Household Support and Social Integration in the Year after Prison[1]

Catherine Sirois[2]
Stanford University

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[2] Department of Sociology, Stanford University, 450 Serra Mall, Building 120, Stanford, California 94305. E-mail: csirois@stanford.edu.

ABSTRACT

The conventional household is typically conceived as a fixed residence where married adults pool incomes and raise their children. In poor communities, however, households are often residentially unstable, fluid in composition, and economically insecure. Men and women who leave prison face extreme disadvantage, and their households are likely to shape social integration after incarceration. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from the Boston Reentry Study, this article describes the complex living situations of men and women newly released from prison and proposes a multifaceted concept of household support. Regression analysis with an index measuring household support shows that living in a stable well-resourced household just after prison release is associated with reduced risks of a new criminal charge, social isolation, and unemployment six to twelve months later. More than just a social unit for sampling and enumeration, the analysis suggests the household is an explanatory concept that can account for the social integration of poor, minority populations often detached from formal sources of economic and social support.

Key words: households; incarceration; mixed methods; poverty; reentry; social integration

INTRODUCTION

The household is fundamental to our understanding of social life in the United States. Conventional understandings of the household as a fixed private residence or site for family life assume that adults reside stably in one place, most commonly with a spouse and children, and support the household with their earnings. However, many poor and otherwise disadvantaged adults are disconnected from conventional households and the social roles that comprise them. These men and women are often weakly connected to collective living situations that provide material support and stability, and because survey methods focus on conventional households, disadvantaged adults are often overlooked altogether (Martin 2007). The standard household concept thus restricts our view of the living arrangements of poor men and women and the influence of those arrangements on well-being.

Even among the poor, conventional households are rare for those leaving prison. The formerly incarcerated experience high levels of housing insecurity and residential mobility (Geller and Curtis 2011; Harding et al. 2013; Herbert et al. 2015; La Vigne and Parthasarathy 2005; Metraux and Culhane 2004). They are also likely to occupy the complex and fluid households characteristic of other disadvantaged groups (Blank 1998; Desmond 2016; Edin and Lein 1997; Stack 1974). As a source of shelter, sociability, and support, the household may be an important but varying mechanism for social integration after incarceration.

Using a unique data set that tracks the householding of men and women just released from prison, this paper asks: How does household life for economically marginal adults influence social integration after incarceration? In the context of leaving prison, social integration describes the connection to adult roles that characterize full participation in a community (Harding et al. 2014; Travis 2004; Western et al. 2015). From this perspective,

community membership refers not to residing in a specific place, but rather one's broader attachment to the roles and relationships that comprise free society.

I focus on three markers of social integration. First, a new arrest after prison release is likely to limit participation in community life; avoiding new charges helps one become a trusted and reliable member of a family and community (Edin and Nelson 2013). Although recidivism is an important outcome on its own, it is also closely tied to social integration after prison (Harding et al. 2014). Second, community bonds are formed through the development of social ties which might be a source of support for oneself and others (Sullivan 1989). Third, employment provides formerly-incarcerated people with a sense of self-worth and allows them to materially support their families (Western 2018). Avoiding new charges, establishing close ties, and becoming employed capture an individual's capacity to function as a full member of a community by filling the mainstream roles of citizen, peer, and worker.

The process of social integration after prison is cumulative—"experiences just after release affect outcomes some months later" (Western et al. 2015:1518). Although one's living situation itself is a marker of social integration, this article views household support as a critical early step in the cumulative process of becoming connected to community life after incarceration. In this way, a supportive household soon after prison release can provide a foundation for further social integration as life in free society proceeds.

The article makes three key contributions to our understanding of households and social integration among the formerly incarcerated and marginal populations more broadly. First, the article provides a more comprehensive understanding of living situations after prison than has previously been possible. Research on households after prison is often restricted to parents with young children or tracks residence using administrative records that are limited in scope (Geller

and Curtis 2011; Metraux and Culhane 2004). Longitudinal studies that describe living situations in detail often follow small ethnographic samples or suffer from high rates of attrition (Harding et al. 2014; La Vigne and Parthasarathy 2005). The present analysis draws on qualitative and quantitative data to examine household support in a complete sample of men and women released from prison. The Boston Reentry Study (BRS) documents the experiences of 122 people in the year after they leave prison through a series of five in-person interviews, frequent phone check-ins, interviews with family members or close friends, and linked administrative records. Through an unusually high response rate (over 90%), the data allow us to track the range of places where people stay after prison and map the networks of household relationships in which they are embedded, even if they are not heads of households or parents living with their children. For a population characterized by high residential mobility, this multi-method approach improves on research that retains only those easiest to follow.

Second, this article draws together several lines of research—on housing, families, social networks, and neighborhoods—to elevate the household as a social context influencing life chances. Research on poor households typically focuses on a single component of one's living situation, such as residential stability or family complexity. I propose an alternative household concept in which support offered by a living situation depends on (1) stability of physical residence, (2) availability of close kin, and (3) the economic security of household members. Using BRS data, I construct an index of household support that indicates that residence in a supportive household soon after release reduces individuals' likelihood of criminal charges and increases odds of social connection and employment months later.

Last, the analysis highlights the importance of social context for understanding outcomes after prison beyond recidivism (see also Harding et al. 2014; Western et al. 2015). A rich

research tradition emphasizes the role of prosocial bonds, social relationships, and stable neighborhoods in promoting criminal desistance and reducing criminal recidivism (Kubrin and Stewart 2006; Laub and Sampson 2003; Leverentz 2014). This article expands existing research on the transition out of prison to examine how individuals' immediate social contexts—specifically, their households—help explain not just whether they return to crime or incarceration but also their attachment to social relationships and employment. A supportive household is thus broadly conceived as a safety net that can offer security during prison release and other periods of stress and hardship.

Erving Goffman (1961:12) described total institutions as the displacement of households, the building blocks of social life. This article views the establishment of supportive households as foundational to overcoming incarceration and becoming once more a community member. The household helps erase the separation from community produced by incarceration, by promoting citizenship, social connection, and employment. A multifaceted view of household support proposed here helps explain how community bonds develop after incarceration in a way that is grounded in the lived experience of social marginality.

