

DISSERTATION

BREAKING THE CYCLE: THE EXPERIENCES OF JUSTICE-IMPACTED PEER
RECOVERY COACHES AND CLIENTS

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ABSTRACT

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The United States has the largest justice-impacted population in the world, with over 79 million individuals having experienced involvement with the justice system (Prison Policy Initiative, 2026). As a result, there is a growing need for effective programming designed to reduce recidivism and support successful community reentry. One example of this type of programming is wounded healer peer recovery coaching, a distinct form of peer mentorship that encourages previously justice-impacted people to use their lived experience to provide emotional, informational, and instrumental support to clients navigating reentry. Using a case study approach, this project investigates the socialization, emotional, relational, and communicative experiences of wounded healer peer recovery coaches to better understand how coaches learn about and perform their role and how they communicatively build mentoring relationships with clients. Grounded by community reentry, peer mentorship, organizational socialization, and emotion in organization literature, data for this study were collected through 31 semi-structured interviews, 30 hours of ethnographic observation, and 15 arts-based creative drawings gathered from coaches and clients at Hoist Healing, a peer recovery organization. Data were analyzed using Tracy's (2020) phronetic iterative approach. The findings of this study lead to four important theoretical contributions. First, it advances a relational approach to organizational socialization by conceptualizing socialization as an ongoing, co-constructed, and communicative

process. Second, it bridges the wounded healer (LeBel et al., 2015) and peer mentorship (Long; 2025) scholarship to introduce wounded healer peer recovery coaching as a distinct form of peer mentorship within community reentry. Third, it introduces the concept of extreme mentoring to explain the dangers and risks wounded healer peer recovery coach's experience. Finally, this study examines the role of temporality and emotion in coaching relationships to reveal the emotional risks embedded within wounded healer peer recovery coaching. Practical implications highlight the importance of ongoing relational support within organizations, sustainable infrastructure, and training opportunities that help coaches engage in identity work and narrative reframing.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	9
Community Reentry.....	9
Peer Mentorship.....	13
Peer Mentorship.....	14
Communicative Functions of Peer Mentoring and the Wounded Healer	17
Organizational Socialization.....	21
Anticipatory Socialization	21
Encounter	23
Metamorphosis.....	25
Exit.....	25
Liminality.....	26
Emotion in Organizations	27
Chapter Three: Methods	34
Researcher Positionality.....	34
Research Design.....	36
Case Study Approach.....	41
Site Description.....	42
Data Collection	44
Ethnography.....	44
Participants.....	46
Procedures.....	46
Interviews.....	48
Participants.....	49
Procedures.....	50
Data Analysis	53
Qualitative Considerations.....	58
Chapter Four: Findings	66
Learning.....	67
Coaches discovering peer recovery coaching.....	67
Clients experiencing coaching and creating expectations for HH	69
Formal and informal training.....	72
Constructing.....	78
Coaches finding strength in being justice-impacted	79
Shared lived experience as an expectation of coaching.....	83
Using shared identities to construct a peer mentoring relationship	86
Feeling.....	91
Emotions most commonly felt by coaches	91
Emotional demands of coaching.....	94

Client feelings about receiving peer recovery coaching	97
Being	100
Personal Transformation	100
Managing client situations	103
Risking	107
Temporal dangers of coaching	108
Tension of protection	113
Chapter Five: Discussion	117
Theoretical Contributions	117
Practical Implications.....	127
Limitations and Directions for Future Research	129
Conclusion	131
REFERENCES	133
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER	145
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC TABLE	146
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT.....	148
APPENDIX D: LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	151
APPENDIX E: LICENSED PRACTICING CLINICIAN (LPC) INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	152
APPENDIX F: COACH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	154
APPENDIX G: CLIENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	156

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Drawing of the word “success”	85
Figure 2: Drawing of “a bunch of hands and arms coming into one”	86
Figure 3: Drawing of an angel with a halo around its wings	87
Figure 4: Drawing of a sun and a rain cloud.....	92
Figure 5: Drawing of a sun and a thunderstorm	92
Figure 6: Handwritten quote describing peer recovery.....	98
Figure 7: Drawing of a path with a tree and birds	102
Figure 8: Drawing of a person offering a helping hand to another person	102
Figure 9: Model of a relational approach to organizational socialization.....	118

Chapter One: Introduction

“When you help so many people, and those people help other people, you start to get different kind of fruit.” -Murphy, peer recovery coach at Hoist Healing

More than 79 million people are justice-impacted in the United States, meaning they have had contact with the criminal justice system and have likely experienced at least one of the following: substance misuse, homelessness, barriers to employment, complicated familial relationships, mental health crises, and more (Sawyer et al., 2026). The impacts of the justice system permeate all facets of an individual’s life and can create significant barriers to living a life of their choosing, especially as they seek to participate meaningfully in their community. For many people, involvement in the justice system is cyclical, like a revolving door, and it can be difficult to exit once the spinning begins. One approach to breaking this cycle is peer recovery coaching¹—a supportive, reciprocal, communicative relationship between people with similar backgrounds and/or shared experiences. Interest in peer recovery coaching is growing, as is the number of peer recovery professionals, with the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Center for Mental Health Services Research and Policy (2024) reporting that over the last decade, the number of certified peer specialists grew from approximately 30,000 to over 100,000. Despite this growth, demand has outpaced supply and it is estimated that an additional one million peer recovery specialists are needed to keep up (University of Illinois at Chicago’s Center for Mental

¹ Peer recovery coach participants in this study were justice-impacted but not all peer recovery coaches are justice-impacted. Common qualifications for peer recovery coaches include being “well established in their own recovery and self-identify[ing] as an individual with life experience of a behavioral health and/or substance use disorder,” along with valid state certifications (Peer2Peer Recovery Services, 2026). Throughout this project, “justice-impacted peer recovery coach” will be used in reference to study participants.

