on quantitative findings from the Misdemeanor Justice Project, which is examining trends in enforcement of low-level offenses in New York City – and, to a lesser extent, New York State – using arrest and court processing data from the NYPD, the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, and the New York State Office of Court Administration (Chauhan et al., 2014, 2015). As reviewed above, the initial findings are reflective of profound changes in policing practice over the past few decades. Yet much more needs to be understood about how these trends occurred, how they have been experienced by both the police and New York City residents, and the extent to which the trends indicated by official statistics match up with officers’ on-the-ground experiences. Thus, the qualitative research team sought, in focus groups and in-depth interviews, to under-
stand how people working in the police and court systems, as well as young men and adults living in communities with a high volume of low-level enforcement activity, experienced and understood these trends. The perspectives of court officials and community members are examined in separate papers (Barrett, 2017; Barrett & Welsh, 2018).

In order to capture the experiences of front-line police personnel in conducting low-level enforcement activity during this historical time period, I conducted in-depth interviews with retired NYPD officers. The decision to interview retired rather than active police officers was made not only because, as noted above, gaining access to active officers can be difficult and time-consuming, but also because retired officers were more likely to have the extensive knowledge necessary to contextualize the trends visible in the quantitative data.

To guide this part of the qualitative project, the following research questions were posed:

1. How do retired NYPD officers explain trends in low-level enforcement activity – specifically, misdemeanor arrests and C-summonses?
2. To what extent do the trends indicated by official statistics align with officers’ on-the-ground experiences?
3. To what extent do retired officers buy into and/or resist dominant narratives regarding the utility of low-level enforcement strategies?

METHOD

Recruitment and sampling
The analysis presented here draws on in-depth interviews conducted between December 2014 and June 2015 with a small sample (n=10) of retired NYPD officers. A mixture of purposive and snowball sampling was used to recruit study participants. Potential participants were identified through the professional networks of the Misdemeanor Justice Project team, and were emailed a brief description of the larger project and the nature of the interview in which they were being asked to participate. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to recommend other retired officers who might be willing to participate in the study.

Selection criteria required that officers had served on the force for at least five years and that they had worked patrol for at least some of that time. Additionally, potential participants who had worked patrol in precincts within the three communities targeted for our community focus groups (East New York/Brownsville, Harlem, and South Bronx) were purposively approached,
and thus six out of the ten participants had worked patrol in at least one of these areas.

Table 1. Participant characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Year started on force</th>
<th>Years on force</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abe</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stu</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All participants were White; the average number of years spent on the force was 22.

Officers’ time on the force ranged from 5 to 35 years, with a mean of 22 years. Officers’ starting year on the force was between 1963 and 1992. Although substantial effort was made to recruit a sample of participants that was diverse by race/ethnicity and gender, all officers interviewed were White, and all but one was male. While this lack of diversity is an important limitation of the sample, it is reflective of previous eras in the department—a focus of the study here—and an issue that is still relevant today amid struggles to maintain diversity on the force.

Procedures

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the City University of New York, and all data collection and analysis procedures maintained human subjects protections, including the maintenance of confidentiality through the assignment of a code to each participant prior to analysis to protect participants’ identities. Additionally, any references made to information that could be traced back to participants, such as specific job roles occupied in specific precincts, have been removed from the data excerpts presented here. I conducted and audio-recorded all interviews, had them transcribed for analysis, and then checked each transcript for accuracy. Interviews ranged in length from 55 minutes to two hours long, with the average length being 90 minutes. Each interviewee was compensated with a $30 gift card and—for those still residing in the city—a round-trip MetroCard.
I conducted the interviews in a semi-structured style, in which topics were set in advance but the sequence and wording of questions were determined as each interview unfolded (Patton, 2002). Open-ended questions asked officers to describe the sorts of activities they undertook while working patrol, to reflect on aspects of the communities they worked in, and to describe what – if any – changes they noticed in the numbers of misdemeanor arrests and for what types of offenses these arrests typically occurred. Officers were also asked about their summons activity and the sorts of charges for which summonses were typically issued. When changes over time were noted, officers were asked what they thought accounted for these changes.

Some recent qualitative research with police has benefited from researchers’ “insider” positionality as current or former police officers themselves (Eterno & Silverman, 2010; Moskos, 2008; Oliver, 2015; Reynolds & Hicks, 2015). As a “civilian” researcher who was new to interviewing police officers (but not new to interviewing other law enforcement professionals), I was keenly aware that interview participants understandably might be apprehensive about candidly answering my questions about their time on the force. I wanted to be especially sensitive to this possibility given the nature of the questions I would be asking about the history of policing and crime in the city, as a non-native New Yorker who had only lived there since 2009, and who thus had not lived through the high-crime years of the late 1980s and early 1990s. To monitor this, I followed a modified version of Spradley’s (1979) rapport process, which conceptualizes the developmental stages of rapport throughout an ethnographic interview as being comprised of apprehension, exploration, cooperation, and participation. I have reason to believe that I achieved cooperation quite quickly, as evidenced by interviewees’ willingness to correct my usage of terms and ask questions about the Misdemeanor Justice Project data.

**Limitations**

The sample of officers interviewed was small and lacked racial/ethnic and gender diversity, and thus this study’s findings cannot be generalized to all NYPD officers, let alone to officers in other departments. Rather, the aim of the exploratory analysis presented here is to make modest claims (Charmaz, 2006, p. 114) about officer perceptions and to suggest directions in which future studies might look. Moreover, while the retired status of the officers interviewed for this project is an asset in terms of the extent of their knowledge, their remarks, despite the usefulness of their insight into current issues in policing, and their likely willingness to be more candid about their perceptions in comparison to active officers, should not be interpreted as reflecting what is presently happening in the NYPD, nor should their perspectives be ascribed to current NYPD officers. Lastly, a key methodological concern in this study is the issue of retrospective construction, or the tendency to construct specific moments in time as significant in retrospect. With low-level enforcement gaining substantial public attention in recent
years, I sought to minimize the influence such developments might have on the interviews in how I framed the interviews and posed questions. There is some evidence from psychological research on memory to suggest that people are better able to recall events when asked to do so in chronological order (Anderson & Conway, 1993; Belli, 1998). At the beginning of each interview, I showed participants line graphs depicting trends in the rates of misdemeanor arrests, C-summonses, and violent and non-violent crimes and asked them to recall their experiences on the force starting with their academy training and rookie year. I then asked participants about the extent to which their experiences matched up with these data (see Figure 1). This approach sought to attenuate possible bias by keeping the interviews grounded in the data.

