

How Formerly Incarcerated Women Confront the Limits of Caring and the Burdens of Control Amid California's Carceral Realignment

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Abstract

The largest scale effort to reduce our reliance on incarceration is currently taking place in California. Drawing on in-depth interviews with formerly incarcerated women on two different forms of community supervision in one California county, this article makes two main contributions. First, I offer a conceptual framework for understanding how women experience the goals of community supervision. Because actual rehabilitation is often off-limits, I suggest that these institutional goals are organized around caring, control, and self-governance: Caring is exhibited by supervision officers in lieu of substantive assistance toward rehabilitation; control for the sake of public safety remains a key aim of community supervision; and self-governance is an unstated institutional goal through which women are forced to take on the invisible work of managing their own rehabilitation. Second, I assess how—if at all—California's decarceration effort has shifted institutional goals, and what this means for women. I argue that decarceration's continued emphasis on control for the sake of public safety impedes the transformative potential of efforts to restructure the crime-processing system.

Keywords

decarceration, parole and probation, women's incarceration and reentry, California's Public Safety Realignment

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When I was in prison, that's when I started rehabilitating, but it wasn't nothing that the prison did, it was what I did within myself. And it took me to be alone for two years in a cell with books and a TV to make me really cry and cleanse my soul and accept things. To just be like, ok, I gotta do this because nobody else is gonna do it for me and nobody else cares.

—Dawn (24, on California state parole)

Introduction

After decades of punitive policies which have earned the United States the ignominious distinction of incarcerating the largest number of people, at the second highest rate, compared with all other countries (Walmsley, 2016), the United States has tentatively entered a moment of “penal optimism” (Green, 2013, 2015). A promising array of reforms at federal, state, and local levels, aimed at both the “front” and “back” ends of the crime-processing system, are underway to scale back our reliance on incarceration. The largest state-level reform effort is unfolding in California, where the passage of the Public Safety Realignment legislation, coupled with the Supreme Court decision that spurred it, have been called “the most sweeping correctional experiment in recent history” (Petersilia, 2013, p. 4) and the harbinger of “the new common sense of high-crime societies” (Simon, 2014, p. 155). These grand descriptors hint at the transformative potential of this large-scale effort toward decarceration.

However, the shift away from incarceration remains precarious both nationally and in California (Cohen & Roeder, 2014; Tonry, 2014; Travis, 2014). Notably, the impetus to reduce incarceration rates has thus far been largely economic, and jurisdictions have done so reluctantly, if not outright involuntarily (Aviram, 2010; Cole, 2011; Gottschalk, 2015; Hallett, 2012). California in particular has enacted its changes unwillingly, after fighting them for more than a decade (Travis, 2014). An additional concern is that the reduction in imprisonment has been met not so much with a decrease in the overall scale and scope of the crime-processing system, but rather in a shifting of its form, primarily through the use of “alternatives to incarceration” administered locally.¹ For example, the centerpiece of California's carceral realignment is a new form of community supervision administered at the local county level rather than by the state.

Relatedly, as the data presented here suggest, the interventions that our newly found penal optimism expects will keep people out of prison continue to operate within resource deficient environments. Thus, now, as throughout recent decades, people ensnared in the crime-processing system must do the bulk of the work to both get out and stay out. For women, a wealth of recent scholarship has yielded mixed results on the efficacy of community supervision for enabling women to desist from crime and rebuild their lives (Morash, Kashy, Smith, & Cobbina, 2014; Opsal, 2014; Sered & Norton-Hawk, 2014; Stone, Morash, Goodson, Smith, & Cobbina, 2016; Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009).

This article examines women's experiences of being on two forms of community supervision under California's new regime. Drawing on in-depth interviews with formerly incarcerated women in one California county, I first offer a conceptual framework

for understanding how institutionally defined goals shape formerly incarcerated women's lives in the critical months postrelease. Building on other scholars' work in this vein, I suggest that these goals are best understood as being organized around "caring," "control," and "self-governance," and that these goals are gendered in specific ways. I then use this conceptual framework to show that what has been touted as a massive change has merely amounted to further devolution of the existing penal control framework. Caring is exhibited by some supervision officers in lieu of substantive assistance toward rehabilitation; control for the sake of public safety remains a key aim of community supervision; and self-governance is an unstated institutional goal through which women are expected to take responsibility for their own rehabilitation. I use this evidence to argue that Realignment's continued emphasis on public safety impedes its transformative potential to restructure the crime-processing system away from control and toward rehabilitation.

Caring and Control

The two competing and often contradictory goals of supervision are commonly understood to be the rehabilitation of crime-processed people and the maintenance of public safety—each of which may be differentially prioritized during various political eras (Simon, 1993). Some scholars have suggested that these goals are deliberately fractured: While the effort to ensure public safety relies heavily on risk management, rehabilitation necessitates attention to individual parolees' circumstances (Werth, 2011b; Lynch, 2000).

A more cynical vein of research has argued that the goal of rehabilitation has largely been cast aside for the sake of efficiency. The "new penology" framework contends that supervision is a managerial enterprise in which the poor, dangerous underclass of criminals is to be managed at the lowest possible cost, not transformed into worthy members of society (Simon, 1993). This perspective is in contrast to the "old" penology, which viewed individuals as potentially malleable and therefore worthy of both punishment and treatment (Lynch, 1998).

Rich ethnographic work in California parole offices² has documented the on-the-ground realities of this tension. Lynch (1998, 2000) finds that although California parole agents largely resist the trend toward managerialism and maintain rehabilitation as an ideal, the new twist is that only the individual parolee can make the change necessary to live a conforming, noncriminal life; little is to be done by agents toward this effort. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when, as Lynch notes, "[a]gents are given a social work directive without the resources to fulfill it" (Lynch, 2000, footnote 18, p. 62). More recently, Werth (2011a, 2011b, 2013) finds that rehabilitation as an ideal continues to exist, but that the actual work of doing so is almost completely outsourced to the people who are on supervision. For example, Werth observes that parole agents are rarely proactive in referring parolees to rehabilitative programming such as substance abuse treatment and, in some instances, even deny parolees' requests for assistance; parolees often must seek out help beyond parole on their own. Furthermore, the scant rehabilitative resources that are available are frequently employed as way of

controlling parolees (Werth, 2013). Thus, “rehabilitation as rhetoric” (Lynch, 2000) translates into supervision tactics such as the dishing out of “tough love” (Werth, 2013) to encourage parolees to rehabilitate themselves.