HOUSEHOLDS IN POOR COMMUNITIES

A household is a physical residence in which resources are pooled and needs are met through familial and other intimate relationships. The following discussion first outlines the elements of conventional households. I then describe how households vary in poor communities, bringing together research on residential mobility, household fluidity, and economic insecurity. Last, I review what we know about households among an especially disadvantaged group—men and women just released from prison.

At its most basic level, the household is a physical residence. The census defines a household unit as "a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied...as separate living quarters" (Torrieri 2014:67). Stable housing involves "customary and regular access to a conventional dwelling" (Rossi 1989:10). Beyond fulfilling a critical material need, residential continuity makes daily life more predictable and provides a foundation for individual stability.

More than a physical residence, a household also functions as a site of social relationships. The contemporary household is usually associated with the nuclear family, though historically, the household has consisted of a wide variety of social relationships (Kertzer 1991). Membership in a household is determined not just by "spatial proximity or closeness of kinship" but also by the "intensity of functional association" (Hammel and Laslett 1974:78). Access to steady sources of social support at the household level can lend stability and order to daily life.

The household is partly woven together by intimate relationships and partly brings people together to do collectively what they cannot do by themselves. From this perspective, households also function to pool resources and provide material support. The organization of individuals for the production and consumption of goods predates the notion of the household as solely a site of family life (Polanyi 1944; Yanagisako 1979). When employment is steady and material resources are readily available, prime-age adults can sustain a household on their wages and pool risk to guard against economic shocks (Oppenheimer 1997; Western et al. 2012).

Households in poor communities often differ from the fixed social units defined by the census and sampled in household surveys. For the poor, we can usefully think of households as a variable, not a constant. Conceiving of the household as comprising a physical residence, intimate relationships, and a bundle of economic resources suggests there are three key

dimensions that govern a household's capacity to support its members: residential mobility, household member fluidity, and economic insecurity.

Poor people, particularly in urban areas, are less likely to reside in safe and stable housing. Residential mobility is common as people struggle to pay rent, seek to leave unsafe neighborhoods, or are forced out of their homes (Desmond 2016; Rosen 2017). Those with limited housing options are more likely to live in group quarters, such as homeless shelters or rooming houses, where residence is often temporary and marked by high turnover (Rossi 1989). When the household often moves from place to place, daily life is less predictable and secure.

Residential mobility likely contributes to the fluidity of residents in and out of households, where "there is a constant coming and going of people" (Smith 1970:68). Household fluidity is particularly acute where prime-age adults do not have the material resources to support a family (Liebow 1967; Tach et al. 2014). Under these conditions, women kin commonly house their adult children and siblings (Stack 1974; Stack and Burton 1993). However, in the absence of close kin, individuals may be forced to form "disposable ties" with strangers during periods of instability (Desmond 2012). Where residents frequently come and go and ties are fragile, the household is undermined as a reliable source of social support.

In contexts of poverty, where unemployment is high and adults move in and out of households, steady earners are in short supply and households are marked by economic insecurity. Even when adults are employed, the high proportion of single-parent households means that the burden of household provision might rest on one source of income (McLanahan 2004). This limits the ability of household members to pool financial risk, and thus the household is more vulnerable to shocks such as job loss or economic recession (Western et al. 2012). Although families may share households in order to survive periods of economic

insecurity, resources are scarce in contexts of deprivation, and households where families are "doubled up" make for fragile economic units (Edin and Lein 1997; Mykyta and Macartney 2012).

Research on poor households suggests a simple theory of household support. Where home consists of a stable residence, reliable and close kin, and employed co-residents, the living situation provides a social context for order and well-being in daily life. On the other hand, where housing is unstable, household members are loosely attached, and co-residents are not working, one's living situation contributes to social and economic insecurity.

What do we know about the household support of men and women just released from prison? Research on the living arrangements of the formerly-incarcerated has focused mainly on housing. As many as 20% of men and women who leave prison are homeless after release, and a recent study found that Michigan parolees moved more than twice on average over the course of a year after incarceration (Harding et al. 2013; Metraux et al. 2007). A small subset of men and women account for most of the residential mobility in the entire cohort of prison releasees (La Vigne and Parthasarathy 2005). Although residential instability can also emerge several years after leaving prison (Remster 2017), mobility is most common soon after release (Herbert et al. 2015; Warner 2015). Thus, housing insecurity among the formerly incarcerated is likely unevenly distributed and most prevalent immediately after imprisonment.

Detailed information on household composition after prison and its continuity over time is limited, although a number of studies document variation in household types. With low earnings and restrictions on public housing, the formerly incarcerated have few opportunities for independent housing (Geller and Curtis 2011; Rubinstein and Mukamal 2002). As a result, they often live with friends and family or in group quarters, such as homeless shelters (La Vigne and

Parthasarathy 2005; Harding et al. 2013; Harding et al. 2014). The support and stability offered by household members is likely to vary. Residing with a stable partner might promote criminal desistance (Laub and Sampson 2003; Steiner et al. 2015), although marriage is rare among the recently incarcerated (Turney 2015; Western 2006), and romantic relationships are just as likely to be stressful as supportive (Wyse et al. 2014). Returning to families of origin may also present challenges, particularly where kin are associated with past crime or where the recently incarcerated are unable to reciprocate support (Braman 2004; Leverentz 2014; Martinez and Christian 2009). However, close kin, particularly parents and siblings, may be more willing to house their family members after prison, with fewer obligations for household membership.

Few studies of the formerly incarcerated examine the household as an economic unit. Men with greater earnings after prison are less likely to experience housing insecurity than those with lower earnings, but steady employment is rare (Geller and Curtis 2011; Herbert et al. 2015). Although the formerly incarcerated rely heavily on their co-residents and family members to help pay for living expenses (Harding et al. 2014), the extent of material support from household members after prison is largely unknown. Because the majority of those released from prison reside in poor neighborhoods (Harding et al. 2013), assistance from steady earners is likely limited but critical to establishing economic security in the year after prison.