Source: Chauhan et al., 2014.

Figure 1. Rates of felony arrests, misdemeanor arrests, violent crime, and nonviolent crime in New York City, 1980 to 2013
Analysis

As is standard in qualitative research, data analysis was iterative, beginning during the first interview and continuing for three months after the last interview took place. In every interview after the first one, I discussed with my participants the themes I was seeing in the data to confirm accuracy and to highlight conflicting perspectives amongst participants (Patton, 2002). Reliability in a qualitative research context depends on internal and external consistency (Kraska & Neuman, 2008, p. 410). Internal consistency was maintained though my questioning on the same topics throughout interviews. External consistency was achieved by cross-checking observations with other sources of data and by testing “rival explanations” of the data during analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 553). Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcription service. I then carefully read each transcript while listening to the audio recording of the interview to ensure accuracy. Data were first analyzed using an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify patterns and categories. Once these codes were established, they were refined based on relevant themes from the literature (Patton, 2002).

FINDINGS

Tracing the evolution of low-level enforcement

For the purpose of the discussion to follow, a brief review of crime trends is useful. Until the early 1960s, the homicide rate in New York City was low and steady at around 5 homicides per 100,000 people. In what some have characterized as a roller coaster (Fagan, Zimring, & Kim, 1998), the homicide rate then more than doubled between the mid-1960s and 1972, fell, then peaked again in 1979 and 1991. In raw numbers, homicides reached their highest point in 1990 at 2,262 homicides before steadily declining to a historical low of 328 in 2014 (NYPD, 2016).

The historical context of the NYPD has been carefully documented by others (see: Darien, 2013; Silverman, 1999; White, 2014) and thus I do not detail it here. A few key facts are worth noting, however. The year 1994 is the line of demarcation between two distinct eras in New York City and NYPD leadership. Rudolph Giuliani became mayor in 1993, elected on a “tough on crime” platform. He appointed William J. Bratton for what would be his first of two stints as police commissioner in December of 1993, and Bratton began implementing tactics associated with order maintenance policing, as described above, in 1994 (Harcourt, 2001). However, it is also important to note that, although Bratton has been widely credited for the dramatic reduction in crime in New York City in the 1990s, the crime decline actually began under Raymond Kelly, who also served as NYPD Commissioner twice – from 1992 to 1994 and from 2002 to 2013. The officers interviewed for this project took care to distinguish between Kelly and Bratton, not only because of what was happening around crime during their tenures, but because of the distinct
policy initiatives each implemented. Specifically, the police strategy of stop, question, and frisk – a tactic commonly linked with broken windows and order maintenance policing – proliferated during Kelly’s second term. NYPD data indicate that under Kelly, pedestrian stops by police officers more than quadrupled inside of a decade, growing from 160,000 in 2003 to 685,000 in 2011 before falling sharply to 191,000 in 2013 (Chauhan et al., 2015).

**Early days: Productivity and discretion in low-level enforcement pre-1994**

A helpful entry point for tracing changes in low-level enforcement in New York City in recent decades is through how police officer productivity was measured. The officers I interviewed who engaged in low-level enforcement prior to the Bratton era consistently noted that their productivity was measured by the issuance of traffic summonses for parking and moving violations (“movers”), much more so than by any other activity:

"Precinct commanders would really look at things like [traffic] summonses activity. Summons activity generated revenue for the city. So that would be a big thing... You know, like how much revenue are you generating for the city? (Abe, active 1972 to 2012)"

It went from maybe ten [traffic] summonses and two movers, to now we expect twenty summonses and eight moving violations. It just kept growing. And that’s when I think the PBA [Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association] got involved... It wasn’t fair because, I guess some commanders used it as a really strict quota and they didn’t care if you were out sick for half of the month or whatever. Like, “What? You only gave me ten summonses.” “Yeah, but I was out sick, boss. I couldn’t.” “Well, you know what? Now you’re not in a radio car anymore. For the next month, we’re gonna take you out of the radio car. Or we’re gonna change your hours until you get the message...” (Sam, active 1967 to 2002)

Two themes are notable in the above narratives. Although traffic summonses were integral to ensuring quality of life in the city – by enforcing laws against double-parking, for example – officers recognized that there was a profit motive to ensuring that they issued a minimum number of such summonses every month. Second, the emphasis on issuing traffic summonses and “movers” (summonses for moving violations) exemplified a larger perspective on the role of policing during this era, which was that there was little that police could or should do to prevent crime (PERF, 2013), a point that the officers interviewed for this project reiterated. As Sam, who started with the NYPD in the late ’60s, put it, “There were cops who always cared about crime, but they were never directed to really care about it.”
Thus, it is unsurprising that during this time, criminal summonses, or "C-summonses" were considered to be neither an effective policing tactic nor an important source of revenue for the city. Either the suspected offense was serious enough to merit an arrest or the officer simply gave a verbal warning to cease the behavior:

In those days, I just never felt the pressure that some police officers apparently say they feel today to issue [criminal] summonses. (Tim, active 1963 to 1968)

I never did any of that. No, no. You know, urinating in public back then would be maybe a kick in the ass or something along those lines. [laughter] You know, “Get the hell out of here. What’s the matter with you?” You know what I mean? And depending on the age of the person...an old Irish drunk that just fell out of a bar or something, what are you gonna do with them? If I knew him – I mean, I probably knew him, knew his wife and...It was a whole different world, such a whole different way of looking at things. (Bob, active 1968 to 1996)

Back in the day, C-summons, criminal court summons, were pretty rare. I'm talking about in the '70s and stuff. We didn't do it. You just didn't. People got locked up. You did regular parking and moving. And very few cases involved a C-summons. And when you did it, you usually had to ask somebody, “Gee, I never gave one of these out.” For something like a park regulation, back in the day, no one would get a ticket for being in a park when it was closed. We wouldn't do it. It was silly. (Sam).