While rehabilitation has become elusive, control—the surveillance of individuals for the sake of public safety—has consistently remained both an explicit and implicit cornerstone of community supervision. The classification and management of risk is a relatively recent hallmark of this trend (Feeley & Simon, 1992; Simon, 1993). Critical scholars have detailed the shortcomings of these tools (Hannah-Moffat, 2009; Werth, 2013): The “needs” of crime-processed people have become code for “risk” in actuarial assessments, and “criminogenic” needs may not necessarily correspond to individuals’ self-defined needs. This avenue of research thus argues that risk management for the sake of control perpetuates the illusion that rehabilitation happens on supervision. There is also some evidence that supervision agents will prioritize control even when encouraged to focus on rehabilitation. Rudes (2012), conducting fieldwork during an earlier effort to prioritize rehabilitation on California parole prior to Realignment, finds that agents actively resisted this effort through the continued use of technical violations to reincarcerate their parolees, believing that such control strategies were more effective at ensuring public safety than rehabilitative alternatives.

What happens when rehabilitation does not or cannot happen, either because it may not be a departmental priority or because community supervision agents may not believe in it? This article offers an answer to this question through the lens of “caring”—demonstrating an investment in a client’s success and well-being—as an approach that workers may adopt in lieu of substantive rehabilitation. The perception that a supervision worker cares about one’s well-being may be a key factor not only in successful completion of supervision (Skeem, Eno Loudon, Polaschek, & Camp, 2007) but also in reclaiming one’s “conventional” or noncriminal identity (Pogrebin, Stretesky, Walker, & Opsal, 2015). For women, the adoption of a “supportive” relationship style may lead to positive outcomes such as lower anxiety and increased self-efficacy, including avoiding criminal behavior, especially for women categorized as “high risk”; conversely, a more punitive style of supervision is counterproductive, particularly for women at the lowest risk of recidivism (Morash et al., 2014; Stone et al., 2016).

Gendered Self-Governance

Community supervision constitutes a “no man’s land” (Mobley, 2012), a liminal status (Werth, 2011b) in which one is neither incapacitated nor free. The fundamental irony here is that people on supervision are constructed, through their history of poor choices, as being ill-equipped to self-govern and thus in need of supervision, yet demonstrating the ability to self-govern is essential to successfully completing supervision (Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009).

Postincarceration self-governance can be especially complex for women, who tend to have experienced greater economic disadvantage than men and are much more likely to be caring for children (Heilbrun et al., 2008). Sered and Norton-Hawk (2014) use the

term “institutional captives” (p. 13) to denote women whose lives are shaped by their entrapment in a circuit of emergency rooms, transitional housing programs, welfare offices, and other state agencies that claim to offer help. Despite cycling through this circuit, the vast majority of women remain in a marginalized caste typified by poor physical and emotional health, unstable housing, and limited income opportunities. Across these institutions, social policy that prioritizes self-governance—personal responsibility and independence from state assistance—sets women up to fail.

Scholars who have examined how neoliberalism has seeped into penal policy have argued that programming for crime-processed people utilizes techniques of “responsibilization” to get people to take on the work of addressing their own deficits (Donohue & Moore, 2009; Garland, 1996; Moore & Hirai, 2014; O’Malley, 1992). Responsibilization tactics are rooted in a broader governing-at-a-distance approach which includes or excludes people from society based on their ability to “conform to the ideal of the prudent, self-actualized, neoliberal self” (Moore & Hirai, 2014, p. 7). As Donohue and Moore (2009) note, responsibilization can happen in the subtlest of ways, such as how people are labeled: “Offenders” are objects of punishment, while “clients” are active participants who take responsibility for their reformation.

These tactics are particularly insidious when they involve normative definitions of gender: Women are associated with emotions, which are considered to be unpredictable and uncontrollable and thus in need of intervention, while men are associated with reason (Jaggard, 1992). In the supervision context, this comes at the expense of what both men and women actually need, which is assistance with rebuilding all facets of their lives (Wyse, 2013). Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat (2009) find that parole conditions seek to foster self-governance by employing conceptions of femininity focused on women’s “personal/emotional” issues and “dysfunctional relationships.” For example, the “criminogenic potential” (p. 542) of women’s intimate relationships means that they tend to be more heavily scrutinized than are men’s, particularly in the highly regulated spaces (e.g., transitional housing programs) at which women on parole often reside. Motherhood, likewise, is often viewed not as a positive social identity to motivate women in rebuilding their lives, but rather as a “risky site in need of regulation” (Opsal, 2014, p. 11; M. Brown & Bloom, 2009).

Thus, self-governance can be understood as an *unstated goal* guiding much of what happens within community supervision agencies, which are frequently unable to fully meet their stated goal of rehabilitation. As a result, supervised people must take on additional, and I argue often *invisible*, work. Dorothy Smith’s (1987) institutional ethnography has been shown to be useful for examining invisible punishment in postincarceration life (Welsh & Rajah, 2014). Institutional ethnography is rooted in a feminist critique of capitalism. The point of entry into this inquiry is through a generous definition of work (Smith, 1987). As DeVault (2006) explains,

the work involved could be part of a paid job; it might fall into the broader field of unpaid or invisible work, as so much of women’s work does; or it might comprise the activities of some “client” group. In any case, there is recognition that institutional ideologies typically acknowledge some kinds of work and not others. (p. 294)

The focus of the analysis presented here is on how the limitations of community supervision mean that women take on various forms of invisible work as they juggle being on community supervision alongside the many other tasks associated with postincarceration life. These are forms of labor above and beyond that which is conventionally expected of recently released individuals (e.g., obtaining housing, finding a job), and thus must be rendered visible.

The California Context

California has been compelled via court order and chronic budget deficits to carry out a massive reduction in its state prison population. The Public Safety Realignment Act, which is typically referred to as either Realignment or AB (Assembly Bill) 109, was passed in 2011 in the wake of *Brown v. Plata* earlier in the same year. In *Plata*, the Supreme Court determined that, due to rampant overcrowding, California state prisoners' lack of access to adequate health care violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment.³

Public Safety Realignment has made three notable changes to the way people convicted of low-level felony offenses are managed in California. Table 1 summarizes these changes. First, individuals newly convicted of “non-non-non” or “N3” offenses (nonviolent, nonserious, and non-high-risk sex offenses) are now handled by the counties rather than the state. In this way, Realignment is an example of what scholars have referred to as “carceral devolution”—the larger context for the responsabilizing techniques discussed earlier (Miller, 2014; see also: Abarbanel, McCray, Newhall, & Snyder, 2013). Second, people convicted of N3 offenses, who previously would have been sent to state prison and then released on state parole, now serve time in local jail and/or on Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS), which is administered by county probation departments.