In sum, the living situation of men and women just out of prison is precarious, underscoring the challenges to building a detailed account of household life after incarceration. Housing is insecure and often in group quarters. Household ties may be tenuous, and household members may be economically insecure. These elements of household support are distinct yet correlated, operating together to promote individual well-being after incarceration.

EFFECTS OF HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL INTEGRATION AFTER PRISON

I have conceptualized the household as a multifaceted social context that helps to organize daily life. Residential stability, availability of close kin, and economic security together form a supportive household. Often in research on poor populations, the neighborhood is taken as the main social context that affects a variety of individual life chances (e.g., Sampson et al. 2002; Sharkey and Faber 2014; Small and Feldman 2012). Among the recently incarcerated in particular, neighborhood context has been associated with whether one is rearrested or returns to prison (Hipp et al. 2010; Kubrin and Stewart 2006; McNeeley 2018). Like the neighborhood, the household environment also influences an individual's capacity to fill mainstream social roles and fully participate in community life. Supportive households might promote social integration after incarceration in three areas.

First, access to a supportive household can offer privacy and protection from the chaos of daily life. For those outside of supportive households, the stress of transition, perhaps involving relapse to addiction or disorderly behavior, plays out in the public eye. Those without the privacy of a stable household are often most visible to criminal justice authorities (Beckett and Herbert 2010; Clark 2016; Stuart 2016). A supportive household might also include adults who can assist those whose legal status is compromised. For example, household members may give rides to those who would otherwise drive without a license or those who wish to avoid potential conflict on public transportation. Thus, residence in a supportive household will likely reduce the chances of criminal justice system involvement in the year after release.

Second, supportive households offer opportunities for social contact. For those who have spent much of their lives in punitive institutions, the transition to the community is marked by social isolation, particularly for those in temporary or unstable housing (Western et al. 2015).

Individuals living in stable neighborhoods with low turnover have larger social networks and stronger ties to their communities (Keene et al. 2013; Sampson 1988; Schieman 2005). We might expect that the social stability offered by a supportive household similarly increases social contact among those released from prison. As a result, men and women living in supportive households in the year after prison are likely to develop more close ties.

Third, a supportive household provides a foundation for subsistence which can expand economic opportunity. Knowing that one has a place to sleep each night and consistent material support lends predictability to daily life in the first months after prison release (Harding et al. 2014). For those without secure housing, time spent trying to find somewhere to stay could be spent looking for work (Desmond and Gershenson 2016). A network of steadily employed friends and family members can increase one's own employment chances, and co-residents may also help support a job search, materially assisting with transport or clothing (Sullivan 1989). A supportive household is thus likely to improve employment outcomes in the year after release.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

The BRS followed 122 men and women for a year after release from Massachusetts state prison to the Boston area. Between May 2012 and February 2013, adults within one month of release and with a post-release address in the Boston area were recruited to participate. The sample is representative of all prison releases to Boston during this period. (See Western et al. [2017] for further detail about study design and sample selection).

The BRS sample includes 107 men and 15 women, 36 years old on average and with ages ranging from 19 to 59. About half of the sample is Black, a third is white, and the remainder is Latino. Two-thirds report a history of mental illness or drug addiction. Importantly for this

analysis, the BRS was designed to maintain a high rate of retention with a group of people who might be loosely attached to conventional households, lacking stable employment, and involved in crime. Over 90% of respondents were retained through 12 months of follow-up, significantly higher than most prior research on this population (Western et al. 2016).

The BRS interviews provide detailed information on living arrangements after prison, observing the many residential changes that often follow incarceration. Survey interviews asked respondents about their residence type and household composition at one week, two months, six months, and twelve months after their release from prison. Residence type includes private residences for those staying on their own or with family and friends; group quarters such as homeless shelters, rooming houses, and correctional facilities; or no set place if respondents were staying between several places or on the streets. This approach captures the heterogeneity of living arrangements among those released from prison compared to the general population (see online Appendix Table A.1[3]). A household roster recorded the age, sex, relationship, and employment status of each person in a respondent's household and tracked whether respondents were staying with the same people at each interview, providing detailed data on household fluidity.

In the first stage of analysis, I coded data related to people's living situations from all 454 post-release survey interviews with focal respondents, notes from phone calls in between interviews, and 81 interviews with proxy respondents (mostly mothers and sisters) to build a detailed account of household life in the year after prison. With these data, I also constructed a variable indicating whether respondents moved residences in each calendar month. The objective of this analysis was to identify the features of respondents' living situations that provided support

[3] The appendix is online and can be found at https://justicelab.columbia.edu/re-entry.

after incarceration. In the results that follow, I first describe the indicators of household support that emerged through a qualitative analysis of the data, drawing on the experiences of individual respondents to illustrate how household support operates during the transition out of prison.

The qualitative evidence on respondents' living situations motivated the construction of a quantitative index of household support for the second stage of analysis. The household support index serves as the key explanatory variable in a regression analysis predicting three indicators of social integration in the year after prison—whether a respondent is charged with a new crime, establishes close ties, and becomes employed. I conducted the regression analysis on the portion of the sample with complete residential data over the study period (n=113).

Although the BRS sample size is small, study design is likely to yield insight beyond more conventional research. Prior studies of residential patterns after prison have relied on administrative records (Harding et al. 2013; Metraux and Culhane 2004), longitudinal social survey data examining mobility at the neighborhood level (Massoglia et al. 2013; Warner 2015, 2016), interviews where many respondents are lost to follow-up (Geller and Curtis 2011; La Vigne and Parthasarathy 2005), or small ethnographic samples (Harding et al. 2014; Leverentz 2014). The following analysis advances prior research by using multiple data sources to study residential transitions over time, the variety of people that men and women stay with after incarceration, and the economic status of household members. The flexible measurement strategy developed here can grant important insight into the formerly incarcerated and other groups who tend to live outside of conventional households.

MEASURING HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT

A supportive household is a safety net during periods of transition and when material resources

are scarce. This safety net consists of a physical place in which shelter combines with supportive relationships and material resources to help people meet basic needs. I measure the combined effects of shelter, relationships, and resources with three empirical indicators—a stable physical residence, the availability of close kin, and the economic security of other household members—that together comprise the supportive households that promote social integration after prison.