The theme of discretion emerges here in officer narratives of how they handled behavior that now would receive a C-summons. For example, the most frequent charges for which people were issued C-summonses in 2013 were: public consumption of alcohol, disorderly conduct, public urination, park offenses (such as being in a park after hours), and riding a bicycle on the sidewalk (Chauhan et al., 2015). In contrast, during this era, issuing a summons for these types of offenses was neither something that was encouraged by the department nor was it an approach that officers believed would be effective in deterring behavior. A better approach, as Bob, who was a patrol officer in the late ’60s and early ’70s, put it, would be a literal or figurative “kick in the ass.” This approach would be particularly appropriate if he knew the offender. Misdemeanor arrests were similarly discounted during this time:

When I was a cop before this Broken Windows thing, or COMPSTAT, we didn't care so much about the misdemeanors. You know, we didn't give a crap about them. They actually, they were frowned upon in a lot of ways. Like, you made a collar, “What did you do?” “Oh, it was criminal trespassing.” “Oh, yeah, big deal!” Maybe he was just in the project, just warm-
ing up because it’s cold outside... But if you got a gun collar or something along those lines, then that was a whole different... you’re risking your life, and the guy had a weapon, you know? So misdemeanors weren’t that important. (Bob)

Thus, the emphasis during this time was, as Tim put it, on making “good arrests,” which he defined has being for “something dangerous and serious.” If an officer made an arrest for a less serious crime, s/he could be overtly criticized for doing so. Similar to C-summons, officers linked the difference between how misdemeanor arrests were used as an enforcement tool then versus now to changes in the amount of discretion officers have:

Back in the day, low-level enforcement was not emphasized at all, okay? It was, officers had a lot more discretion, and an officer, at the end of the month, you would turn in your activity report. And if you had, say, two arrests in a month, you would be looked upon as an active officer... No one would ever say to you, “Gee, you didn’t make any arrests. What are you doing?”...The idea was [traffic] summonses were real important and arrests really weren’t that important, as long as crime wasn’t getting totally outta control. (Sam)

What seems to be going on now is that the discretion is being pulled out of low-level enforcement, which has made it possibly so disproportionately important. Instead of it being what you just do in the course of your regular work, it’s become the raison d’etre, and therefore, it’s come under too close scrutiny. Police interacted with people all the time, and basically, nobody paid attention to it. That was what the job was. Now, everything is under the microscope. (Sarah, active 1978 to 1988)

As these passages reflect, prior to departmental policy changes in the mid-1990s, officers believed that they wielded more discretion in how to deal with misdemeanor offenses; the subsequent curtailing of discretion (whether perceived or real) was accompanied by additional scrutiny of this aspect of policing.

Taking responsibility for crime: The era of accountability

William J. Bratton served as the Commissioner of the New York Police Department for two relatively brief though defining stints, from January 1994 to April 1996 and from January 2014 to September 2016. While the officers I spoke with were at times critical of how some of the policies he initiated have evolved over time, officers were unanimous in their admiration of the positive changes Bratton made to the Department during his first term as Commissioner:

Bratton I think is a strong leader. I remember when he first became chief of the transit police [in 1990]. He said some-
thing that was absolutely shocking... He said, “I am taking responsibility for crime in this city...” And, of course, that’s a wonderful step forward where – I mean, the Bratton era changed policing. Everybody then had to say, “Yeah, crime is our responsibility.” (Tim)

The first thing he did that made him what he is today, [was] not implementing low-level crime initiatives and all that. What made him what he is today is the fact that he got the police department to work again. And how did he do that? The first thing he did was he had someone go out and analyze all the police precincts in the city that needed paint jobs, that needed new plumbing, that made it an environment that you want to go to work in. He gave them new uniforms, he gave them 9 mm handguns. He gave them dignity. So the cops got all these good things to make them cops again, you know, and there’s this big sign up in COMPSTAT, over the big room, that says, “We are the police. We’re not just report takers.” So he made cops feel good about themselves, he made cops feel that they were doing something important. And then everything else followed. (Abe)

These narratives indicate that, by rebuilding the dignity of the police through material improvements such as new uniforms and better facilities, Bratton primed the Department for what at the time were revolutionary changes to policing, particularly around the notion of the police taking responsibility for preventing and solving crime.

Officers also repeatedly emphasized that discourses around policing today tend to either ignore or forget that officers were operating in a very different reality in the 1980s and 1990s than they are today. Police responses to crime were a product of this context. Officers consistently recalled that crime was an ever-present threat and source of fear in New York City in the 1980s and 1990s. As Stu, who was a rookie officer in 1992, put it,

The people who are actually adults now who were alive during the ’70s and ’80s know what crime was really like in the city. You would think nothin’ of gettin’ on a subway now at three o’clock in the morning and taking the A to 125th Street. You didn’t do that. You got off at 59th Street, or we never saw you again. People don’t understand that. Why do you think they used to stop at 59th Street and leave the train there and say, “All right, next stop 125th Street?” (Stu, active 1992 to 2012)

This passage reflects a consistent perception among officers: that people who live in the city now – in an era of historically low crime – have the luxury of being critical of police practices because they either weren’t around for or don’t remember how bad it was.
During this time, misdemeanor arrests became a key crime reduction tactic, not just for order maintenance, but also as an investigative tool. As Chuck, who also started on the force in 1992, put it, “misdemeanors gave you the opportunity to solve a lot of major crimes,” either by converting misdemeanor offenders into informants (see also: Harcourt, 2001), or by catching more serious offenders in the act of committing lower-level crimes. Thus, the approach to reducing crime was to cast a wide net effecting a lot of arrests for low-level offenses – and thereby increase the likelihood that some more serious crimes would be solved as well. Sam sums up this shift like this:

The message was, “lock up all these people.” And it probably wasn’t a bad message, because it had come from an era where “Oh, don’t get involved. The more you get involved, the more bullshit you’re gonna stir up, and then we’re gonna get a civilian complaint, and we’re gonna do this, and we’re gonna do that. It’s not good for my career if you get involved.” And it got to, “Lock up people. We’ve gotta get the city back.” (Sam)

As this passage reflects, the message to patrol officers during this time was about arrests – not the problem-solving that Wilson and Kelling (1982) had written about. Also notable is the invocation of the war metaphor of “we’ve got to get the city back” – a technique Manning (2001) identifies in his dramaturgical analysis of this era of policing in New York City.