A third change prompted by Realignment has varied at the county level. State parole agents are sworn peace officers, meaning they may carry firearms in the field.⁴ In contrast, California's 58 counties differ on whether and how many of their probation officers are armed.⁵ Thus, in counties where probation officers are not armed, compliance checks, which are regularly carried out by teams of parole agents to verify parolees' whereabouts,⁶ have been assigned to local law enforcement agencies for individuals on PRCS. There were also political reasons for this policy—namely, that despite (and because of) opposition by local politicians, Realignment needed to succeed and not be sidetracked by a rash of high-profile crimes committed by people on PRCS.^{7,8}

Realignment's Impact on Women

Realignment stands to greatly affect women, who are convicted of a substantial portion of the low-level offenses which Realignment and similar reforms are meant to target (Bloom, 2015; Owen & Mobley, 2012). For several decades, women have remained the smaller yet fastest growing segment of the incarcerated population

Table 1. Before and After Public Safety Realignment.

	Before	After
For people convicted of “N3” offenses	Time served in state prison 3 years of mandatory state parole Compliance checks conducted by parole agents	Time served in local jail and/or up to 1 year on county PRCS under county probation Compliance checks conducted by local law enforcement
For state parole agents	Revocable parole Mixed caseloads of people convicted of both N3 and serious/violent offenses	Parole revocation is restricted; revocations handled locally Caseloads of people convicted of serious/violent offenses Layoffs/downsizing upon AB 109 implementation
For county probation officers	Traditional probation model and caseloads	Traditional probation still exists PRCS for up to 1 year for people convicted of N3 offenses Large-scale hiring of new officers, most from juvenile supervision

Note. PRCS = Post-Release Community Supervision; AB = Assembly Bill.

(Mauer, 2013), and nationally, women now comprise 25% of people on probation and 12% of the parole population (Herberman & Bonczar, 2014). In post-Realignment California, the effect on women can be seen in trends in prison and jail admissions: Women’s prison admissions fell by 60% in the first year post-Realignment, while men’s prison admissions declined by only 31% (Bloom, 2015; Males & Buchen, 2013). Meanwhile, the average daily jail population of women in California increased by 23.7% between 2010 and 2013 (Bloom, 2015).

Parole Downsizing

There has long been consensus that California’s parole system is in dire need of an overhaul (Grattet, Petersilia, Lin, & Beckman, 2009; Lynch, 1998, 2000; Simon, 1993). Yet, under Realignment, change has thus far mostly meant downsizing. Despite being represented by what is widely touted as the most powerful correctional union in the country, parole has experienced massive layoffs.^{9,10} In the restructuring that accompanied Realignment, parole implemented a “53 to 1” system intended to reduce caseloads to facilitate “a move away from a ‘surveillance’ model . . . towards an approach that emphasize[s] both the quality . . . and the engagement of the parolee in the supervision process” (Turner, Braithwaite, Tartar, Omori, & Kearney, 2011, p. 1). However, caseload reductions remain an empty promise: 3 years post-Realignment, one estimate suggested that more than 60% of agents statewide still had caseloads that exceeded the new caseload maximum (Flores, 2014; Parole Agents Association of California [PAAC], 2014).¹¹ Some laid-off parole agents have been hired by probation, but the

ability of agents to adjust their approach to align with probation's mission has been debated. Parole agents, who have been steeped in a culture of law enforcement and who are accustomed to being armed in the field, may have a difficult time adjusting to the culture of probation (Petersilia, 2013). Indeed, in interviewing agents for this project, I discovered that a defining feature of California parole is that the path to becoming a parole agent is typically by way of working as a Correctional Officer (CO) in a juvenile or adult state custodial facility. This is unusual: In most other states, the paths to working in prison versus parole are completely separate.¹²

Probation Upsizing

Meanwhile, in counties across the state, probation departments have been allocated primary responsibility for, and therefore, the resources associated with the implementation of PRCS (Lin & Petersilia, 2014; see also: Bird & Hayes, 2013). This transition has not been smooth. The implementation of PRCS had to happen quite rapidly: Counties only had about 6 months to prepare between the passage of Realignment legislation in mid-March of 2011 and its implementation on October 1 of the same year. As a result, counties scrambled to hire additional officers to staff the new program, often bringing officers over from juvenile probation. PRCS caseloads initially skyrocketed as probation departments struggled to adjust (Petersilia, 2013).¹³

Prior to Realignment, people convicted of "N3" offenses would spend 3 years on mandatory state parole postprison; now, with no violations, they may spend between 6 months and 1 year on PRCS (Chief Probation Officers of California [CPOC], 2014). Although shorter, PRCS is intended to be more comprehensive than traditional probation: "just showing up" to meetings with one's probation officer is only "one part of the puzzle" (CPOC, 2012, p. 3). Officers are trained to use a cognitive-based curriculum such as "Courage to Change" (Change Companies, 2014a) to encourage rehabilitation through techniques such as "interactive journaling." Such approaches, very much in the responsabilization tradition, help probationers to identify their "individual problem areas."¹⁴

Despite these distinctions, PRCS is *not* different from parole in the extent to which it emphasizes public safety. Local law enforcement agencies are involved at multiple points in the PRCS process, a fact that shaped the experiences of the women in this study who were on PRCS. Although information-sharing among law enforcement and community supervision agencies is standard in most jurisdictions, the extent to which law enforcement has been integrated into PRCS signals Realignment's public safety priority (Lin & Petersilia, 2014; Petersilia, 2013).

Method

The data for this article are drawn from an ethnographic study of formerly incarcerated women, state parole agents, and County probation officers carrying PRCS caseloads in one large, densely populated California county. Fieldwork took place over the

Table 2. Demographics of Formerly Incarcerated Female Participants ($n = 24$).

	State parole ($n = 16$)	County PRCS ($n = 8$) ^a
Race/ethnicity	87.5% Black; 12.5% Latina	62.5% Black; 25% Latina; 12.5% White
Average age	36.5	35.5
Felony drug conviction ^b	37.5%	62.5%
Mothers ^c	31.2%	50%

Note. PRCS = Post-Release Community Supervision.

^aIf this study were to be conducted today, the proportion of women on PRCS would likely be higher, given what we know about the sorts of crimes for which women are often convicted. During the first year of Realignment, when recruitment for this study took place, the infrastructure for making housing referrals to programs like New Beginnings was not fully up and running, and thus women on parole may be overrepresented in the study sample.