A first step toward the security that a household might provide is a stable physical residence. Only about one-fifth of BRS respondents remained in the same residence through 12 months after prison release. High levels of residential mobility were concentrated in just half of the sample. Fifty percent of respondents moved more than twice over the course of the year, and nearly half of this group moved at three months out of prison. The sharp increase in mobility results from respondents who left a homeless shelter or residential treatment program, moved out of private homes where they were staying temporarily, or began to split their time between multiple residences. A residential transition could also indicate greater stability—for example, if someone moved from doubling up with family into his own apartment. However, these types of moves were rare, and any move soon after prison release reflects uncertainty about where one might stay during a typically stressful period.

Extreme residential mobility was closely tied to instability in daily life. Donny, a 47-year-old white man, returned to Boston's North End neighborhood upon his release from prison. His cousin initially welcomed him to stay on her couch, even though she was concerned that she would be evicted since Donny's presence violated the conditions of her lease. Two weeks after his release, Donny frantically reported that he needed to find his own place. His anxiety about his housing search compounded his struggle with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. At two months out of prison, Donny had begun to stay with other friends for a few nights a week in

order to relieve the burden on his cousin. For the remainder of the year, he cycled between homeless shelters, the streets, a friend's couch, and hospitals, where he went after a suicide attempt. Without consistent housing, Donny spent his time looking for a safe place to stay each night. A private residence in his case was available but temporary and was not a stable source of support in the year after prison release.

In contrast to respondents like Donny, about half of the sample were residentially stable. After three years in state prison, Jordan, a Black man in his mid-20s, immediately moved into his mother's two-bedroom unit in a privately-owned apartment building. His mother had lived in the apartment in Boston's Hyde Park neighborhood for nearly 10 years and did not expect Jordan to pay rent. Jordan worried about spending time in the Hyde Park and Mattapan neighborhoods where he had gotten into trouble in the past and intentionally sought work in other areas of the city. His mother's residence offered a refuge from the possibility of trouble outside. Even though Jordan planned to move out as soon as he completed parole, he was still living with his mother a year after prison release. In addition to employment in a food service job, Jordan attended classes on the weekend to become a personal fitness trainer. He hoped to become more independent so that he could eventually get his own place with his girlfriend. Jordan was one of 23 people out of 122 in the sample who remained in the same residence for the first 12 months after prison release.

The second key feature of a supportive household is the availability of close kin, defined here as a parent or sibling. Nearly one-third of the sample moved in with a parent or sibling after leaving prison, and the majority of these households were headed by women. Close kin households were marked by the continuity of household membership. Fourteen of the 19 respondents whose household composition remained stable for the entire year were staying with

a parent or sibling. Where close kin were available, social support was more dependable, and respondents had fewer obligations to materially contribute to the household.

Maria, a 32-year-old white woman, moved in with her mother and father after 15 months in prison. Maria's year after release was marked by turmoil, including the end of a romantic relationship, an ongoing struggle with heroin use, and periods of unemployment. During this transition, Maria returned home each day to her parents who were reliable sources of emotional support. No one else moved in and out of the household, and Maria's parents focused much of their attention on caring for their adult daughter, including gathering resources to support her recovery efforts. A year after prison release, Maria was employed in a carpentry program and hoped to join the union. Despite a temporary relapse to heroin use, she managed to avoid any new criminal charges. In Maria's case, a household comprised of close kin provided order and emotional support during an otherwise chaotic period.

Siblings, like parents, were often a dependable source of support for those transitioning out of prison. Ricky, a 36-year-old Puerto Rican man, had been incarcerated since his early 20s. Immediately at release, his older sister Tanya welcomed him into her apartment where she stayed with her two children, and he remained in the household for the entire year. Ricky had a suspended driver's license, and in the first few months after his prison release, Tanya drove him an hour each way to work. In addition to getting Ricky to work, Tanya's rides may have helped him stay out of trouble, as nearly one-fifth of BRS respondents were charged with a driving violation in the year after release. Tanya also helped Ricky navigate family relationships after 15 years in state prison, connecting him to family members with whom he had lost touch. "He was needy," she reported, "but how can you say no to a person that lost half his life?"

Five respondents also lived with a stable partner during the year after release, though

more commonly, partner households reflected the uncertainty of new relationships. Nineteen of the respondents who moved in with a partner at some point during the year signaled the relationship's temporary status by keeping their belongings at the home of a close family member and continuing to sleep there a few nights a week. Social support in these households thus tended to be less reliable than in households headed by parents and siblings.

Where close kin were not available, household membership was more fluid, particularly for the third of respondents who resided with strangers in group quarters after prison release. Though a portion of respondents remained continuously in the same treatment program, sober house, or homeless shelter, turnover was generally high. Strict regulations regarding duration of stay, drug testing, and weekly rental payments contributed to the flow of people in and out of residential programs. Emergency homeless shelters did not require rent but consisted of 300 to 400 residents who changed each night. As a result, group quarters were more often a source of social instability or isolation than social support.

Shana, a Black woman in her 30s, entered a residential treatment program upon leaving prison. She spent much of her time alone and reported feeling bored and isolated at the house, where she was required to stay inside much of the time. "It's really…people just pace around," she explained. "Sit down. Get up. Sit down. Get up." Many who stayed in group quarters, like Shana, compared the restrictive and isolating nature of the housing to their time in prison. Respondents staying in group quarters could rarely depend on the consistent social support more commonly offered by a close-kin household.

Finally, household support depends not just on the availability of close kin but also on the ability of co-residents to provide material support. Research on the economic status of the formerly incarcerated typically focuses on their own employment. For a population with such

limited opportunity for steady work, however, the employment status of those they are living with is also important for economic security. With two or more earners in the household, residents can insulate themselves from external shocks of job loss or a reduction in public assistance. In the early months after prison release, less than one-fifth of respondents resided with multiple earners, about one-third of respondents lived with a single earner, and over half did not live with any earners. Respondents in group quarters typically received the least material support from co-residents. These settings were sometimes unsafe, and respondents spoke just as often of having their belongings stolen as being able to borrow money from a housemate.