Health Services Research and Policy, 2024). With such significant growth in and need for peer recovery services, it is imperative that we understand the experiences of those who provide and receive these services to ensure its efficacy and sustainability—the impetus of this project.

From a communication perspective, peer recovery services can be understood as a unique form of mentorship, shaped by a distinct socialization process and an experience that is inherently emotional. Within organizational communication, peer recovery coaching is best conceptualized as peer mentorship, a form of mentorship defined by the relational nature of the mentorship exchange and focus on personal wellbeing (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Mullen & Kilmaitis, 2021). The role of a peer recovery coach aligns in many meaningful ways with traditional notions of peer mentorship but differs significantly in its context, performance, and lived experience. To understand these differences, this project builds on the following bodies of literature—community reentry, peer mentorship, organizational socialization, and emotion in organizations—to investigate the socialization and emotional experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches² and the ways in which coaches and clients communicatively build their mentoring relationship. Using an engaged case study approach, this project partnered with Hoist Healing (HH)³, a peer recovery coaching organization founded and operated by justice-impacted people, to learn more about their experiences.

Community reentry is the process through which justice-impacted people reintegrate into their community. This process is commonly experienced by people transitioning from community corrections, jail, or prison, but also includes justice-impacted people who have not

² “Justice-impacted” is the preferred term for leadership at Hoist Healing, the partner organization for this study, and refers to individuals who have been affected by the criminal justice system. The term “justice-involved” is often used in the literature cited throughout this project, but in the spirit of community engaged research this project uses the terminology preferred by the partnering organization.

³ Hoist Healing is a pseudonym for this study’s partnering organization.

been formally incarcerated (National Reentry Resource Center, 2024). Community reentry is a precarious process for justice-impacted individuals as they are often tasked with navigating complicated, dehumanizing systems that are not always designed to help them succeed. Reentry programming for justice-impacted people typically includes various types of support services including assistance with housing, medical care, education and vocational training, substance abuse treatment, and family support (Anderson-Facile, 2009; Lynch & Sabol, 2001). The provision of such services aims to reduce recidivism and facilitate successful community transitions by addressing factors contributing to criminal activity. Peer recovery coaches can play a pivotal role in facilitating successful community reentry for their clients, functioning as communicative links to provide and coordinate service delivery and conversational resources to help clients construct a positive environment within their community (Koschmann & Peterson, 2013). The provision of such material and emotional resources depends on a peer recovery coach's expertise in navigating these same resources, warranting further investigation into how a coach leverages their justice-impacted identity to support their clients.

Peer mentorship is a communicative exchange between a mentor and mentee in which mentors provide guidance, feedback, and support. By leveraging shared experiences, peer mentorship creates an environment wherein mentors (coaches) and mentees (clients) co-construct meaning as they participate in sensemaking, framing, and identity work (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). The identity work that occurs through the process of peer mentorship directly relates to the concept of the wounded healer. Wounded healers are justice-impacted people who use their lived experience to provide mentorship services to people with similar backgrounds (LeBel et al., 2015). Importantly, wounded healers often frame their work as a shift from once being part of the problem to now being part of the solution (LeBel et al., 2015). This

study sought to bridge the gap between peer mentorship and the wounded healer to explore how justice-impacted peer recovery coaches communicatively build mentoring relationships with their clients, with particular attention to how coaches learn to perform their role as a coach.

Organizational socialization is used to understand how an individual learns to perform their role within an organization. This project used Jablin's (1987) stage model to understand how justice-impacted peer recovery coaches learn about, encounter, and perform their role as a coach. The stage model of organizational socialization is organized in four phases—anticipatory socialization, encounter, metamorphosis, and exit—but it is important to note that organizational members rarely, if ever, experience these stages linearly (Woo & Acosta, 2024). For example, a peer recovery client might not know about peer recovery coaching until they encounter a coach, resulting in a simultaneous experience of the anticipatory and encounter stages of organizational socialization. This means that expectations are being developed at the same time information seeking is occurring, thus demonstrating the non-linear nature of organizational socialization. Each phase in the model of socialization assists in our understanding how organizational newcomers learn and adapt to the values, norms, behaviors, and communication practices of an organization to become functional members. This project employed a relational approach to the study of organizational socialization, meaning the process of socialization was examined as an ongoing, co-constructed, communicative process between coaches and clients, to investigate how coaches learn to provide and perform the mentorship expectations of their clients and organization. To extend this understanding of socialization as a communicative and relational process, it is important to consider how emotions are experienced by both coaches and clients.

Emotion in organizations refers to the feelings, expressions, and management of emotions people experience as organizational members (Elfenbein, 2022). Two common ways to

consider emotion in organizations are emotional work and emotional labor. Emotional work refers to any attempt made on behalf of an individual to manage a recognized and felt emotion (Hochschild, 2003). Emotional labor occurs when the performance of an emotion is related to a profession (Hochschild, 2003; Mishra, 2006). The key difference between emotional work and emotional labor is the performance of emotion. For example, a peer recovery coach might become frustrated with their client and recognize their frustration (emotional work) but choose not to perform or share this emotion with their client to adhere to organizational expectations of emotional performances (emotional labor). These emotional performances are often restricted by organizational expectations and policies with appropriate displays for negative emotions regularly requiring emotional labor (Kramer & Hess, 2002). In the case of peer recovery coaches, negative emotions are a daily occurrence and learning to appropriately respond is an essential function of their profession and ability to build relationships with clients. More than just engaging in emotional labor to perform their role as a coach, coaches are tasked with using their lived experiences to support clients navigating similar circumstances—an inherently emotional and temporal process that creates concert time. Concert time occurs when an individual shares an experience that aligns with another individual's past or present experience, resulting in a feeling of togetherness (Mattley, 2002). This project used emotional concepts—emotional work, emotional labor, and concert time—to understand the emotional experiences of individuals providing and receiving peer recovery services.