^bI use this category as a rough proxy for substance abuse issues. Because I was interested in how women are categorized by institutions for processing purposes, I asked women whether they had a felony drug conviction rather than if they had a history of substance abuse. In California, at the time of this study, people convicted of a felony drug offense were banned for life from receiving food stamps. This ban was lifted in January 2015. A woman may have a drug felony conviction for selling rather than using drugs, which was the case for at least one woman in my sample (Alice).

^cFour women had custody of their children at the time of their participation in the study, four more were actively seeking custody of at least one child, and nine women were mothers of adult children (see: Welsh, 2015 for an in-depth look at variations among formerly incarcerated women's experiences with welfare). For the purpose of providing descriptive information here, I only include the former two categories—mothers of young children, whether or not they had custody of them at the time of the study.

course of a year and a half, beginning in the spring of 2012, approximately 6 months after Realignment went into effect.

I recruited women to participate in the study through one community-based, residential “sober living” program for formerly incarcerated women, which I pseudonymously refer to as New Beginnings. I selected New Beginnings because it provides temporary housing exclusively to women, and because it offers these services to women on both parole and PRCS, an important facet of this study given the organizational changes in California’s community supervision systems reviewed earlier. Specifically, I wanted to understand whether and how women’s experiences of being on PRCS might differ from that of being on conventional state parole.

Table 2 summarizes the demographic composition of the sample. I used a purposeful sampling approach to identify information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 1990). Through initial observations at New Beginnings, I identified women whose circumstances might require that they have extensive institutional contact (e.g., with the welfare office or family court). I then conducted in-depth interviews with these women ($n = 24$). The questions posed in the interviews focused on the various institutional contacts women might be making to uncover the sorts of invisible work the women were doing to rebuild their lives. At the end of each interview, I asked if I could accompany women as they did this work. I then conducted participant-observation with a subset of 10 of these women. Observations ranged in length from 2 to 8 hr in a day; in total, I conducted approximately 400 hr of observations.¹⁵ Although I initially

spent time observing women at the program, the bulk of fieldwork consisted of driving, accompanying, and, at times, helping women¹⁶ to do the institutional work of rebuilding one's life postincarceration, on what Sered and Norton-Hawk (2014) termed the "institutional circuit": looking for housing and employment, attending family court hearings, complying with supervision requirements, applying for public assistance, and a wide range of other tasks. I also sought to recruit a mixture of women who were on state parole and county PRCS to identify any variation in experience between these two groups. I was unable to consistently observe women's interactions with their supervision officers, and thus do not directly draw on observational data in this analysis. However, I did conduct in-depth interviews with parole agents and probation officers working in the same county in which the women resided, and officers' accounts were used to verify these findings.

I utilized Doucet and Mauthner's (2008) Listening Guide approach to analysis, in which interview transcripts and field notes are read repeatedly, each time through a different analytical lens. For example, one reading examines social and institutional relationships, and another focuses on "structured power relations and dominant ideologies that frame narratives" (pp. 405-406). These readings allow for reflection on microlevel narratives and their linkages with macrolevel policies and processes—a key focus of the analysis presented here. While this manual coding process was more time-consuming and labor-intensive than working in a software program, similar to what other qualitative researchers have noted (Bisaillon, 2012; Cobbina, 2009), I found that this approach afforded me a greater degree of immersion into the data. I then wrote memos to reflect on the coding process. As I honed the findings presented here, I continued to use memoing as an analytical tool. As Birks, Chapman, and Francis (2008) argue, memoing to extract meaning from data and to draw connections across concepts is an effective strategy in qualitative analysis for "making conceptual leaps from raw data to those abstractions that explain research phenomena" in the particular contexts in which they occur (p. 68).

Findings

What follows are illustrative examples of the ways in which women experience self-governance as an unstated goal communicated to them by their parole agents or probation officers. Women in turn take on additional forms of work to manage their own rehabilitation. Caring—when it is exhibited by officers—is valued by the women and at times bolsters their self-efficacy to do this invisible work. My analysis highlights differences in women's experiences on state parole and PRCS due to the organizational changes reviewed above, though in sum, women's experiences across these two supervision types are more similar than different. This indicates that little has actually changed for women on supervision post-Realignment. Demonstrating the ability to self-govern is essential for getting off community supervision, but supervision constrains efforts at doing so by creating barriers to women's own goals and by paradoxically punishing women who demonstrate self-governance by discharging them from supervision without the support necessary to obtain permanent housing and employment.

“You Have to Do Everything Yourself”: Caring and Invisible Work in the Shadow of Parole Downsizing

As reviewed above, in recent years, California parole has sought to revitalize its efforts toward rehabilitation, yet it also endured substantial downsizing as the state prepared for Realignment. Thus, the accounts of the women on parole who participated in this study reflect the realities of an agency in flux. The extent to which women perceived that their parole agents cared about their well-being varied. Some women attributed caring, or lack thereof, to a parole agent’s ability to calibrate their supervision style to each woman’s specific personality. Prior to her most recent incarceration, Abby, a self-described “White girl . . . [who] came from Mexicans,” had been “doing good”: she had been going to school to become a drug and alcohol counselor. When her father relapsed on drugs and stopped paying her tuition, Abby “just gave up . . . I was just like, man, fuck it, I’m gonna get high.” When Abby tested dirty on a drug test, she absconded from parole. She was subsequently picked up on a warrant and sent to an in-patient drug treatment program for 90 days. While Abby was in the drug treatment program, her parole agent gave her a stern talking-to in a style that Abby appreciated:

She was like a play mom to me. She would be like, “man, I’m gonna whoop your ass.” [Laughs]. Like, “Imma spank you girl, you been bad.” She would talk to me how she knew I needed to be talked to because authority figures with me don’t work. I’m gonna be like, “hold up! Who the fuck you think you are?! I don’t give a fuck if you’re my parole officer. I don’t even listen to my mom, alright?” But she talked to me like, “come on, what are you doing?” I could tell she really cared. (Abby, 27, on state parole)

Abby speaks fondly of her parole agent not because of any substantive assistance she was able to provide. Notably, Abby did not go to her agent for help when she had to stop going to school. Rather, Abby appreciates her agent’s ability to recognize that Abby does not respond well to conventional authority figures. The agent’s ability to talk to Abby “how she knew I needed to be talked to,” in a tough but parental way, communicates that her agent cares about her well-being.

Once Abby completed the in-patient program and came to New Beginnings, her parole agent commended her on this success: as Abby put it,

she’s like, “I’m so proud of you and I’m just really glad and happy for you . . . I just want you to get your shit straight,” you know what I mean? “Cause you’re a good kid. You got a good head on your shoulders. When you’re not high you’re an awesome person.”