The economic status of private households can also be insecure in poor communities with high rates of unemployment and residential fluidity. After three years in state prison, Sheila, a Black woman in her early 40s, moved in with her mother Rhonda who was divorced from Sheila's father. Rhonda provided a consistent residence and assisted Sheila by attending to her health needs and lending her a monthly bus pass. About a month after Sheila's release, Rhonda was laid off from her temporary job as an office administrator. She would remain unemployed for the next eight months and was forced to use her savings to pay the $1500 monthly rent for the apartment. Sheila herself had no income besides food stamps which ranged from $95 to $193 per month, leaving her "financially frustrated." As both Sheila and her mother were at home and without work, the household became tense. Nearly a year after her initial release, Sheila was arrested for selling drugs, and her 12-month interview was conducted back in prison. Although Sheila had access to a stable residence after release, the household contained only an adult earner during her first month out. Rhonda's job loss highlights the insecurity of low-wage work and the stress that might result in a household when no other earners are present.

In contrast, living in a household with multiple sources of income can provide economic

security. Phil, a 43-year-old Black man, spent nearly his entire adult life in prison. Immediately after release, he moved into Boston's Dorchester neighborhood, where he stayed with his brother, his brother's wife, his nephew, and his nephew's wife, who were all employed. Phil's brother ran a construction company and provided him with a job for $29.50 an hour, in addition to allowing him to stay in the house without paying rent. Phil's access to work and other earners helped him to build an economic foundation after prison release. Eight months out of prison, he moved in with his girlfriend and her two children and was able to contribute financially to the household. This was the first time Phil had been out of prison for a full year since he was 19 years old, largely because, he reported, of the consistent support provided by his household.

Qualitative evidence illustrates the variation in household support along three dimensions: residential stability, availability of close kin, and economic security. Half of the sample were highly mobile in the early period after prison release, confronted with the stress of not knowing where they would sleep each night. Where close kin, primarily mothers and sisters, were able to provide housing, respondents were more likely to stay in one place for a continuous period of time. In addition, households where two or more adults were working provided a secure foundation for men and women leaving prison.

Although some households exemplified a single aspect of household support more than others, household conditions typically operated in combination to create a small environment that influenced social integration. Jordan had access to a stable residence because his mother, whose emotional support and earnings bolstered the household, allowed him to stay without paying rent. Maria's parents did not just provide social support as she navigated a difficult year after prison but also a stable place to return to each night. And Phil's relatives' steady earnings meant that Phil could stay rent-free in their home, where he was welcomed after nearly a decade

in prison. The features of household support are thus mutually reinforcing, operating together to form a safety net during the transition out of prison.

To measure the joint contributions of residence, relationships, and resources to a living situation, I constructed an index of household support that considers these three components together. The index measures household support through the first four months in order to explain social integration six and twelve months after release. Prior research highlights the significance of the initial months after prison release for understanding the process of reintegration (Visher and Travis 2003; Western et al. 2015). In the current sample, measurement in the first months captures the period when respondents were most mobile. For those respondents who were reincarcerated in the first year, most returned to custody five or six months after their initial release. Measuring the household through four months ensures that the majority of respondents were still out in the community. Most respondents had also completed two post-release interviews by the four-month mark (at one week and two months out of prison), maximizing use of the data available on living arrangements immediately after incarceration.

Table 1 describes the three items that are summed to form an index of household support through four months out of prison. Each item has three possible values, with higher scores indicating a higher level of household support. Stability is measured by the number of residential transitions during the first four months out of prison. Availability of close kin is measured by relationships to household members at the one-week and two-month interviews. The economic security of the household is measured by co-resident adult earners at one week and two months out. On average, respondents moved more than once in the first four months out of prison and lived without close kin or other earners, indicating the low level of household support across the sample. Although the indicators of household support are chosen based on theory and qualitative

Table 1. Items used to construct an index of household support through four months out of prison.

Item	Description	*Mean*
Residential stability, 0-4 months	0 = 2 or more moves, 1 = 1 move, 2 = no moves.	1.23
Availability of close kin, 0-2 months	0 = living outside of private household, 1 = householder is partner, friend, or other adult, 2 = householder is parent or sibling. Item takes the average of living with close kin at the 1-week and 2-month interviews (scale of 0 to 2 with 0.5 increments).	1.03
Economic security, 0-2 months	0 = living with no other earners (including those not in households), 1 = living with 1 earner, 2 = living with 2 or more earners. Respondents are not counted as earners. Item takes the average of living with earners at the 1-week and 2-month interviews (scale of 0 to 2 with 0.5 increments).	0.61
Household support index	Sum of residential stability through 4 months and the average of availability of close kin and economic security at the 1-week and 2-month interviews. Range of 0 to 6.	2.87

Note: Residential stability is measured from a variable indicating whether respondents moved in each calendar month over the course of the year. An individual living alone during a given interview is coded as living without close kin or other earners. The household support index used in regression analysis is based on a sum of the standardized items.

evidence, they also load heavily on a single dimension in a factor analysis with baseline demographics and other measures of disadvantage, including mental illness and drug addiction.

All three items are positively correlated. The availability of close kin and economic security of household members are most strongly correlated (0.62), as they both measure features of co-residents. There is a weaker correlation between residential stability and availability of close kin (0.26) or economic security (0.21) because respondents could reside stably in group quarters without access to family or other earners. Cronbach's alpha, summarizing the strength of correlations among the scale items, is 0.64. Individual index items are related to the outcomes of interest, although the index generally yields a better fit, and index coefficients have relatively smaller standard errors than the individual items in the regression analysis that follows.

I conducted a sensitivity analysis that explored alternative codings of household support, for example, assigning greater weight to respondents who remained in the same group quarters

from one week to two months or limiting the sample to those who were in private households at either interview. The following results are robust to these alternative measurement strategies.

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

With pooled data from the six- and twelve-month interviews, we can explore the effects of household support by regressing measures of social integration on the household support index. The index is standardized, yielding coefficients that describe changes in the dependent variables for a one-standard deviation change in household support. The logistic regression analysis that follows uses three dependent variables to measure social integration: whether one is charged with a crime, whether one reports two or more close ties, and whether one is employed.