The “lock people up” approach was incentivized through the possibility of swift promotion (see also: Eterno & Silverman, 2010), as Abe described like this:

So it was through repetitively locking all these people up, sooner or later, you were gonna get somebody of significance...So that was the concept. Go out there and, you know, little things could mean a lot...Cops were saying to themselves, “if I get the right guy and I lock up the right guy, and I break a big case...” It was nothing for Bratton to promote people to detective right on the spot...Normally, it would take you three years to become a detective doing investigations. This way, he would show the incentive by promoting people on the front page of the news, because they solved a big crime just based on a minor infraction. (Abe)

The idea that low-level enforcement could facilitate the solving of more serious crimes also extended to C-summonses, though officers acknowledged that these summonses could also lead to arrests simply for not resolving the initial summons. As Chuck put it,

What happened at that point in time was directives came down that you couldn’t issue a summons without first conducting a warrant check. So now you had to run their name right away. A lot of people had open warrants. So they’ve already demon-
strated that they’re not gonna show up when they’re [issued a] summons in lieu of arrest, because they didn’t show up the last time, which is why they had a bench warrant issued. So those people oftentimes were arrested for the warrant and for the minor crime. (Chuck, active 1992 to 2014)

In this way, the issuance of a C-summons could now become the gateway to a much more extensive encounter with the criminal justice system. Indeed, recent analyses indicate that just over a third of C-summonses result in a warrant being issued (Chauhan et al., 2015).

**COMPSTAT: Accountability through data**

The first iteration of COMPSTAT, called “Charts of the Future,” was enacted by Jack Maple while both he and Bratton were in the Transit Department (Eterno & Silverman, 2006; Harcourt, 2001; PERF, 2013). The thrust of this initial version was simple: compile, store, and visually display crime statistics to direct enforcement efforts. Bratton, who was Transit Commissioner prior to becoming Police Commissioner, rebranded the approach as biweekly “Crime Control Strategy Meetings” or COMPSTAT (for “Computerized Statistics” [Bratton & Malinowski, 2008] or “Compare Statistics” [Eterno & Silverman, 2006])—and subsequently expanded it to the entire department upon becoming Commissioner. COMPSTAT, which has since been adopted by police departments both across the U.S. and internationally, has been credited with changing three key facets of policing: information-sharing among and across different divisions within a police department; decentralization of decision-making through a reduction in hierarchical bureaucracy; and a more creative, flexible, and thereby responsive organizational culture (Chauhan, 2011; PERF, 2013). COMPSTAT has been widely regarded as a ground-breaking development particularly because, as noted previously, prior to this time, it was commonly accepted that the police couldn’t do anything to lower crime (Harcourt, 2001; PERF, 2013). The following narratives reflect the extent to which COMPSTAT fundamentally changed how police officers did their jobs:

COMPSTAT is fantastic, because what happens is everything is computerized, and wherever the crimes are, that’s where the personnel goes. (Mark, active 1968 to 1992)

There was no more coming into the squad, drinking your coffee, and reading the newspaper for the first hour. You hit the ground running, and you just worked, worked, worked, and worked. (Abe)

There were aspects of [COMPSTAT] that were really good... Commanders really started to monitor what was going in their precincts, where before, you took a report and it got filed and got recorded, and got filed, and next, all day long. At least now you had some data you could go to. You could say, “You know what? We’ve had 300 robberies here. And the majority
of those robberies have taken place, say, on 104th Street and Amsterdam Avenue.” So now everybody could start focusing on an area...and like I said, we’d lay on the outlying areas because now we knew in between what times these things were taking place, whereabouts they were taking place. So it was really, really good for anybody who wanted to really work, because you could make a difference, because you had the data now. (Vic, active 1982 to 2002)

Across interviews, the theme of increased accountability consistently emerged as the key development that occurred with the advent of COMPSTAT. Many aspects of this were quite positive; officers who were motivated to address crime now had tools with which to do so. COMPSTAT facilitated the informed allocation of police resources where they were needed most, and in doing so, officers felt they could really “make a difference” in addressing crime.

There was also a dark side to this shift, however. Officers readily talked about the burden of having to play what others have referred to as the “numbers game” (Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993; see also: Cooper et al., 2014). While in the pre-COMPSTAT era, police productivity was primarily measured through traffic summonses, now, police leadership was held accountable for crime rates, and front-line officers were expected to show consistent activity toward lowering crime. Officers described feeling pressured to conduct pedestrian stops, particularly in high-crime areas:

Like they say, poop runs downhill, or whatever they say? Now the precinct commander knows he’s gonna get beat up if he doesn’t rectify this [an increase in crime]. So what is he gonna do? He’s gonna beat up the lieutenants, he’s gonna beat up the sergeants, he’s gonna beat up the cops. “You go out there and give me stop and frisk,” you know? So whether you have reasonable suspicion or not, you’re throwing people up against the wall, and you’re doing your stop and frisk. So you couldn’t come down a block without getting thrown up against the wall. You got tossed, you got beat up. So you’re violating people’s civil rights. Why? Because the pressure is on from the top... You don’t generate stop and frisk reports, you don’t generate gun arrests, you don’t do this, you don’t do that, life is gonna become very difficult for you. (Abe)

[Under Kelly,] if you weren’t stopping people, you weren’t fighting crime. That’s how [COMPSTAT] went off the rails a little bit. His idea was stopping people in the street shows that your cops are out there trying to fight crime. Well, if you put a number on how many people I have to stop today, you’re
basically doing away with my discretion or doing away with my personal observation skills mattering. (Chuck)

Because precinct-level commanders were under immense pressure to reduce crime – several officers described how commanders would get “beat up” and “humiliated” at COMPSTAT meetings. There was also pressure on patrol officers to minimize felony arrests. Chuck recounted a typical instance in which an attempt at order maintenance spiraled out of control, in which he confronted a man in possession of stolen magazines who was sleeping on a park bench:

Alright. It's a misdemeanor, a classified misdemeanor and a parks regulation. It's disorderly behavior. "Listen, you got to go." “I'm not gonna—.” Now you have to physically stand him up. Now I know he's in possession of stolen property. What, am I gonna check every newsstand on Broadway to figure out which one he stole it from? He's up. He's been in prison. He's been doing nothing but pushups for the last two years. It's gonna hurt, and I'm realizing that this is gonna hurt me more than it hurts him. So now it's a fight. Now I'm involved in a struggle with this guy because he's sleeping on a bench. He punches me, we're rolling around. Another cop nearby comes over, and we get him arrested, no problem. So the desk officer, the lieutenant who initially says, "Hey, clear the benches. I don't want to see any homeless sleeping on the benches on your post," now when I bring him in and I want to charge him with felonious assault for punching me, "Oh, that's kind of a heavy charge." Exactly. "What are you bringing in felonies for? We don't need felonies. COMPSTAT measures your felonies." You told me to do this, so I'm gonna try to do it to the best of my ability. It winds up being a fight here. Now you're gonna tell me not to charge it. (Chuck)

This narrative vividly illustrates the extent to which officers felt pressured to demonstrate continuous progress toward the reduction of serious crime, not only through reduced rates of reported crime, but also through fewer felony arrests. It is important to note that Chuck described the above encounter to make another, related point: that the substantial rise in the misdemeanor arrest rate indicated by official statistics may be artificially inflated by a number of factors, not only due to the downgrading of felonies, but also because some misdemeanor arrests were of repeat offenders. As he put it, "I think the recidivism rate will be very telling. It'll be a small portion of your society, of New Yorkers, who are committing the bulk of these crimes. Only because – this is anecdotal – but in my experience we locked up the same people all the time." Indeed, a limitation in the arrest data used by the Misdemeanor Justice Project and many others is that they are of unique arrests,
not of individuals. Still, New York City’s Data Analytic Recidivism Tool for 2009 data (City of New York, 2016), estimates that 80 percent of the arrests in the dataset were of unique individuals. In other words, approximately 20 percent of those arrested for a misdemeanor were rearrested at least once in the same year (Chauhan et al., 2014). Thus, as others have noted (Harcourt, 2001; Manning, 2001), just as with rates of reported crime, official statistics of police activity should not only be interpreted with caution, but should also take into account contextual factors such as recidivism rates and shifts in policy mandates.

Recognizing the limitations of the era of accountability

When asked to reflect on how things have and haven’t changed in New York City in recent decades, several officers noted that in conversations about “progress,” crime trends should be decoupled from other “quality of life” factors, such as poverty and inequality. For example, Vic observed the following:

I worked in a minority community my whole time. I don’t view it as that. I view people as people. But I will say that in my opinion, and in the area that I worked – I worked there almost 21 years – and in that area I didn’t see a lot of positive change for the people there. And we did get a handle on crime under Giuliani. We positively took down crime substantially by different programs that were initiated under his tenure as mayor. The homicide rate went down, which directly affects the minority community there, less people being killed unnecessarily, and things like that. But for the peoples’ quality of life, I didn’t see much change. It’s haunting to me, because I met a lot of great people there, and I wish things would’ve gotten better for their lives. (Vic)

Notable in the above narrative is the observation that misdemeanor arrests and pedestrian stops were driven by a myopic focus on crime rates, and while crime – and violent crime in particular – did fall dramatically starting in the early 1990s, few other changes were made to improve quality of life, particularly in communities of color that were already otherwise marginalized.

Officers noted that even when crime had gone down, the pressure not only remained to demonstrate productivity, but also persisted through changes in leadership. As Stu put it, “even after Bratton left, Giuliani was still pushing this stuff forward. And Bloomberg picked up the baton right afterwards. You know, nobody to tell you to turn it off.” Sam likewise described the continued push to achieve ever-lower crime rates like this:

They didn’t know when to let up. In other words, they came to a point where crime was down dramatically, and instead of saying, “You guys are doing a great job. Let’s try to…” All they had to say is, “We’re not gonna compare numbers from
last year to this year.” And they didn’t do that. They would go, “Last year you made 100 stop and frisks. This year you only did 70. What’s going on?” And the answer is, there aren’t many guns on the street and crime is better. People in COMPSTAT didn’t accept that. They would look at it and say, “No, there’s still crime out there. You have to get your guys to do more stop and frisks.” (Sam)

In recognizing the limitations of these policing strategies, the overall stance of the officers I interviewed was that while programs like COMPSTAT undoubtedly improved police effectiveness, in combination with tactics like stop, question, and frisk, it was taken too far:

It’s not brain surgery, the Broken Windows theory or the COMPSTAT theory. It’s been enhanced too much. It’s what’s caused the stop, question, frisk (issue)... I look at that as your performance, if I start using those numbers, you start to lose the humanity of the street. Then you start to look at it as just as a bunch of figures. (Bob)

Broken Windows works. I’ve seen it work. But like everything else, you have to move with the times. We had 2,300 murders in 1994. Broken Windows is gonna work great. Fourteen hundred murders, Broken Windows is gonna work great. Two hundred and eighty murders, Broken Windows is not gonna work. (Stu)

Several officers acknowledged that, in neglecting to “move with the times” – to change course once crime had dropped – these shifts in policing practice continued to threaten already-fragile police-community relations. Unprompted, a majority of the officers interviewed referenced the case of Eric Garner, a high-profile incident involving the death of an unarmed civilian in Staten Island at the hands of an NYPD officer, as an illustrative example of the ways in which this loss of “humanity” in policing has harmed both police and the citizens they are meant to serve and protect. Garner’s death, which occurred only five months prior to the beginning of this study, occurred as a result of NYPD officers’ decision to stop, question, and subsequently restrain Garner on the suspicion that he was committing a misdemeanor offense, the sale of loose cigarettes – an offense for which he had previously been arrested multiple times.