In threading these bodies of literature together, this study sought to better understand the unique experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches in the context of organizational socialization and emotion in organizations, and how peer recovery coaches and clients communicatively build their relationship. This project employed a relational approach to the

study of organizational socialization, identifying the ways in which coach and client relationships informed the socialization process. Additionally, it bridged the gap between peer mentorship and the wounded healer, thereby theorizing “extreme mentorship” as a unique mentoring process. It also examined the temporal nature of emotions and concert time in the development of a peer mentoring relationship, reiterating the importance of emotion in organizations. Finally, this project considered the inherent risks associated with providing peer mentorship and identified ways in which organizations can be better attuned to the dangers of such work.

In the following chapter I provide an overview of literature pertinent to this study including community reentry, peer mentorship, organizational socialization, and emotion in organizations. Chapter three includes my positionality as a researcher, an explanation of the research design and data collection procedures, a summary of how data were analyzed, and a review of the criterion used in this study to ensure qualitative rigor. Chapter four presents five key findings of this project—a) *learning*, b) *constructing*, c) *feeling*, d) *being*, and e) *risking* as they relate to the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients using participant drawings, and interview and observational data. Finally, chapter five discusses the theoretical and practical implications of this study as well as the limitations and future directions. Overall, this project sought to deepen our understanding of how communicative and relational processes—particularly organizational socialization and emotional experiences—shape the work and relationships of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and their clients.

Key Terms

The following is a list of terms and their operational definitions used in this study:

Community reentry: The process of reintegrating into the community after being justice-impacted (Zhang et al., 2019)

Concert time: A feeling of togetherness resulting from the alignment of two individuals' past and/or present experiences (Mattley, 2002)

Emotion in organizations: The feelings, experiences, expressions, and management of emotions people experience as organizational members (Elfenbein, 2022)

Emotional labor: The performance of an emotion related to a profession (Hochschild, 2003; Mishra, 2006)

Emotional work: Attempts made by an individual to manage a recognized and felt emotion (Hochschild, 2003)

Justice-impacted/Justice-involved: Individuals who have interacted with the criminal justice system and/or engaged in illegal activities (Bodamer & Langer, 2021)

Lived experience: First-hand experience and personal knowledge developed by directly encountering and navigating situations related to justice-impacted experiences including, but not limited to, mental health, substance use, and homelessness (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, n.d.; Sunkel & Sartor, 2022)

Organizational socialization: The process of learning about and becoming a member of an organization through four (non-linear) stages—anticipatory socialization, encounter, metamorphosis, and exit (Jablin, 1984; Woo & Acosta, 2024)

Peer mentorship: A supportive mentoring relationship grounded by shared or similar experiences wherein the mentor/coach provides support to their mentee/client (Ragins et al., 2017)

Peer recovery coach: An individual with life experience related to behavioral health and/or substance use (Eddie et al., 2019; Peer2Peer Recovery Services, 2026)

Relational socialization: The process of socialization as an ongoing, co-constructed, communicative process between a peer recovery coach and their clients

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This study has two goals: a) to understand the experience of a justice-impacted peer recovery coach, and b) to explore how justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients communicatively build a mentoring relationship. To achieve these goals, this chapter consists of four sections overviewing four bodies of literature—community reentry, peer mentorship, organizational socialization, and emotion in organizations. The first section describes community reentry as it relates to justice-impacted people to establish the relevance, importance, and role of lived experience in the process of providing peer recovery coaching. The second section bridges peer mentorship and the concept of the wounded healer to develop a definition of peer mentorship rooted in lived experience with the justice system. The third section overviews the stage model of organizational socialization to provide a foundation for understanding how individuals come to learn about and perform their roles within an organization. Finally, the fourth section reviews the literature on emotion in organizations to examine how emotional expressions surface in organizational contexts.

Community Reentry

Community reentry is the process through which a justice-impacted person attempts to reintegrate into their community after becoming involved in the criminal justice system. Anderson-Facile (2009) defines community reentry as the “process of reintegrating post-release prisoners into the communities in which they will live, the family structure in which they left, and the world of employment” (p. 184). Zhang and colleagues (2019) provide a more comprehensive definition of community reentry as they include individuals who have had interactions with the justice system but may not have been incarcerated. As individuals

reintegrate, they often rely on community programming, like a peer recovery coach, to connect them with the services and resources they need to be successful. Examples of such services and resources include education and vocational training, housing, transportation, and substance-use treatment. Individual reentry success is circumstantial and some of the most common obstacles people face in attempting reentry include securing housing, gaining employment, and receiving family and community support (Anderson-Facile, 2009; O’Neil et al., 2017; Salem et al., 2021). Lynch and Sabol (2001) argue that barriers to reentry raise “questions about public safety, about how corrections systems should manage the volume of releases, and about how communities can absorb and reintegrate the returning prisoners” (p. 2). Furthermore, the variability of needs and available community services and resources create additional barriers as people without experience navigating these systems rarely know where or how to begin the process of community reentry.