A *criminal charge* measures whether someone was charged with a new crime between two and twelve months out of prison, indicating respondents' involvement with the criminal justice system rather than self-reported criminal behavior. The measure of respondents' *close ties* is drawn from the peer network grid administered at the six- and twelve-month interviews, in which respondents were asked to identify people with whom they regularly discussed important matters. The dependent variable used in the analysis measures whether respondents could identify two or more people. *Employment status* indicates whether someone was employed at the six- or twelve-month interviews. This includes on-the-books employment and more informal work, such as day labor. (For more information on the dependent variables, see the online Appendix.)

Because criminal charges, close ties, and employment are likely to vary with demographics, personal characteristics, and prior involvement with the criminal justice system, covariates for the regression models include race, sex, age, history of mental illness and

addiction, time served during respondents' most recent prison bid, current supervision status, and total time in incarceration since age 18. Race, sex, and age were self-reported at baseline. A history of mental illness and addiction is an indicator for whether respondents reported either health problem at the baseline interview. A dummy variable for time served indicates respondents who were incarcerated for more than three years during their most recent incarceration. Total adult incarceration is a binary variable indicating those who have spent more than half of their adult life incarcerated. These covariates have been found to be predictive of rearrest (Huebner and Pleggenkuhle 2015; Uggen 2000), social contact (Sampson 1988; Schieman 2005), and employment (Pager 2003; Western et al. 2015) in other research and are likely correlated with household support.

The regression analysis also includes lagged measures of the dependent variables, intended to capture heterogeneity across the respondents associated with average levels of the dependent variables. The lagged measures of close ties and employment are measured at the earliest post-release interview, one week out of prison. Because no one was charged with a crime in the first week out, a prior criminal charge is instead measured two months after prison release.

More formally, we can write the model,

$$\text{logit}\, p(y_{it} = 1) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 H_i + \beta_2 y_{i0} + \boldsymbol{x'}_{\boldsymbol{i}}\boldsymbol{\beta}_{\mathbf{3}}\,,$$

where y_{it} is a binary measure of a new criminal charge, two or more close ties, or employment for respondent i (i = 1,...,113) at time t (t = 6 months, 12 months), H_i is the standardized index of household support through four months after release, y_{i0} is a lagged dependent variable measured prior to the six-month observation, and $\boldsymbol{x'}_{\boldsymbol{i}}$ is a vector of time-invariant covariates measured at baseline. Interest centers on the coefficient for household support, β_1.

Table 2 displays the means of the dependent and independent variables by scores on the

Table 2. Means of dependent and independent variables by household support at 4 months.

	Household Support Index		
	Less than Median	Greater than or equal to Median	Total
Dependent variables			
Criminal Charge	.22	.14	.18
Close Ties	.59	.74	.67
Employment	.43	.63	.53
Independent variables			
Black	.49	.55	.52
Latino	.18	.18	.18
Male	.88	.86	.87
Less than age 31	.28	.43	.35
Mentally ill/addicted	.46	.20	.33
>3 years served	.28	.34	.31
Probation/Parole	.63	.64	.64
Total adult incarceration	.56	.46	.51
Charge at 2 months	.11	.02	.06
Close ties at 1 week	.53	.82	.67
Employed at 1 week	.11	.25	.18
Total (*n*)	57	56	113

household support index. Those who scored at or above the median on the index were less likely to be charged with a crime, tended to have more close ties, and were more likely to be employed. Older respondents and those with histories of mental illness and addiction were disproportionately represented among those with lower levels of household support through four months out of prison. Although the following analysis is concerned with household support as an explanatory variable rather than as an outcome, the Discussion section further considers heterogeneity in levels of household support.

Table 3 displays the results of two logistic regression models estimated from the pooled six- and twelve-month waves for each dependent variable. The first includes just covariates and the second adds a lagged dependent variable. The results suggest that household support through four months out of prison is significantly associated with a reduced likelihood of a criminal charge later in the year. A one-standard deviation increase in household support is associated

Table 3. Logistic regression analysis of criminal charge, close ties, and employment using pooled six- and twelve-month post-release interviews.

	Criminal Charge		Close Ties		Employment	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Household support	-.542*	-.447*	.570**	.302	.552**	.491*
	(2.48)	(2.07)	(2.81)	(1.34)	(2.97)	(2.50)
Black	-.140	-.109	-.093	.085	-.259	-.162
	(.30)	(.22)	(.20)	(.18)	(.62)	(.41)
Latino	-.529	-.454	-1.033*	-1.065*	-.316	-.251
	(.98)	(.85)	(2.14)	(2.14)	(.60)	(.48)
Male	-.517	-.241	-.277	-.266	.827	.753
	(.77)	(.32)	(.50)	(.49)	(1.45)	(1.30)
Less than age 31	-.348	-.380	-1.665***	-1.256*	-.903*	-.814
	(.77)	(.87)	(3.32)	(2.54)	(2.16)	(1.81)
Mentally ill/addicted	-.692	-.502	.750	.720	-.670	-.623
	(1.45)	(1.05)	(1.77)	(1.70)	(1.69)	(1.58)
>3 years served	-.382	-.391	.290	.353	.249	.161
	(.90)	(.91)	(.65)	(.77)	(.65)	(.41)
Probation/Parole	-.417	-.503	.336	.247	.687	.672
	(1.02)	(1.22)	(.75)	(.57)	(1.74)	(1.74)
Total incarceration	1.366**	1.327**	.343	.196	-.513	-.580
	(2.90)	(2.86)	(.78)	(.44)	(1.37)	(1.55)
Lagged charge	-	1.406*	-	-	-	-
	-	(2.04)	-	-	-	-
Lagged network	-	-	-	1.103*	-	-
	-	-	-	(2.56)	-	-
Lagged employment	-	-	-	-	-	1.403*
	-	-	-	-	-	(2.47)
Intercept	-1.079	-1.424	1.210	.346	-.128	-.313
	(1.45)	(1.69)	(1.92)	(.50)	(.20)	(.48)
No. of respondents	113	113	104	104	109	109
No. of observations	226	226	208	208	218	218

$^{*}p<.05$ $^{**}p<.01$ $^{***}p<.001$ (two-tailed tests)
Note: Log odds are reported, and absolute *z* statistics are in parentheses. Standard errors are adjusted for clustering at the individual level.

with a 42% reduction in the odds of a criminal charge (1-exp[-.542] = .42). Controlling for a criminal charge earlier in the year still yields strong evidence that those in supportive households are significantly less likely to be charged with a new crime over the following eight months.