The officers who referenced the Garner case were highly critical of Daniel Pantaleo, the main officer involved in the case, who subdued Garner through the use of a chokehold technique that is prohibited by NYPD policy. However, the officers who cited the Garner case did so to support the assertion that proactive policing is often dictated by political pressure both within and beyond the Department, and that this can produce negative outcomes both for individual citizens and for public perceptions of the police more broadly. The
following narratives are representative of what officers had to say about how the Garner case is directly linked to larger political pressures, and particularly to a profit motive:

People don’t realize how many tens of millions of dollars the state and city loses on tax revenue for cigarettes. Every friggin’ year, which means store owners are losing, which means they’re not hiring, which means there’s no tax revenue. The states aren’t getting the tax revenue. It’s not going into the budget for welfare and other work programs – and people don’t understand that. They all think it’s bullshit. Yeah, it is bullshit to the average observer, but the problem is so big that the states and the cities want this thing enforced. We were enforcing loose cigarettes back in ’92 when I was a rookie cop. This isn’t something new. We just didn’t start this... I mean, we’re talking one truckload of cigarettes is a million bucks. One truck. They pay like a seven cents tax in North Carolina. They bring them up here, and it’s a $5 tax... The state and the city is losing that five bucks. That’s why it gets enforced. You think the cops just said, “Hey, let’s go get the guy for loose cigarettes?” Who gives a fuck? (Stu)

What all of this really comes down to is that the police officers’ discretion has been curtailed. And a lot of people who don’t like police officers think that’s a good thing, but police officers make better decisions left to their own devices than when they’re being pressured to do something. I’m convinced that those police officers in the Garner case probably would have ignored him if they had not felt pressure from above. But I’m also sure that the same shopkeepers who were all so horrified after he died were the ones who were calling in the complaints, because either they were in their bodegas also selling loosies, and he was cutting into their income, or for the people who were put off by that, he was discouraging other business. So... they were all horrified by the outcome, but they were probably the ones who were calling in the complaints, ‘cause certainly the people buying the cigarettes weren’t complaining...Even stop and frisk, one could think, “I could get a gun off the street,” you know? Or, “I could pick up some heavy narcotics.” So there at least...But to a guy selling loose cigarettes who’s there every day that you’re there, I mean, you’re not gonna have guys working in plain clothes going, “Let’s go lock up guys selling loosies.” That’s coming from above. (Sarah)
These narratives reflect important themes that were consistent across interviews with officers. First, officers recognize that the low-level enforcement of “bullshit” offenses like selling loose cigarettes is neither readily understood by the public, nor is it what police officers typically consider to be worthwhile police work. The theme of discretion also reemerges here, as the officers believed that the limiting of discretion was a key precipitating factor in the Garner case. It is beyond the scope of the data gathered here to assess the veracity of this perception. However, it is notable that the officers interviewed here suggested that when discretion is curtailed, the likelihood of negative police-public interactions increases.9

**Discussion: Toward a contemporary understanding of police alienation**

It is well understood that community residents, particularly young men of color, often feel alienated from society due to their negative experiences with police, and that policing policies oriented toward order maintenance have especially contributed to this dynamic. What emerged in the narratives of the officers interviewed for this study is that the police officers carrying out these policies have experienced their own form of alienation. The officers interviewed for this study articulated – across the distinct eras explored here – the profit and political motives undergirding low-level enforcement, as well as the alienating effects of having to carry out these enforcement tactics. This, coupled with the reality that police officers are regularly tasked with confronting an impossible array of social issues (indeed, as Bob aptly described it, the police are “the catcher’s mitt of society”) contribute to a sense of alienation both from the larger policy mandates they are charged with carrying out, but also from the communities they police.

This is not a new concept, but rather one that I argue must be revived in contemporary examinations of policing. Alienation among police officers was a hot research topic in previous decades (Crank, Regoli, Hewitt, & Culbertson, 1995; Niederhoffer, 1967; Poole, Regoli, & Lotz, 1978; Regoli, Poole, & Hewitt, 1979) but has since largely disappeared. The focus of these studies was largely inward, examining the effects of professionalization efforts on officers’ levels of cynicism and commitment to the work. More recently, scholarship has focused on multiple facets of officer job satisfaction (Cooper et al., 2014; White et al., 2010), and importantly, how satisfaction varies by officer race/ethnicity and gender. Findings from this research – much of it conducted with the NYPD – indicate that officer alienation is now produced through the numbers-driven ways in which officer performance is assessed. Indeed, in their analysis of a survey of NYPD officers, Cooper et al. (2014) observed the deleterious effects of “the shift from a street-cop orientation to a micromanaged and numbers emphasized management-cop culture” which has led officers to “resent this aspect of the job, the support of their superiors, and the ‘real’ motives behind what they were told to do on a daily basis” (p. 54). This alienation in turn has a profound effect on police legitimacy and community relations.
The concept of worker alienation originates with Marx (1844), who argued that workers suffer from objective alienation because they have ownership of neither the products of their labor nor the means of production. In his seminal *Street-level Bureaucracy* (1980), Michael Lipsky theorizes the contributing factors to the alienation of front-line public service workers. Such workers become alienated, he argues, for four reasons: they work on only one part of the product of their work; they do not control the outcome of their work; they do not control the raw materials of their work; and they do not control the pace of their work (Lipsky, 1980, pp. 76-79).

Despite this alienation, according to Lipsky, the saving grace is that street-level workers exercise wide discretion – the freedom and flexibility to make decisions about how to do their jobs. In aggregate, these discretionary decisions constitute policy-making, and thus street-level workers wield an incredible amount of power. Yet as the narratives of the officers interviewed for this study reflect, recent changes in policing, particularly around data-driven accountability and the proactive enforcement of low-level laws that have a larger profit motive, have meant a reduction in the perceived or actual amount of discretion exercised by officers. If officers perceive that their discretion has been limited, alienation may be a result. Lipsky contends that, when alienated, workers are “more willing to accept organizational restructuring and less concerned with protecting clients’ interests and their own connection with clients. The more tenuous the relationship with clients, the less salient that relationship becomes, and the easier it is to transform the relationship further” (pp. 79-80). This dynamic is particularly evident throughout the narratives presented here, as officers were increasingly pushed to enforce the “low-hanging fruit” of low-level offenses. Officers noted that despite the numerous positive aspects of COMPSTAT, the pursuit of ever-lower crime statistics through the use of aggressively proactive tactics was pushed far beyond the point when such strategies yielded any benefits in terms of crime reduction – and importantly, to the detriment of police legitimacy and relationships with community members. Indeed, as Cowper (2000) observed, COMPSTAT produced, “a more combat enforcement oriented force, with a resulting increase in isolation from and hostility between police and citizens” (p. 237; see also: Eterno & Silverman, 2005).