These additional barriers undergird the need for community support in community reentry. For example, securing stable housing is often the most formidable, and immediate, challenge for justice-impacted people (Luther et al., 2011). The burden of housing justice-impacted people often falls on family members, forcing them to assume the financial and emotional responsibility of a dependent adult (Wang, 2022). However, the assumption of this burden is predicated on the expectation that justice-impacted people have family support, which is often not the case. In fact, justice-impacted people have the highest group risk for homelessness in the U.S. and are more than ten times more likely to be homeless than the general public (Stainbrook & Tibaduiza, 2024). Thus, the need for, and barriers to, stable housing exemplify the importance of having community support as justice-impacted people commonly need housing assistance and peer recovery coaches can help clients access safe housing. Indeed,

community reentry is a precarious process, and it is imperative that justice-impacted people “hav[e] an effective social support system as well as access to social networks high in capital” to help facilitate successful reentry outcomes (Opsal & Foley, 2013, p. 271).

These successful outcomes are influenced by access to social support systems and communicative connections that provide social capital, all of which are facilitated by peer recovery coaching. Social capital emerges through networks as individuals are connected to others who can provide information and mutual benefit (Bourdieu, 1986). These networks are valuable because they connect individuals to opportunities and information they would otherwise be unable to access (Koschmann & Peterson, 2013; Putnam, 2000). This is important in the context of community reentry because a common result of being justice-impacted is isolation; individuals are either cut off from the networks that once provided them with social capital or they never had access to begin with (Koschmann & Peterson, 2013). In either case, justice-impacted people have limited access to the social capital required to be successful. Having community support in the form of a peer recovery coach with both social capital and personal knowledge of community reentry processes, resources, and services, is a key component to facilitating successful outcomes.

Peer recovery coaches offer the social support, social network, and social capital clients need to reenter their communities. Due to their own lived experiences, peer recovery coaches are uniquely positioned to provide social support to their clients as they learn how to navigate community reentry services and sobriety (Eddie et al., 2019). The efficacy of this social support is demonstrated by reduced recidivism, reduced substance use and relapse rates, improved relationships with treatment providers, increased treatment retention, and greater treatment satisfaction (Eddie et al., 2019). Social networks refer to the social links that individuals develop

within a community and the ways in which these links influence the behavior of people within the network, meaning social networks are built from the relationships that develop as a result of social support (Mitchell, 1974). The development of these network connections results in social capital as social networks provide access to the resources, information, opportunities, and support that constitute social capital (Luxton & Opsal, 2024). Social capital functions as a mechanism for change during community reentry because it gives justice-impacted people access to resources that would otherwise be difficult for them to attain. As individuals access the resources available to them through their coach's social capital, they are developing and/or repairing their own social networks and creating their hooks for change. Hooks for change refer to those material and immaterial resources necessary for an individual to turn their wish into a reality (Schinkel, 2015). Examples of hooks for change include meaningful community relationships, housing, and employment (Schinkel, 2015). Within the peer recovery relationship, coaches function as both a source and broker of social capital as they help their clients develop their individual hooks for change during their community reentry transitions (Luxton & Opsal, 2024).

Justice-impacted peer recovery coaches play a crucial role in community reentry as they leverage their lived experiences in support of individuals navigating this complex and ongoing process. Opsal and Foley (2013) argue that community reentry requires constant attention to the competition between contradictory needs, stressors, and concerns that constitute the process of community reentry. In the context of this study, peer recovery coaches are uniquely situated to help justice-impacted people learn how to navigate these contradictions because they have already done so themselves. In the process of community reentry, it is the role of a peer recovery coach to help resocialize their clients by repairing gaps in learned social behavior and teaching

them new, prosocial ways to contribute to their community (Byrne, 1989). Existing scholarship has investigated the efficacy of peer recovery coaching in the context of community reentry and found that receiving peer mentorship increased self-efficacy, improved social support and quality of life, and lowered stress (Andreas et al., 2010), increased the likelihood of attaining stable housing and employment (Goldstein et al., 2009), reduced recidivism (Sells et al., 2020), and created deep emotional bonds that enabled mentors to respond to their mentee's emotional and practical needs (Elisha, 2025). These findings exemplify the importance of peer recovery coaching in the process of community reentry, but they do not attend to the communicative nature of peer mentorship. Because of this, little is known about how justice-impacted peer recovery coaches use their previous justice-involvement to communicatively construct mentoring relationships with clients or how they learn to perform their role as a coach.

Peer Mentorship

Understanding the role of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches in the process of community reentry requires careful attention to the relational and communicative elements undergirding peer mentorship. Traditional conceptualizations of mentorship emphasize the role of a mentor supporting, guiding, and facilitating the development of a junior organizational member with particular attention to job performance and organizational hierarchy (Hill et al., 1989). These traditional notions of mentorship focused on career functions, but mentorship scholarship has since expanded and there is increased attention on the relationship between the mentor and their mentee (Long, 2025). Foundational to the creation of the relationship between a mentor and their mentee is the role of communication in developing respect, empathy, connection, and trust (Long, 2025; Mullen & Kilmaitis, 2021). An extension of traditional mentorship is peer mentorship, an alternative mentoring framework centered on shared

experience and relational reciprocity (Douglas et al, 2019; McCormack & Katalinic, 2016;). The following section overviews what we know about peer mentorship, the communicative function of a peer recovery coach in the process of community reentry, and the wounded healer (justice-impacted people who have transitioned from being part of the problem to part of the solution).