There is also evidence that those in supportive households just after incarceration had more close ties later in the year. A one standard deviation increase in household support is

associated with a 77% increase in the odds of reporting close ties to more than one person (exp[.570] = 1.77). The coefficient remains positive and substantively large when controlling for the lagged outcome, but the effect is no longer statistically significant. There is thus some evidence for the effects of household support on one's close ties, and statistical insignificance in one model might be due to loss of power from missing data for the network variable.

Table 3 also shows that household support is significantly associated with subsequent employment. A one-standard deviation increase on the household support index is associated with a 74% increase in the odds of employment over the next eight months (exp[.552] = 1.74). When controlling for prior employment one week out of prison, a standard deviation increase in household support is still significantly associated with a 63% increase in the odds of employment later in the year (exp[.491] = 1.63). Early employment also predicts later employment, indicating the importance of material stability soon after release.

The BRS's small sample provides little power to test the relationships between covariates and outcomes (see also Western et al. 2015), though the directions and magnitudes of the relationships presented here are largely consistent with existing research on recidivism, social networks, and employment after prison (e.g., Huebner and Pleggenkuhle 2015; Reisig et al. 2002; Visher et al. 2011).

Evidence in favor of the positive effects of household support on social integration may be driven by just one or two of the scale items, rather than the index as a whole. In Table 4, I explore this idea by regressing the measures of social integration on the individual scale items. Residential stability is significantly associated with reduced odds of a criminal charge, and the magnitude of the coefficient is roughly equivalent to the estimated effect of the household support index in model 4. Economic security is a slightly stronger predictor of close ties than the

Table 4. Logistic regression analysis of criminal charge, close ties, and employment using individual items from household support index.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Charge (n=226)					
Residential stability	-.579***				
	(3.34)				
Availability of close kin		-.209			
		(.96)			
Economic security			-.301		
			(1.47)		
Household support index				-.542*	-.447*
				(2.48)	(2.07)
Lagged charge					1.406*
					(2.04)
Close Ties (n=208)					
Residential stability	.452*				
	(2.49)				
Availability of close kin		.086			
		(.38)			
Economic security			.630**		
			(2.78)		
Household support index				.570**	.302
				(2.81)	(1.34)
Lagged network					1.103*
					(2.56)
Employment (n=218)					
Residential stability	.361*				
	(2.09)				
Availability of close kin		.402			
		(1.96)			
Economic security			.425*		
			(2.27)		
Household support index				.552**	.491*
				(2.97)	(2.50)
Lagged employment					1.403*
					(2.47)

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 (two-tailed tests)

Note: Log odds are reported, and absolute z statistics are in parentheses. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at individual level. Individual items and index are standardized. All models control for race, ethnicity, sex, age, mental illness or addiction, >3 years served, probation/parole, and total adult incarceration. Model 5 includes lagged measure of each outcome variable. Pooled sample size for each outcome counts the number of observations (2 for each respondent).

index in model 4, without the lagged outcome measure. In the models predicting employment, the household support index produces larger and more significant coefficients than any of the individual scale items. There is thus some support for the explanatory power of residential stability and economic security on their own. However, taken together with evidence from the qualitative interviews, considering only a single measure of residential mobility or composition fails to convey the multifaceted character of the household as a source of support in daily life.

DISCUSSION

Supportive households—stable and well-resourced— help men and women develop community bonds as citizens, peers, and workers after incarceration. Because incarceration is destabilizing and people released from prison are poor, supportive households are relatively uncommon in the first months of community return. Analysis of data from the BRS showed that nearly 80% of respondents moved at least once in the year after incarceration, and over half lived apart from close kin or in households without any earners. Qualitative accounts illustrated how residential stability, the availability of close kin, and economic security contribute to the overall support of a household.

Regression analysis of survey data in the year after prison release showed that early household support is associated with reduced risks of a new criminal charge, social isolation, and unemployment later in the year. The significant association between household support and a new charge may reflect the greater privacy from police for those with stable housing. Household support may also divert people from crime or relapse to addiction. A supportive household may provide the stability needed to develop close ties during an otherwise isolating transition. Without immediate access to a supportive household, resources are spent trying to find a place to

stay and there is less freedom to pursue other means of economic and social support.

The results presented here align with research on the importance of stable housing, supportive family, and steady employment for individuals transitioning out of prison (Harding et al. 2014; Leverentz 2014; Lutze et al. 2014; Uggen 2000). Advancing prior work, this article demonstrates the utility of measuring residence, relationships, and resources together at the household level. When a stable residence is combined with consistent access to social relationships and other earners, the household can provide a foundation for social integration after incarceration. Following research on neighborhoods, studying the household can grant important insight into even more proximate contextual factors that shape individual well-being.

Even though this research speaks directly to the process of leaving prison, it also suggests the importance of incarceration for related studies of housing insecurity, social networks, and family complexity. Research on housing insecurity points to the dilapidated physical condition of low-income housing and the fragile networks of residents at high risk of eviction (Desmond 2016). The current research shows that incarceration can contribute greatly to housing insecurity and network fragility by increasing the fluidity of household composition as people transition from prison to community. Research on family complexity often emphasizes the high rate of father nonresidence and multipartner fertility in low-income families (Edin and Nelson 2013; McLanahan 2004; Tach et al. 2014). The present analysis suggests nonresidence should be conceived as a continuum of living arrangements, and research on family relationships should consider the role of parents and siblings in addition to partners and children.