Due to limitations in sampling, this study failed to uncover any variation in alienation by officer race/ethnicity or gender. There is some recent evidence (Cooper et al., 2014) to suggest that officers of color may feel more satisfied with their jobs than do White officers, and that Black and Latino officers feel particularly more satisfied with their ability to develop relationships with members of the communities they police. Cooper et al. (2014) speculate that this may be due to White officers possessing some “unfulfilled expectations of what the job would be” (p. 52). Future qualitative research should dig into how officer perceptions of low-level enforcement might vary by officer racial/ethnic and gender identities.
CONCLUSION

As White (2014) notes, although the NYPD is unique in many ways, much of its history, particularly its changes enacted in response to crises such as police corruption and soaring crime rates, is relevant to police departments across the country. Now-former Commissioner Bratton recently stated that the decline in the NYPD’s low-level enforcement activity over the past five years signifies the “peace dividends” associated with New York City’s historically low crime rates (Goodman, 2015). This phrase is an extension of the war metaphor that Manning (2001) observed – and that the officers interviewed for this project reiterated – as justification for the proactive policing tactics that have contributed to the straining of police-community relations in recent decades. The implication in this metaphor is that such dividends will disappear when crime rates go back up, and there is some indication that crime rates are doing just that, both in New York City and in some cities across the country (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016; NYPD, 2016). Yet there is ample scientific evidence suggesting that the proactive approaches favored in recent decades do far more harm than good: they do not substantially contribute to lower crime rates (Weisburd, Hinkle, Braga, & Wooditch, 2015), they impair police-community relations, and, as the data presented here suggest, they may contribute to a sense of alienation from what one of the officers interviewed for this project eloquently referred to as “the humanity of the street.” The analysis presented here should serve as a reminder of how we arrived at the present rift in police-community relations and a warning to not repeat past mistakes.

With crime potentially on the rise in some jurisdictions, now is the time to carefully examine the role we ask police officers to play in our society: the President’s Taskforce on 21st Century Policing (2015) has recently emphasized the need for law enforcement to “embrace a guardian – rather than a warrior–mindset” to build public trust and legitimacy (p. 11). Recent training efforts to build empathy and compassion among NYPD patrol officers who frequently encounter people with severe mental illnesses (Rodriguez, 2015) are promising and should be expanded and adapted for other common police-citizen encounters (see also: Birzer, 2008). Aside from the obvious potential benefits to citizens, the development of these interpersonal skills may serve to bolster officers’ sense of agency and discretion, and result in reduced alienation. Furthermore, as the narratives of the officers interviewed for this project reflect, so much of what has contributed to the current frayed state of police-community relations can be traced back to the pursuit of ever-lower crime rates, largely by placing pressure on patrol officers to engage in the proactive policing strategies of pedestrian stops. Another promising direction forward may be to integrate indicators of police-community relations into COMPSTAT measures (Willis, Mastrofski, & Kochel, 2010). Future research should continue to carefully examine how the quality rather than the quantity of police-citizen encounters can be improved and properly measured.
REFERENCES


ENDNOTES

1. In New York City, C-summonses are issued by law enforcement agents (most often, but not exclusively, NYPD officers) for certain violations of the city’s administrative code, health code, or New York State penal law. Data on C-summonses prior to 2003 have been difficult to obtain, as Harry Levine discusses in his recent testimony to the New York City Council on the City’s summons courts (2014). Using New York City Criminal Court annual reports, Levine estimates that in 1993, the number of C-summonses issued that year (approximately 160,000) was similar to the number of misdemeanor arrests and felony arrests for that year. Over the next two decades, C-summonses nearly quadrupled, peaking in 2006 at 607,195 before declining modestly in recent years. To put this volume into context, misdemeanor arrests nearly doubled during this period, peaking in 2010 at 249,641. It is important to note that, unlike for arrests, reliable race data are not available for any years for C-summonses (Chauhan et al., 2015).

3. Longitudinal data prior to 1990 on NYPD diversity are unavailable (see Reaves & Hickman, 2001); Guajardo (2014) examines more recent trends showing increased diversity from 2000 to 2012 despite downsizing.

4. Several reasons have been cited for recent setbacks in efforts to bolster police force diversity: the disproportionate proliferation of criminal records among people of color; administrative barriers in the application process; and strained relationships between the police and communities of color. Commissioner Bratton recently acknowledged that the prevalence of criminal records among Black NYPD applicants has limited the Department’s ability to recruit and maintain a diverse force (Gambino, 2015; Swarns, 2015). It should also be noted that some scholars have recently argued that diversifying police forces aren’t a quick fix for repairing police-community relations, particularly in under-resourced departments and high-crime communities with extensive histories of unmet safety issues and police misconduct (Gau & Brunson, 2015[2015 not in refs; the year there is 2010]).

5. I followed this process despite not having the luxury of also conducting participant observation with interviewees for this project, which I have learned in previous research far more expediently facilitates the development of rapport. Thus, I only achieved the first three stages of Spradley’s model, ending with interviewee cooperation.

6. It is important to note that preventing and addressing police corruption was a focal point for the Department during the 1970s and into the 1980s; all officers interviewed for this project who were active during these years emphasized this point. As Sarah put it, “the joke sort of used to be that for a lot of bosses, the best police officer was the one who did nothing, because if you did nothing, you couldn't get in trouble.” In 1973, the *Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption* suggested that as many as half of all NYPD officers were involved in corruption in some form (Brazelle, 1973; see also: White, 2014). Sam, whose time on the force spanned over three decades starting in the late 1960s, recalled an instance as a rookie in which he issued parking tickets on cars owned by a the manager of a gas station in his precinct, only to later be chastised and relocated by his supervisor, who was involved in corruption with the gas station manager. Officers interviewed for this project who were active during this era suggested that *Knapp* and similar investigations not only functioned as a distraction from crime prevention, but also, in shining a light on corruption, may have paved the way for subsequent shifts toward accountability and data-driven policing.