What is striking in Abby’s description of her parole agent’s mode of caring is that the agent communicates investment in Abby’s success—getting her “shit straight”—but the agent speaks of this process as if only Abby can determine the outcome. There is nothing that the agent can or should do toward this effort, but her encouragement is still meaningful.

Dawn, a young Black woman who was eager to get off parole, similarly views her past and current parole agents positively, likely because *they* viewed *her* positively:

He's cool or whatever, but he's stern. "This is what you have to do, this is when you have to be here, and this is it." But if I needed something, he would go out of his way or try to get me the assistance to obtain what I need. I've noticed that about him . . . I think he knows that I'm trying, he wants me to succeed. I feel like if I was just a fuck-up and not reporting or not coming to test or just not doing anything, I think he would be really hard on me and be really on me, but since I've been out I haven't had no violations, I haven't came in contact with the police, I haven't gave no dirties, I was working—I was working 2 jobs at one time—I do everything I have to do. And one of my [previous] parole officers said, "it got to the point where I forgot to come visit you." So I think when you try, it's better. (Dawn, 24, state parole)

"Trying" on parole is more than compliance with parole's requirements: As Dawn observes, she is not only avoiding police contact and testing negative for drugs, but she has also demonstrated that she *wants* to succeed; in turn, she views her agent as wanting her to succeed.

Dawn perceives her current agent as caring not because of his demeanor—he is "cool but stern"—but rather through his willingness to help her. Dawn never got the chance to test this, as her agent submitted the paperwork for Dawn to be discharged from parole while she was still at New Beginnings, before she had found permanent housing. While she was excited to be getting off parole, Dawn had to scramble to find housing, as parole would no longer pay her rent at New Beginnings. After a months-long wait, Dawn had managed to get a Section 8 voucher through a special program for young adults. Yet, in one of many ironies of state assistance, although the voucher meant that Dawn's rent was heavily subsidized, the landlord of the apartment for which she was approved was able to require a market-rate security deposit of US\$2,000. Parole was unable to assist Dawn with the deposit, as she had already been discharged. After a lot of searching, she cobbled together enough for the deposit through donations from family members, friends, and local charities. Several other women in this study faced a similar struggle of being simultaneously rewarded for their display of self-governance by being discharged from supervision and punished by having to find financial assistance for housing elsewhere.

Because of parole's limited resources, agents often managed their parolees' expectations of help. Lucy's agent, for example, made it clear to Lucy from the beginning that there was very little she could do for her. As Lucy describes it,

She said she's mostly on people who aren't doing what you need to do. She said "you do everything." I bring my papers and schedule, I go to three meetings a week. She's always been kind. She's always just, "we don't have any resources but you're doing what you need to do about it . . ." They don't want nobody asking them nothing . . . I never had to ask her for anything because she let me know when I first met her . . . They used to give you a food voucher, bus tokens, and try to find you a place to stay if you don't have none. Now . . . all they can do is take your urine and tax you. They make sure you report and whatever condition you in, they'll try to help you if they can. (Lucy, 51, state parole)

Lucy's agent describes a classic example of what Lemert (1993) refers to as "bank-loading": She is most concerned about her parolees who "aren't doing what you need

to do” on parole and largely leaves the rest to their own devices. As Lemert has argued, regardless of institutional pronouncements of changes in community supervision, in the absence of adequate resources, those working on the front-lines will continue to manage their caseloads in this way (see also: Rudes, 2012). Because Lucy, who was in school to become a drug and alcohol counselor at the time I met her, is complying with the conditions of her parole, she summarizes parole’s role in her life as taking her urine for drug testing and “taxing” her by getting her to pay her court-ordered restitution. This is only positive in so much as minimal contact with her parole agent means Lucy is at reduced risk of incurring a parole violation.

The women in this study universally agreed that being on parole is more of a hindrance than a help. However, many women strategically identified ways in which it could be helpful. For example, at the time of our interview, Lucy was in the process of requesting to stay on parole (and therefore maintain funding for her temporary housing) for an additional month and a half, which she hoped would buy her more time to find permanent housing. In a similar way, Randi sought to leverage her mental health diagnosis to stay on parole longer:

I’m up for a review for parole, I tell them I don’t want to get off parole because my resources stop. I told my psychiatrist and she’s going to suggest that I stay on for a little while longer. It might be another year. I’m dealing with that. I don’t want him to come up and surprise me one day and say, “You off parole.” And then immediately, your resources just stop and you have to go other avenues . . . Why he ain’t checking on me? He’s supposed to come to the house. He said that he was coming out here and he ain’t made it out yet. That’ll be the second time he didn’t come. But, he’s a good parole officer. I don’t give him no problems. I’m not a problem child when I’m on parole. Just don’t take me off parole. (Randi, 57, state parole)

Randi longs for her agent to care about her for two reasons: one, the agent is a possible source of assistance, and two, she wants him to check on her so that she can show she is in compliance. However, her agent is likely preoccupied with the “riskier” parolees on his caseload. It is ironic that Randi wants to stay on parole longer than necessary, even though her rationale is understandable. This underscores Haney’s (1996) finding that, contrary to much feminist theorizing that state institutions try to foster and perpetuate dependency, in some situations, people will actually work to maintain a “dependent” relationship in direct opposition to institutional efforts to discontinue the relationship. For several other women in this study, parole was the one reliable avenue through which they could maintain funding for their temporary housing if they were persistent in asking for it. Lucy’s and Randi’s experiences thus show that navigating community supervision is more complex than simply being burdened by control.

Unlike Randi, Alice is fine with minimal interaction with her parole agent, though it comes at the expense of getting the assistance she needs:

Our conversations are brief. When she comes to visit me, she’s here for two minutes. That’s the way they all are, they don’t come in and sit down, you know . . . Like they come in, they say “how ya doing?” I say “ok.” “I’ll see ya later.” “See ya next month,

bye.” So, it’s like that . . . If I needed some real help, I don’t know what she—they—have because they don’t tell you anything . . . The reason I don’t think I could go to her for help is I can’t never catch up with her. Do you see what I’m saying? First you have to be accessible. I’m always leaving her messages. Actually, I don’t want to spend a lot of time with police, for real. I had enough of them. So, I’m cool. You have to do everything yourself. (Alice, 55, state parole)

At the time I first met Alice, she had been putting the entire amount of aid she could receive through the county General Assistance (GA) program toward her rent at New Beginnings. It was not until Dawn, her roommate at the time, told her that she could request that parole subsidize her temporary housing through a program for people convicted of drug-related offenses that Alice asked her parole agent to enroll her for this assistance. This enabled Alice to use her GA money to start saving for an apartment, as well as to purchase a printer for her resume and job applications. Alice is understandably upset that her parole agent did not tell her about this funding. Despite this frustration, Alice would rather have to do everything herself because she equates interactions with parole with the police, whom she’s “had enough of.”