Peer Mentorship

Peer mentorship is a relationship in which a mentor provides advice, resources, encouragement, and support to a mentee. A defining feature of peer mentorship is a mentor's attention to both the psychosocial wellbeing and organizational performance of their mentee (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Mullen & Kilmaitis, 2021). In attending to both aspects, mentors provide counseling and encouragement to improve a mentee's confidence and assist them in navigating the realities of their organizational role (Mullen & Kilmaitis, 2021). Irby (2012) describes peer mentoring as "a psycho-social endeavor by individuals working together to create a greater good for both mentors and mentees" (p. 175). This definition highlights another key feature of peer mentorship—relational reciprocity. Relational reciprocity is the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, support, and care that defines peer mentorship (Luedke et al., 2024). Within these relationships, the most important factors for success are trust, authenticity, empathy, collaboration, and companionship (Bellon-Harn & Weinbaum, 2017; Bennetts, 2003; Spencer; 2006; 2007). In addition to these emotional factors, peer mentors are uniquely able to provide experience-related technical knowledge to their mentee, resulting from their primary experience, thus attending to their mentee's role-based needs (Bryant & Terborg, 2008; Eby et al., 2007; Eddy et al, 2005; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Indeed, much of a peer mentor's knowledge is taken-for-granted and not recorded in any formal capacity (Swap et al, 2001) but in developing

a peer mentoring relationship, they are able to use their knowledge to support the wellbeing and performance of their mentee.

Effective peer mentorship is enacted through a series of intentional communicative exchanges that structure the relationship and help mentees develop the skills necessary to perform their role. Rollnik-Sadowska and colleagues (2022) define peer mentoring communication as “a mechanism of mutual relations which lies at the core of establishing contacts as well as a set of all means and methods for transferring information in order to affect the behavior of people,” meaning the role of communication in relational exchanges like peer mentorship is to develop a mentee’s personal and professional skills (p. 2). To better understand how mentors attend to the development needs of their mentees, Buell (2010) identified three models of mentoring characterized by their communicative functions—a) cloning, b) nurturing, and c) friendship. The first model, cloning, posits that mentors seek to control their mentee, creating a duplicate of themselves. In doing so, the mentee is expected to comply and discouraged from being independent. Within a cloning model of mentorship, the relationship is based on fear, with mentees describing their mentors as critical, dominating, and coercive (Buell, 2010). Such descriptors exemplify how the cloning model impedes the development of relational reciprocity within the mentoring relationship. The second model, nurturing, conceptualizes mentoring as “a safe, open environment in which a mentee can both learn and try things for him- or herself” (Buell, 2010, p. 65). In this model, the mentor seeks to empower the mentee to be independent and creative, and mentees describe their mentors as accessible, nonjudgmental, empathetic, and encouraging. The third and final model, friendship, positions mentorship as collaborative and co-constructed between mentor and mentee—peer mentorship. The goal of the friendship model is to create a mutually beneficial interpersonal bond between a mentor and their

mentee as the mentoring pair “enjoys and learns from the other” (Buell, 2010, p. 68). Buell (2010) described friendship model mentors as “someone with whom they were able to talk things through, someone who could be trusted, who listens, and who is encouraging” (p. 68). An especially high value of the friendship model is the respect between a mentor and their mentee (Buell, 2010). The value highlights the importance of the relationship between a mentor and their mentee. Importantly, the friendship model of mentoring was the only one of Buell’s three models to demonstrate a peer mentoring relationship.

As a fundamentally communicative and relational process, peer mentorship is shaped by the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Kram and Isabella (1985) argue that there are three different types of peer mentoring relationships—information peer, collegial peer, and special peer. The primary function of an information peer is to share information. In an information peer relationship, there are low levels of self-disclosure and trust, and, because of this, mentees rarely receive confirmation or emotional support. Importantly, information peers are more likely to provide small amounts of job-related feedback but, due to insufficient trust, are less likely to provide personal feedback. The collegial peer relationship is characterized by the provision of job-related feedback and friendship. This peer relationship is characterized by moderate levels of trust and self-disclosure and increased emotional support, feedback, career strategizing, and confirmation. The last type of peer mentoring relationship, the special peer, is the most intimate peer relationship. Within special peer relationships, self-disclosure and self-expression increase dramatically and mentees receive the highest levels of career-enhancing and psychosocial support, as well as support and understanding. Resulting from the increased intimacy, special peer relationships also provide the most continuity and stability, leading to a sense of bonding that “provides both with a strong sense of security, comfort, and belonging”

(Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 124). Thus, the relationship between a mentor and their mentee is critical to the efficacy of peer mentorship as both parties work to develop a respectful, supportive relationship through communication.

Communicative Functions of Peer Mentoring and the Wounded Healer

The effectiveness of peer mentorship in the process of community reentry hinges on its communicative function as mentors facilitate, coordinate, and share information while simultaneously attending to the emotional needs of their mentees. Koschmann and Peterson (2013) explain that mentors act as “*communication links* [emphasis in original] to enable *coordinated service activity* and are *conversational resources* to help ex-prisoners *socially construct* a favorable post-release environment” (Koschmann & Peterson, 2013, p. 201). Indeed, a peer mentor’s role in the process of community reentry uniquely positions them to attend to the wellbeing of their clients by providing them with emotional, informational, and instrumental supports through the leveraging of shared experience. In the context of community reentry, it is especially important to highlight a peer recovery mentor’s role as a communication link. As Koschmann and Peterson (2013) further explain, a mentor’s role as a communication link is “facilitat[ing] information sharing across agencies that otherwise might not happen” (p. 201). An example of cross-agency information sharing in peer recovery coaching includes a coach communicating with probation or parole offices, the judicial system, and/or community resources on behalf of their client. This is important because it is this linkage, the cross-agency sharing of information, that facilitates successful reentry by bridging institutional gaps and attending to the most pressing needs of mentees. A mentor’s role as a communication link maps directly onto their role as a conversational resource as mentors must effectively communicate with their clients

to identify and respond to their emotional, informational, and instrumental needs, developing relational reciprocity.

