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The Relation of Psychopathic Traits to Social Relationships for Individuals on Probation and Parole

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BACKGROUND: Psychopathic traits (i.e., disregard for the rights of others) are common among individuals involved in the justice system (Campbell, 2004). Individuals with psychopathic traits generally have less stable family, romantic, and peer relationships than do individuals without such traits (Barry, 2008). However, the more precise qualities of these social relationships (e.g., emotional support, involvement with deviant individuals) that might be linked with psychopathy have yet to be determined. The present study examined whether (a) family member, peer, and romantic partner support; (b) involvement with deviant family members, romantic partners, and peers; and (c) psychopathic traits were linked among these individuals.

METHOD: Individuals ($N = 101$) on probation and parole in four states completed measures that assessed social support from family members, romantic partners, and peers (*Multidimensional Perceived Support Scale*; Zimet et al., 2008); involvement with deviant family members, romantic partners, and peers (*Pittsburgh Study Peer Delinquency Scale*; Loeber et al., 1998); and psychopathic traits (*Brief Dark Triad*; Jones & Paulhus, 2004).

RESULTS: Bivariate correlations initially demonstrated that involvement with deviant peers and family support were significantly correlated with psychopathy. Next, a linear regression that incorporated both involvement with deviant peers and family support as predictors was conducted to determine the variance explained in psychopathy. Involvement with deviant peers explained a statistically significant amount of variance ($R^2 = .11$) in psychopathy.

IMPLICATIONS: The results indicate that deviant peer relations are linked with psychopathy among individuals on probation and parole. In future research, it seems important to determine whether involvement with deviant peers occurs before or after the development of psychopathic traits. It seems reasonable to suggest that interventions for justice-involved individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits should focus on development of prosocial peer relationships.