The accounts of women on parole presented here highlight the various invisible forms of work women do to obtain the resources necessary to rebuild their lives postin-carceration. This work must be done in spite of parole’s recent efforts to emphasize rehabilitation, and may at least partially be attributed to the shifting of resources precipitated by Realignment. Despite these shortcomings, women whose agents adopted a caring posture found this to be helpful, even when substantive assistance was in short supply. In this way, these data contribute a deeper understanding of how people experience parole: Being on supervision is not just about surveillance, which was indeed described in abundance by the women; it is also about effectively leveraging whatever meager help is available both within and beyond parole.

Caring and Invisible Work Under the Spotlight of PRCS

In contrast to women’s experiences on parole, the women at New Beginnings who were on PRCS had consistently positive things to say about their probation officers. The data presented in this section demonstrate how these women articulate the caring approaches of their officers. Women described these sentiments despite officers’ inability to provide substantive assistance, which again forced women to take on the additional work of managing their own rehabilitation.

Women’s positive views of their officers may be attributable to a few factors. Perhaps most notable is the pressure that has been placed on county probation departments to ensure that PRCS is a success. As Joan Petersilia (2013), who has led efforts to track Realignment’s progress in spite of the fact that no provision was made for evaluation funding in the Realignment legislation, has observed, “probation is, in essence, the epicenter of Realignment, burdened with the massive responsibility of determining how best to change offender behavior” (p. 7). It is possible that women’s positive perceptions of their probation officers may also be due to officers being less

steeped in a law enforcement approach than parole agents. The following two narratives are representative of what women had to say about their officers:

She always returns my calls when I call her. She does her job. She's always there to answer the phone . . . she's efficient, you know what I'm saying? She doesn't seem like the type that's trying to lock you back up. She wants to see you doing something and get out. I just feel like she's encouraging. It's just the vibes I get off her . . . She was like, you only have to take one bus—lemme tell you the easiest way to get here even with your children . . . She's just very understanding. I might call and reschedule. She's willing to work with me. You know, she's not tripping. As long as she sees I'm doing something positive, she's not gonna mash on me. (Jane, mid-30s, PRCS)

My probation officer's main concern is me going to do the surgery and get my leg repaired. He is very nice. He's very concerned about me. He's just been there for me. When I go and see him, he talks to me straight out and don't sugarcoat it or nothing like that . . . I don't do testing, because they got me on heavy drugs. They got me on morphine for my leg cause my leg is that bad. (Reggie, 54, on PRCS)

Jane, who cycled in and out of prison in multiple states before getting sober in California, notes that her officer treated her quite differently than she expected based on her past experiences. Jane is touched that her officer wanted to make sure she knew how to get to the office by bus and is particularly surprised that the officer was “willing to work with me”—specifically, that she made allowances for the fact that Jane has two young children. In a similar way, Reggie describes her officer as being genuinely concerned about her, and demonstrating this concern by tailoring his supervision of her to accommodate her issues. Reggie had been confined to a wheelchair for her last 2 years in prison because of a botched knee replacement surgery she had while in prison, and at the time of our interview, she was still awaiting another surgery to correct the previous one. While this sort of caring was experienced by only a few of the women on parole who participated in this study, it was consistently noted by all of the women on PRCS. This may be due in part to parole's severe resource deficiency at the time this study was conducted, but it may also be due to the difference in officer orientation noted previously.

However, women's positive relationships with their probation officers were of limited help. When Jane found permanent housing for her family, PRCS was unable to assist her with her move-in costs. This led Jane to consider selling her WIC benefits (Women, Infants, and Children federal food aid) to cover the deposit, which is illegal. Jessie, who was seeking to regain custody of her son, endured an arduous process to transfer the services she needed to a location closer to New Beginnings. A promising development under Realignment has been the establishment in many counties of “one-stop” service centers where people on PRCS can obtain multiple services in one location (Petersilia, 2013). However, affordable and reliable transportation is often a barrier to accessing such services (Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst, & Bratton, 2011). In Jessie's case, the program she was assigned to by PRCS was only about 8 miles away from New Beginnings, but she had to take two buses and a train to get there, at a cost

of about US\$6 each day. This was in addition to the parenting classes and drug treatment meetings she was attending elsewhere:

I was like, "I can't do this every day." And then guy was trying to scare me and telling me, "well, I'll call your probation officer." And I was like, "fine, I'll call her for you." But I told him I can't do this. I told him it's overwhelming for me to have to do my classes where I'm doing 'em and then come here and do other things with you guys. And spend hours with you guys. I told him I can't do it. And I'm gonna be starting school soon. I told him it's not possible. And he was trying to make me. "Well you have to do it by law." I was like, well I'm in another program and I'm doing it there. Why can't I just get a transfer? It took so much. It took me like 2 weeks, I had to keep on going back over there to finally get him to transfer me over here. (Jessie, 27, PRCS)

When Jessie asked her probation officer if she could transfer her case to a location closer to where she was living, her officer told her that there was nothing that she could do, but that Jessie had her permission to request the transfer on her own. The fundamental irony in both Jane's and Jessie's experiences is that they have to manage their own rehabilitation; there is little that probation officers can do beyond ensuring compliance with PRCS requirements. In contrast to parole, for PRCS, this barrier appears to be more structural than cultural: Jane's officer seems to genuinely care about her well-being, but cannot assist her with housing; Jessie's probation officer is "up front" and "understanding," but cannot transfer Jessie's services to a different program even though it would facilitate Jessie's ability to achieve her primary goal, to reunite with her son. Variations on this theme were evident in the experiences of all other women I spoke to on PRCS.

Managing the Burden of Control on PRCS

As noted earlier, in counties where probation officers are not armed, "compliance checks" to verify that people on PRCS are living at the addresses to which they were released have been assigned to local law enforcement agencies. As Petersilia (2013) notes, "officials throughout the state agree that probation was not immediately ready to supervise a more difficult population" (p. 65). Thus, as local police departments have been forced to "pick up the slack" while probation departments train their personnel and bring on more armed officers, it has imposed a substantial drain on police resources (Petersilia, 2013). For the women in this study who were on PRCS, police-conducted compliance checks were not only unexpectedly jarring, but they also forced women to take on the additional work of reconciling what this police contact meant for their community supervision status. During the period in which I conducted fieldwork at New Beginnings, the police attempted or completed compliance checks on all eight of the women in my sample who were on PRCS.¹⁷ Rowena describes the compliance check process like this:

They get a list and your name is on the list and they come out. And my address been on there. I told 'em, when I first came home, I paroled to [inpatient drug treatment program]. So my mom's address was never on an AB 109 list. But they started going to my mom's

house, checking my mom's house and my mom told 'em "she doesn't live here." So they harassed her for a while and then they stopped when she went down to the police station and complained . . .