7. Several officers referenced the high-profile case of John Royster as a justification for the increase in misdemeanor arrests (Perez-Pena, 1996; Sullivan, 1998). Royster was ultimately convicted in 1998 of murdering one woman and assaulting two other women. Yet prior to these offenses, he had no criminal record. Police were only able to apprehend him be-
cause he was arrested and fingerprinted for jumping a subway turnstile, and his fingerprints matched those found at one of the crime scenes.

8. At the time of his death on July 17, 2014, Garner was likely suspected of violating TAX 1814, a New York State law governing the sale of tobacco product, and/or AC 11-4012(b), a New York City Administrative Code law regarding cigarette taxes.

9. It is worth noting here that amidst current discussions about changing how low-level offenses are processed in New York City, the discourse largely revolves around offenses such as the public consumption of alcohol and public urination – offenses that are not directly tied to lucrative tax income for the city and the state; the sale of loose cigarettes is notably absent (see, for examples: Flegenheimer & Goodman, 2015; Goodman, 2016; O’Brien & Shallwani, 2015).

10. See also: Tummers’ (2012) examination of front-line workers’ orientation toward policy and the concept of policy alienation, which is typified by policy powerlessness and policy meaninglessness.

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Book Review:
Forrest Stuart, *Down, Out, and Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row*

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Aggressive crime control strategies such as stop-and-frisk and poverty governance bring forth contentious debates on their impact. Proponents argue the policies are needed to combat crime, while opponents contend they are oppressive, harmful, and discriminatory. It is rare in these discussions that the perspectives of the control agents and the public impacted by the policies are simultaneously engaged. Forrest Stuart in his book *Down, Out, and Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row* fills this gap using ethnographic and historical data to depict how poverty governance impacts the everyday interactions of Skid Row residents, police, and community organizations. Stuart’s five years observing police officers, residents, and community organizations in Los Angeles’ Skid Row illuminates how the police are an effective cultural agent, able to shape and reshape the contexts and collective strategies in neighborhoods where some of America’s most disadvantaged live. Stuart organizes his work into two parts and five chapters.

Part One focuses on the history of policing in Skid Row and the officers tasked with controlling crime. In Chapter One, Stuart traces the historical conditions in Skid Row and how forms of policing have changed beginning in the 1850’s and ending with the initiation of the Safer Cities Initiative, a zero-tolerance model of policing. Stuart argues Skid Row policing strategies evolved in relation to shifts in welfare governance. At a time when welfare programming is at its strongest, police are less intrusive into resident’s lives, tending to yield the role of support to other state agencies. On the other hand, when welfare programming is low, police and non-profit organizations become more involved in residents’ lives. This form of involved policing is referred to as therapeutic policing, which is an outreach that works to convert residents back into conventional society by encouraging productivity and responsible behaviors upon them through mandated rehabilitation and strict adherence to rules. Therapeutic policing is exacerbated by the inclusion of private welfare organizations, such as the Skid Row mega-shelters, that play an important role in promoting zero-tolerance models of policing that push individuals into seeking help. In Chapter Two, Stuart depicts how therapeutic policing shapes police officers’ understandings of and efforts in
Skid Row. Police officers adopt the logic of therapeutic policing and believe residents who take advantage of social services can turn their lives around and become productive members of society. Those residents who refuse to seek help are subjected to increased criminalization where officers will arrest or cite a resident and offer them the choice of going to jail or enrolling at one of the three mega-shelters in order to receive social services. The police in Skid Row use zero-tolerance approaches not for punishment, but to guide residents to more responsible choices.

Part Two shifts from understanding the purposes and practices of therapeutic policing to its impact on residents’ relationships with each other. In Chapter Three Stuart introduces the reader to the term “copwise,” a cognitive schema residents develop to avoid unwanted police contact. Stuart spent time with a group of men, led by “Steel,” who work out together as a means of insulating themselves from threats to sobriety. The men showed Stuart how residents of Skid Row vary their schedule to avoid being on the streets when the police are present in order to limit possible interactions with them. Similarly, the work-out group is careful with whom they interact in order to avoid drawing extra attention to themselves, knowing that when trouble occurs the police subject everyone in the vicinity to increased control. Yet, these evasive tactics only work for so long, before they are placed back under the blanket of suspicion and the group was fractured. Chapter Four reveals the copwise strategies of street vendors. While selling their products, the street vendors are adamant that no illegal activities be completed near them. The vendors commonly interrupt illegal behavior and force the subjects to move elsewhere. Illegal, odd, or threatening activities are likely to draw police to the area, making the vendors more susceptible to arrests and citations. As a result, the vendors forcibly push away residents who are women, look well-off, or entertain illegal activities. The interaction between the vendors and the residents demonstrates how the vendors of Skid Row have taken up an informal social control of the area. The vendors’ informal social control only protects a small group of people while excluding others, resulting in greater exclusion and generating fear, anxiety, and hostility between residents undermining solidarity and breeding new forms of harm.

In Chapter Five, Stuart describes his involvement with the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN) and its Community Watch team, a grassroots organization attempting to combat aggressive police practices in Skid Row. LACAN maintains a different “neighborhood frame” than both Steel and the vendors. While Steel and the vendors view Skid Row mainly as a place of degradation, Community Watch perceives Skid Row as a legitimate neighborhood, filled with people who are being unfairly judged and harassed by police. LACAN confronts and is confronted by the police as they work to follow the police and record police interactions in hopes of achieving evidence that could help local residents in the courtroom, reveal the detri-
mental impact of therapeutic policing on Skid Row, and challenge forms of poverty governance.

Overall, Stuart does a great job examining the motives and impacts of therapeutic policing on Skid Row residents, demonstrating that police strategies reshape residents’ interactions as they become copwise, and thus limit the ability of residents to work together. Stuart’s analysis leads to the proposal of two alternatives to current forms of poverty governance, suggesting that the Housing First and Harm Reduction models would be more effective. As is the case with all ethnography, Stuart’s findings are not entirely generalizable to other locales; however, his analytic framework can be used to study the impact of therapeutic policing models and residents’ responses. *Down, Out, and Under Arrest* is a good resource for graduate or upper-level undergraduate students studying criminology, sociology, or ethnography or for graduate students specializing in urban housing, homelessness, poverty governance, and public policy.