Although I find that household support is closely related to social integration, the results are subject to two important limitations. First, the analysis brackets the individual-level factors that may influence household support. Descriptive results show that older age, mental illness and

drug addiction are associated with reduced household support. Given the added stigma, histories of abuse, and prevalence of mental illness and addiction among incarcerated women (Leverentz 2014), household support may vary by gender, and the BRS sample has few women to test this hypothesis. Relatedly, older respondents struggling with addiction and poor mental health may engage in behaviors that challenge the maintenance of a stable and secure residence or have fewer relatives who are willing to take them in. In these cases, individual well-being and household support are likely mutually reinforcing. The analysis attempts to address the endogeneity of household support and social integration by controlling for several individual-level traits and lagged measures of the outcome variables. However, to the extent that respondents' criminal involvement, sociability, and employment are unmeasured in the current analysis, the effects of household support will be over estimated.

Second, although the BRS sample is representative of individuals released from Massachusetts state prison to Boston, the transition out of prison may be different in other cities or institutional contexts. For example, those released to Boston experience a strong safety net relative to those in jurisdictions that have not expanded Medicaid coverage to low-income single men, or have denied food stamps to those with convictions for drug and sex offenses (Western 2018). At the same time, housing costs in Boston are among the most expensive in the nation (Aurand et al. 2018). The results should thus be considered jointly with findings from research on leaving prison in other places (e.g., Harding et al. 2014).

The findings presented here have two key implications for policy and research involving the recently incarcerated and other marginalized groups. First, the article demonstrates the importance of supportive social contexts after prison. Reentry policy should focus not just on finding housing for people after prison but also on ensuring that people's residential contexts are

adequately supportive. Similar to the tax credit granted to employers who hire people with criminal records, providing a tax credit or stipend to those who house their kin after prison might ease the burden placed on families and improve outcomes for the recently incarcerated. In addition, even though the living arrangements of men and women after prison shed light on individual well-being, they would rarely be observed with standard data collections, built on conventional household sampling frames or lacking detailed measurement of the composition of nontraditional households. Research designs that measure households in a more flexible way and combine multiple methods to study hard-to-reach populations are likely to yield important insight on those facing severe hardship (Pettit 2012; Western et al. 2016).

More than just a social unit for sampling and enumeration, the household is an explanatory concept that can account for the social integration of poor, minority populations often detached from formal sources of economic and social support. In his work on eviction, Matthew Desmond (2016:295) argues that "...a good home can serve as the sturdiest of footholds. When people have a place to live, they become better parents, workers, and citizens." This article begins to show what a "good home" might look like for those transitioning out of prison and others experiencing social and economic insecurity. With little access to independent housing, low levels of formal employment, and continued involvement with police and courts, the formerly incarcerated face significant challenges in establishing supportive households. The expanded concept of the household developed here suggests that a supportive home is uncommon after prison, and a stable place in one's community is often elusive as a result.

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APPENDIX

Notes on Dependent Variables.

Criminal charge. Criminal charge data are coded from Massachusetts Department of Correction records, which integrate data from courts, prisons, and parole. The variable includes new criminal charges which may lead to a probation or parole violation, but not technical violations of probation or parole, such as missing a meeting with a probation officer. The criminal charge variable does not include police stops or arrests that do not lead to an arraignment.

Close ties. At each interview, BRS respondents were asked: "Since our last interview, who have you regularly spoken to about important things?" Respondents could count as many people as they would like and could include anyone in their life, not just people in their physical community or neighborhood. Conventional measures of social isolation distinguish between people who cannot name anyone in their social network and those who can name at least one person (for example, see Fischer 2009). In the BRS, nearly every respondent could name at least one person they spoke to about important matters (97% at the 6-month interview and 91% at the 12-month interview). Only two-thirds of the sample, however, could name more than one person that they spoke to regularly. Thus, whether someone could name at least two people was a more meaningful indicator of social connection in this sample.

Employment. Respondents incarcerated at a given interview are coded as unemployed, even if they reported working in the correctional facility. This work typically paid a few dollars a day and was significantly different from employment in the community.

Missing data. Criminal charge data are coded from criminal records and thus are complete for all respondents. Because close ties and employment are coded from interview data,

these measures are missing for respondents who missed an interview. These data are imputed for a few missing respondents, through reports of networks at reincarceration interviews or retroactive reports of employment at later interviews.

Table A.1. Percentage of adults, aged 19 to 59, living in difference residence types in the U.S. population and among men and women after prison, at one week, two months, six months and twelve months after prison release.

		After Prison Release			
	U.S. population	One week	Two months	Six months	Twelve months
Streets/no set place	0.0	2.5	3.3	1.7	3.6
Group quarters	6.4	32.8	29.2	30.2	37.5
Correctional facility	0.9	0.8	1.7	9.5	17.0
Private household	93.6	64.7	67.5	68.1	58.9
Alone	14.4	1.3	1.2	2.5	9.1
Spouse	36.7	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.5
Partner	8.7	15.2	19.8	20.3	22.7
Parent	14.7	36.7	34.6	34.2	28.8
Sibling	3.5	12.7	17.3	15.2	13.6
Other	22.0	32.9	25.9	26.6	24.2
Total (*N*)	175,195	122	120	116	112

Note: General population data compiled by the author using an urban subsample of the 2012 American Community Survey (Ruggles et al. 2015). Group quarters in the ACS sample includes those in correctional facilities, student housing, residential treatment facilities, skilled nursing facilities, group homes, military barracks, workers' group living quarters, and emergency and transitional shelters (Torrieri 2014). The estimated proportion in correctional facilities is drawn from the Bureau of Justice Statistics 2012 and includes adults outside of cities (Glaze and Herberman 2013). Group quarters in the BRS includes respondents staying in correctional facilities, residential treatment programs, transitional housing programs, sober or rooming houses, and homeless shelters. For those staying between two residences, their primary household is included here. The primary household type is defined by the survey respondent's relationship to the householder. For those who are householders, the household type is defined as their primary adult relationship in the residence. Most other adults in the general population consisted of roommates, while those in the BRS sample commonly resided with other family members, such as aunts or grandparents, and indirect relatives, such as partners' mothers.

Appendix References

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