They came, they searched the house. Tore the house up. They had first tore up the front part of the house and me and Sabrina were in the back. And we didn't even know they were in here. So when they kicked the door it was like, "what are ya'll!?" We were still asleep. And they shined the light on Sabrina and she told 'em that she was a parolee. And she told 'em her name and he looked over at me and he said "they told us nobody was back here, what's your name?" I said I'm Rowena. He said "oh, you're the one we're looking for." "I been here all the time, why would you pick 6 o'clock in the morning to come over here and kick a door in?"

So I told 'em, "well, I need to get up." He said, "well get up then." And I'm like, "ok but I need ya'll to step out so I can get up." They stood there. So I just went on and got up, whatever, just whatever. And they stood there while I put my pajamas on and walked into the living room. It was four police officers and one probation officer. And my thing is, if you're looking for females why don't you have female officers, when you're coming into a female facility? So if you're looking for females, why is it all men and not no women? (Rowena, mid-50s, PRCS)

It is important to note that Rowena was regularly meeting with her probation officer and otherwise complying with the conditions of her supervision. Given that people's encounters with the police are typically in the context of crime prevention or investigation, Rowena struggled to make sense of why the police were looking for her *after* her release from incarceration. Then there is the manner in which the check unfolds, which is rooted in police procedures and training: two or more cars containing four or more police officers and/or armed probation officers park in front of the individual's residence. The individual is handcuffed outside of her residence and questioned by a pair of officers while the other officers search the premises, flipping over mattresses and emptying dresser drawers. For Rowena and the other women on PRCS at New Beginnings, this meant that their neighbors now knew that they have some sort of involvement with the police, perpetuating the stigma of being formerly incarcerated. For women with young children, this practice was especially concerning. Jane, for example, expressed a concern that the police would "handcuff me in front of my children and go in and destroy my room looking for guns and weapons." This fear was compounded by the image described by Rowena of male officers barging into a home for women, often very early in the morning.¹⁸

Women on PRCS thus took on the work of navigating the tension between these encounters with police and making sure they were in compliance with their probation officers. Zara called her probation officer after a compliance check in which an armed probation officer came to New Beginnings looking for her, accompanied by several police officers. Zara "let her [probation officer] know my words that I exchanged with him 'cause I told him I felt like he was a bully. [Laughs]. He showed up there and he was trying to be very—I felt—very intimidating." It is notable that Zara trusts her

probation officer enough not only to tell her about this encounter but also to complain to her about the interaction. Rowena, likewise, calls her probation officer immediately after the check to tell her what happened. In doing so, Rowena learns that her probation officer views these checks as separate from how she supervises Rowena: “she was like, ‘as long as you was in compliance don’t worry about it. They gonna do what they do.’”

Although police and probation officers are part of the same criminal justice apparatus, Rowena’s and Zara’s narratives indicate how they view the differences between their own probation officers’ approach, which they understand as being geared more toward making sure they succeed, and that of armed probation officers and police officers, whom they perceive as unnecessarily intimidating. This is in contrast to Alice, who was on parole and equated her parole agent with the police. Arguably, Rowena’s and Zara’s experiences are by design: People on PRCS are considered to be dangerous and in need of law enforcement’s heavy-handed approach. However, the use of police under Realignment has impaired proactive and community policing efforts by diverting police resources (Petersilia, 2013). The experiences of the women in this study underscore this concern and raise questions about the longer term implications of involving the police in community supervision in this way.

Conclusion

The analysis presented here shows that supervision’s unmet goal of rehabilitation and the unstated goal of self-governance together push agents and officers to demonstrate caring in lieu of substantive assistance toward rehabilitation, while forcing supervised women to take on a range of invisible tasks above and beyond the rehabilitative work expected of them. This finding suggests that little has actually changed amid what has been touted as a massive transformation in the way California manages people convicted of less-serious offenses: women’s experiences of state parole and county PRCS were more similar than different.

A noteworthy exception to this is the extent to which women believed their agents and officers cared about their well-being. The women on PRCS consistently expressed a belief that their probation officers cared about them, while caring was much more unevenly experienced by women on parole. That the women in this study valued when their agents and officers cared about their success confirms recent scholarship on the importance of the “therapeutic alliance” in building women’s postincarceration self-efficacy (Kennealy, Skeem, Manchak, & Eno Loudon, 2012; Morash et al., 2014; Skeem et al., 2007), and may indicate that PRCS has the potential to be more successful than state parole in reducing recidivism for some women. Given that previous research has revealed the isolating and gendered effects of postprison social control tactics (Severance, 2004; Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat, 2009), the importance of caring cannot be overstated. Future research should further identify the precise mechanisms through which caring is effectively communicated, how caring can bolster self-efficacy, and how these mechanisms are gendered.

Yet caring alone is insufficient for women to surmount the many institutionally constructed barriers that stand between them and rebuilding their lives. Women’s

experiences of these barriers were largely consistent across both forms of supervision examined here and are reflective of a profound disjuncture between how supervision goals are publicly articulated and how they are actually carried out. While supervision agencies have reclaimed rehabilitation as a goal, supervision continues to “contradict with the demands of everyday life” (Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009, p. 548). Furthermore, through the unstated goal of fostering self-governance, supervision forces women to take on various forms of invisible work which cumulatively hinder their ability to manage their own rehabilitation. For the women in this study, this invisible work included the following: advocating for oneself to stay on supervision longer, despite all its hassles, to maintain temporary housing; identifying parole-sponsored assistance programs without the help of one’s parole agent; hustling to cobble together funds for housing after being discharged from supervision for doing well; struggling to relocate rehabilitative services to fit with the demands of family reunification; and, for the women on PRCS, managing encounters with the police.