The relational component of peer mentorship is exponentially more important within justice-impacted peer mentorship relationships as research suggests justice-impacted people prefer and respond better to mentors with shared lived experiences (Douglas et al, 2019; McCormack & Katalinic, 2016). A key component of justice-impacted peer mentorship is its role in legitimizing an individual's experience within the justice system (Stearns & Yang, 2021). Shared language among individuals with a shared experience empowers them to effectively communicate with those outside of the justice system (Deetz, 2008; Stearns & Yang, 2021). This relates to a mentor's ability to attend to the emotional, informational, and instrumental needs of their mentee. Mentors with primary experience navigating community reentry are better prepared to guide their mentees in doing the same. Existing scholarship has demonstrated peer mentorship's efficacy through reduced recidivism, improved community connection, and reduced substance use (Bellamy, et al., 2019). In each of these studies, peer mentors relied upon their shared and/or similar identities to provide support to their mentee. In doing so, peer mentors create an environment wherein mentors and mentees co-construct meaning as they participate in sensemaking, framing, and identity work (Ragins et al., 2017). In the context of this study, this sensemaking, framing, and identity work occurs as a justice-impacted peer mentor acts as a wounded healer.

Wounded healers are justice-impacted people who use their experience and expertise post-justice involvement to provide mentorship services to people with similar backgrounds or shared experiences (Lebel et al., 2015). In providing peer mentorship and identifying as a wounded healer, mentors can acknowledge their own past harms and wounds while modeling

healing for their mentee. This is a marked transformation as wounded healers transition from “being ‘part of the problem’ into part of ‘the solution,’” an example of the identity work that occurs during the mentorship process (Lebel et al., 2015, p. 108). As they engage in solution-oriented peer mentorship designed to give something back to their community, it helps them prove themselves worthy of forgiveness, exemplifying the framing work of a wounded healer (Halsey, 2006; Lebel et al., 2015, Maruna, 2001; Vaughan, 2007). Existing scholarship suggests that this feeling of worthiness is correlated to “finding a meaningful role in the prosocial world,” and is a crucial element of the wounded healer working to simultaneously heal themselves, others like them, and their communities (Lebel, et al., 2015, p. 110). This process of healing is an example of the sensemaking that occurs in the work of the wounded healer as they understand their previous harms as necessary to (eventually) being of service to their community.

Another way peer mentors work to facilitate successful community transitions is by reworking negatively stigmatized justice-impacted identities into strengths. This reworking is referred to as a process of “retroflexive reformation” whereby an individual who uses their own criminal history to mentor others with similar experiences can closely identify with the person undergoing “reformation” (Sutherland & Cressey, 1955, p. 119; Riessman, 1965). Because a common barrier to community reentry is a justice-impacted person’s “need to prove him or herself to be worthy of forgiveness,” it is important that justice-impacted peer mentors help remove this barrier by sharing examples of their own wholeness (Lebel, et al., 2015, p. 110). Bazemore (1999) refers to this process as “earned redemption,” a strengths-based strategy that views previous justice involvement as an asset to be used to benefit other justice-impacted people. Lebel and colleagues (2015) explicated on this process and found that members of a prison reintegration program viewed their criminal record as an asset that both benefited their

clients and helped ease them of their guilt related to the portions of their lives they had once perceived as “wasted” (p. 110). In sharing personal stories to build relationships with their mentees, justice-impacted peer mentors can “reach back” and help fellow justice-impacted people by “acting as a role model; mentoring others; and, for some, making a career of helping others who are not as far along in the recovery and/or reintegration process” (Lebel, et al., 2015, p. 110). In this way, the wounded healer’s communicative practice of reframing a justice-impacted identity into a source of strength empowers mentees as they reenter their communities, fostering reciprocal healing for the mentor and their mentee.

Existing scholarship has examined peer mentorship and the wounded healer as distinct concepts, creating two gaps in our knowledge about their overlap: a) how these roles are communicatively enacted in justice-impacted peer mentoring relationships, and b) how a justice-impacted peer recovery coach simultaneously performs the role of a peer mentor and a wounded healer. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by introducing and defining the concept of a *wounded healer peer recovery coach* as an individual who uses their lived experience with the justice system to provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support to their client through the process of community reentry. In performing this role, mentorship is not solely the transfer of knowledge or skills, but a communicative process rooted in shared identity, through which lived experience with the justice system is reframed as a source of expertise, inspiration, and connection. Having established the concept of the wounded healer peer recovery coach, it is now necessary to understand how individuals engage in the process of organizational socialization to learn about and perform their roles as coach and client.

Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is the process by which a newcomer learns their role within an organization. Jablin (1987) developed a model for this process that emphasized the role of communication in individuals learning to become contributing members of an organization. This model suggested four phases: 1) anticipatory socialization, 2) encounter, 3) metamorphosis, and 4) exit. Though proposed as a stage model, individuals rarely experience the process of socialization in a linear manner (Woo & Acosta, 2024). This project used socialization as a framework to understand how peer recovery coaches and clients learn about and perform their role as a coach/client. Existing scholarship has thoroughly explored the socialization process (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010; Ferguson, 2018; Howe & Meeks, 2019), but not within the context of peer recovery coaching. In the following section Jablin's (1987) stage model of socialization and Woo and Acosta's (2024) addition of liminality are explained.