The women in this study experienced, as Moore and Hirai (2014) observe in their study of Canadian drug court participants, “marginalization which comes as both a direct result of the paradox of responsabilization as well as the harsh reality that it takes much more than a willingness to take care of one’s self to extract one’s self from the margins” (pp. 13-14). The invisible forms of work undertaken by the women in this study point to the need for supervision agencies to leverage resources to facilitate a seamless transition not just from incarceration to the outside but also from the liminal state of being on supervision—with its connection to resources, however meager—to being off supervision. The stakes are especially high for women in this liminal state, as women are at higher risk of homelessness (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010; Mallik-Kane & Visser, 2008), tend to have fewer job prospects than men (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999), and far more often engage in the difficult task of reuniting with children (M. Brown & Bloom, 2009; Opsal, 2011). This study highlights how supervision often works at cross-purposes to women’s needs, especially women who are trying to reunite with and care for children.

As Opsal (2014) has argued, supervision agencies must make an earnest effort to see women’s goals as *opportunities* instead of risk to be managed. This is important across all agencies, but especially urgent for PRCS, which we know will have women as a substantial proportion of its cases. Demonstrating the ability to self-govern is essential for getting off supervision, but institutions constrain women’s efforts at doing so by creating additional barriers to women’s own goals, and by paradoxically punishing women who demonstrate self-governance by discharging them from supervision without the support necessary to obtain permanent housing and employment. Furthermore, in California as well as in other jurisdictions looking to reduce their prison populations, the use of police to monitor people on supervision and to thereby project an image of public safety should be reconsidered, not only for the stigmatizing effect on crime-processed people (and the gendered nature of such effects) but also for the drain on police resources and the potentially harmful effect of such checks on community trust in the police.

The court ruling that spurred California’s Realignment was rooted in a concern about humane punishment and the restoration of dignity (Green, 2015; Simon, 2014).

Yet as Pettus-Davis and Epperson (2014) note, “if decarceration isn’t carried out thoughtfully, humanely, and justly, the United States could easily revert back to mass incarceration policies and practices” (p. 3). A more thoughtful and humane community supervision that facilitates rather than hinders and further stigmatizes women would pay serious attention to women’s own goals and offer support for achieving them.

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Notes

1. A notable exception to this has been California’s passage of Proposition 47, the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act, in 2014. Proposition 47 reclassified six drug and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. Some of the savings incurred will be put toward mental health and substance abuse treatment and truancy prevention programming, although the plan for doing so remains unclear as of this writing.
2. As much as possible, I integrate research on probation into my analysis. However, per Phelps (2015), I note that there is a relative abundance of scholarship on parole in contrast to probation (for notable exceptions, see Viglione, Rudes, & Taxman, 2015, as well as recent research that has examined both parole and probation, for example, Morash, Kashy, Smith, & Cobbina, 2014; Wyse, 2013). Phelps suggests that as incarceration rates soared in recent decades, probation “simply fell off the radar of scholars who were increasingly focused on the causes and consequences of mass imprisonment” (p. 28).
3. See Simon (2014) for a thorough examination of the *Plata* decision and its implications.
4. California Penal Code §830.5.
5. Per Assembly Bill (AB) 1968, passed unanimously in 2012, California probation officers may carry firearms, but the final decision is left up to the Chief Probation Officer of each county. The Chief Probation Officers of California opposed this bill. In some counties, including the one in which this study was conducted, most officers (except those who are part of “special enforcement” units) are not armed, but rather carry pepper spray. However, since Realignment took effect, at least five counties have armed their officers (Villacorte, 2013).

6. Parole agents informally refer to these checks as “sweeps,” and they often involve local law enforcement. However, according to Werth’s (2011a) ethnographic descriptions of these sweeps, the extent of the disruption seems to be considerably less than that of Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS) compliance checks.
7. Local politicians in many California counties heavily protested Realignment as a massive shift that was unfairly thrust upon them by the state. For example, Sharon Runner, a now-former Republican state senator from northern Los Angeles County, famously advised Californians to “get a gun, buy a dog, and put an alarm system in” (Lagos, 2011) when AB 109 was passed.
8. Recent studies conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) reveal that the fear of Realignment sparking a crime wave has proven to be largely unfounded (Lofstrom & Martin, 2014).
9. Evidence of this is available in the California Governor’s Budget summaries. From the 2010-2011 budget to the 2012-2013 budget, the allocation for Adult Corrections and Rehabilitation Operations—Security Overtime—a key correctional officers’ union negotiating point—was more cut in half, from 302 million in 2010-2011 to 115.8 million in 2011-2012, then was increased to US\$220 million for 2012-2013. Meanwhile, the allocation for Parole Operations—Adult Supervision sharply decreased over these 3 years, from US\$512.5 million in 2010-2011 to 275 million in 2012-2013 (E. Brown, 2012).
10. The California Correctional Peace Officers’ Association (CCPOA) has historically been instrumental in the massive growth of incarceration (Page, 2011). However, as incarceration began to fall out of favor, the CCPOA reversed course under new leadership. A signal of this change came in 2012, when CCPOA declined to oppose a ballot initiative to reform the Three Strikes law. In exchange for a new contract, the CCPOA agreed to support Realignment (Page, 2013).
11. Of the small sample of agents interviewed for this project in the fall of 2013, none reported even coming close to reaching the 53-case maximum, and several reported that their caseloads had recently been as high as 110.
12. This is consistent with what other scholars of California parole have noted (Grattet et al., 2008; Werth, 2013).
13. Petersilia (2014) estimates that in some counties most affected by Realignment, caseloads were around 72 offenders to one PRCS officer.
14. These problems fall within the “Big Six” criminogenic need domains: antisocial values, criminal personality, low self-control, criminal peers, dysfunctional family ties, and substance abuse (Change Companies, 2014b).
15. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 min, and each woman was compensated US\$40 for participating in an interview. This amount is roughly consistent with what other researchers doing similar work have provided recently: Cobbina (2009) and Heidemann (2013) each provided US\$30 interview incentives to their formerly incarcerated participants. The women who participated in the observational component of this study also received non-cash compensation during observations, such as lunch, in addition to transportation to and from the observation sites.
16. I shared with women that I had training as a social worker and that I was willing to help them in any way I could. Several of the women were immediately accepting of me, while others warmed up to me as soon as they realized I was willing and able to not only drive them to their various appointments (a relative luxury at New Beginnings) but also to sit with them during these appointments and offer support.

17. It is important to note here that throughout my time at New Beginnings, I neither witnessed nor heard mention of parole agents doing analogous searches of any of the women who were on parole.
18. Later in our interview, Rowena clarified that she likes to sleep in the nude, which made her early morning encounter with male police officers all the more upsetting. It is worth noting that the gender demographics of the police officers Rowena encountered is unsurprising, given that men on average comprise 83% of American police forces (Reaves, 2015).

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