Anticipatory Socialization

Anticipatory socialization involves individuals preparing for future roles by learning about the behaviors, norms, values, and expectations of an organization. As the first stage in the process of socialization, this preparation occurs prior to joining an organization, though it is not always purposeful. This phase is nearly all-encompassing and can include everything from an individual's childhood perception of work through adult preparation like educational and vocational training (Crites, 1969; Jablin & Putnam, 2001). Prior to entering an organization, individuals have existing expectations and beliefs about work/labor and how "people communicate in particular occupations and in formal and informal work settings" (Jablin & Putnam, 2001, pp. 5). These conceptualizations shape how we understand the organizations and professions we enter and what our roles will be within them. An example of how anticipatory

experiences shape our understandings of organizations comes from Howe and Meeks (2019) who investigated gendered assumptions of the U.S. military and the Independent Fundamental Baptist Church (IFBC). Both the military and the IFBC are totalistic organizations, meaning the organization controls all aspects of a member's life, requiring strict adherence to rules, norms, behaviors and values (Hinderaker, 2015). Howe and Meeks' (2019) findings exemplified how anticipatory information about the military and IFBC informed assumptions about and concerns related to the tenets of each organization, with women expressing a greater need to conform to organizational norms and sacrifice than men in the organization, all while believing they could not change the organization. While larger implications of this study relate to the need for gender equality within socialization processes, there are also questions of anticipatory socialization—that both women and men had existing beliefs and expectations of their role within their organization prior to their joining based on previous conditioning. Within the broad framing of anticipatory socialization, Jablin (1987) argued for two interrelated but distinct phases, vocational choice/socialization and organizational choice/entry.

The first distinct phase, vocational choice, refers to the process by which individuals form expectations, attitudes, and assumptions about a future career or profession. Vocational choice contends that “as individuals mature from childhood to young adulthood they are intentionally and unintentionally gathering occupational information from the environment” and that they compare this information to their concept of self to help them choose an occupation (Jablin & Putnam, 2001, pp. 6). In doing so, they are making conscious choices that determine the direction of their career (Van Maanen, 1975). This information comes from sources including educational institutions, family members and peers, previous job experiences, and media (Jablin, 1987). Though each of these contexts have an individual influence, they are also interconnected

and embedded within larger systems that shape an individual's vocational development (Jablin & Putnam, 2001).

The second phase, organizational choice, contends that individuals will select their organizations based on their own interests, values, and goals (Jablin & Putnam, 2001). Job applicants typically have positively inflated expectations about the organizations they want to work for resulting from their personal preferences and recruitment strategies that tend to overemphasize the positive aspects of an organization (Jablin, 1987; Wanous, 1980). This overinflation demonstrates the importance of the anticipatory phase in that it is where potential members develop the beliefs and expectations with which they enter an organization. As a result of this conditioning, employment decisions can be made based on inaccurate information. Discrepancies between anticipated and actual experiences can cause surprise for organizational members (Jablin & Putnam, 2001). The possibility for such surprise underscores the importance of this phase as individuals will eventually make decisions about where they want to become an organizational member.

Encounter

The organizational encounter stage of socialization occurs when an individual enters their organization for the first time as an official member, lasting through their first days, weeks, and months. This time period is critical for learning organizationally expected behaviors, values, and beliefs (Schein, 1968). Van Maanen (1975) argues that it is during this initial entry phase that newcomers learn what is "normal" within their organization. The information gathered during this time is crucial for success within the organization and much of what a newcomer learns will become mundane over time, including things like how to properly greet coworkers, appropriate dress, norms of emotional expression, formal and informal rules of communication, appropriate

channels of communication, and more (Conrad & Witte, 1994; Donabedian, et al, 1998; Gilsdorf, 1998; Morand, 1996; & Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). At this stage, newcomers are labeled as new to the organization by existing/veteran members of the organization (Jablin & Putnam, 2001). This label can be advantageous in that it allows newcomers and veterans the opportunity to perceive errors or mistakes as learning opportunities (Jablin & Putnam, 2001). To be clear, organizational newcomers do not enter an organization completely blind, as they have typically experienced some type of anticipatory socialization (vocational and/or organizational choice) related to their role that has shaped their expectations (Jablin & Putnam, 2001). In bridging the gap between what is anticipated and what is expected, newcomers must engage in organizational information seeking.

Information seeking during the organizational encounter phase is commonly marked by uncertainty, discrepancies between expectations and reality, and efforts to make sense of these experiences. Information seeking is an important step in newcomers progressing through the stages of socialization (Jablin & Putnam, 2001, pp. 73). To reduce uncertainty and mitigate the stress of this phase, newcomers can seek information through the following tactics: a) overt—asking direct questions; b) indirect—hinting or using non-interrogative questions; c) third party—asking someone other than the primary target; d) testing—breaking a rule to learn the consequence; e) disguising conversations—easing information by using jokes, prompts, or self-disclosure; f) observing—watching other people’s behavior to model it; and g) surveillance—covertly monitoring the behavior and actions of others to decide what to do (Jablin & Putnam, 2001). The process of information seeking in the organizational encounter phase is important because it helps us understand how newcomers take an active, agentic role in their socialization process.

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis is the stage of socialization wherein an organizational member transitions from being a newcomer into an integrated and experienced member of the organization. During this stage, the member has learned, and performs, organizationally sanctioned behaviors and attitudes. At the same time, they now have the agency and organizational capital to modify and introduce new behaviors and attitudes (Jablin & Krone, 1987). Additionally, reaching metamorphosis demonstrates a member's organizational commitment (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Their commitment is further exemplified through the performance of an organization's culture and effective participation in the organization, resulting in increased job satisfaction (DiSanza, 1995). It is generally assumed by organizational communication scholars that achieving metamorphosis is desirable because it means that an organizational member is comfortable and familiar with the organization's daily to-do (Gist, 2016). Despite these presumptions, not all members of an organization will achieve metamorphosis for a variety of reasons. Gist (2016) argues that achieving metamorphosis in an organization where workplace bullying or short-term employment is normalized might not be in the best interest of an organizational member. Allen (1996) explained the role that personal identities may play in reaching metamorphosis, arguing that her positionality as a Black female academic made her process of organizational socialization "a complex, dynamic, and sometimes emotional process, fraught with issues of oppression and resistance" (Allen, 1996, p. 267). In these ways, members may not ever reach metamorphosis, due in part to the fact that organizations are not always built equitably.

Exit

As the last phase of the stage model of organizational socialization, exit occurs when a member leaves an organization. Organizational exit can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary

exit is employee initiated and can include career changes, life events, and planned retirement (Lindbo & Shultz, 1998; Tan, 2008). Involuntary exit is initiated on behalf of the organization and can include poor employee performance or large organizational changes (Klotz et al., 2021; Kramer, 2010).

Liminality

The process of organizational socialization is useful in understanding how people come to know and perform their roles within an organization, though it is not without its limitations. In expanding our understanding of organizational socialization and the role it plays in our organizational lives, Woo and Acosta (2024) further developed Jablin's (1987) model of organizational assimilation and proposed a refined model of socialization that introduced the concept of liminality. The integration of liminality as a phase in the socialization process explores what happens when "individuals feel neither fully 'in' nor 'out' of their organization," theorizing socialization as a "dynamic and interconnected process through permeable organizational boundaries" (Woo & Acosta, 2024, p. 480). This addition highlights the fact that organizational socialization is a process shaped by moments of uncertainty and ambiguity that require fluidity. By emphasizing the permeability of organizational boundaries, Woo and Acosta (2024) are suggesting that organizational members are constantly negotiating their organizational identities, relationships, and role expectations inside and outside of their organization, meaning there is rarely, if ever, an endpoint for organizational socialization. This is important because it reemphasizes how non-linear the process of organizational socialization can be. For example, Woo and Acosta (2024) used liminality to explain how actively employed early career professionals experienced the socialization process as they sought career advancement opportunities within and outside of their organization. This meant that even though they were

objectively “in” an organization, transitions between roles, career stages, and organizations meant they were subjectively and simultaneously “out” (p. 481-482). The addition of liminality to organizational socialization highlights the nonlinear nature of socialization and invites opportunities for further theoretical expansion. Indeed, existing organizational socialization scholarship has emphasized communication as central to the process of socialization and examined the socialization process from an individual and organizational perspective, but it has yet to explore the interactional processes through which organizational roles are co-constructed in a relational context, like that of peer mentorship. Mentors and mentees engage in the socialization process as they communicatively build their relationship, co-creating the expectations of their role. This is an inherently relational and emotional process and, as one of the goals of this study, the next section provides an overview of what we know about emotion in organizations.

Emotion in Organizations

Emotion in organizations refers to the feelings, expressions, and management of emotions people experience as organizational members. Historically, emotions were separated from organizational life and treated as private issues or barriers to organizational effectiveness (Tracy, 2013). This shifted in the 1990s as scholars began to examine emotions as a core part of organizing (Planalp, 1999), how feelings about work are an integral part of organizational life (Mumby & Putnam, 1992), and how emotional displays are used by organizations to achieve economic goals (Goleman, 1995). These scholarly developments were foundational to the study of emotion in organizations and support Tracy’s (2013) argument that “emotional communication is central to many jobs” (p. 1). Waldron (1994) claimed that a communicative approach to emotion in organizations highlights three key issues: a) emotional performances achieve specific

organizational goals, b) emotions are an ongoing, interactive, negotiated process, and c) communication functions to both package emotions and construct feelings. This means that organizational members learn to negotiate appropriate emotional performances, interpret other people's emotions, and make sense of past emotional events through communication (Tracy, 2013; Waldron, 1994). The notion of emotion as communication is further supported by Kim and Williams (2022) who describe emotion as "communicative and process driven," arguing that emotions are elicited by, manifested in, shared, and socialized through communication (p. 2). A communicative framing of emotion in organizations is necessary to understand how emotional work, emotional labor, and the temporality of emotion function within wounded healer peer recovery coaching.

Emotional work refers to attempts made by an individual to modify their experience of a recognized and felt emotion (Hochschild, 2003; Mishra, 2006). This modification is done to align felt emotions with perceived social expectations of emotional expressions (Hochschild, 1979). The central idea of emotion work is that there is often a gap between what an individual feels and what they think they should feel. In response to this discrepancy, individuals engage in emotion work to determine how they should express themselves (Hochschild, 1979). As a socially constructed, communicative process, emotion work requires individuals consciously attend to their feelings to determine how they should, or should not, be expressed. A key difference between emotional work and emotional labor is the arena in which they occur; emotional work is private whereas emotional labor is public (Hochschild, 1983).

Emotional labor builds from emotional work and requires a public emotional performance as part of a profession (Hochschild, 2003; Mishra, 2006). Hochschild (1983) describes this as the commercial exploitation of emotion work, meaning emotional labor occurs

when an individual performs a particular emotion in service of an organization. This idea is supported by Wharton (1993), who argued that emotional expressions within organizations are organizationally controlled. For example, 911 dispatchers regularly receive distressing calls including homicide, suicide, and domestic violence and they are expected to manage the hysteria of the caller and remain calm, regardless of whatever emotions arise within them (Tracy & Tracy, 1998). This example demonstrates the control an organization can exert over emotional expressions because there is an organizational expectation (taught through the socialization process) that a dispatcher will not exacerbate an already dangerous or tense situation by sharing their own worry or fear. Instead, they must mold their emotional expression to their organization's expectation—thus, emotional labor.

Emotional labor plays an important role in an individual's ability to meet the performative emotional expectations of an organization, especially in the context of care work. Baines and colleagues (1991) define care work as “the mental, emotional, and physical effort involved in looking after, responding to, and supporting others” (p. 11). Because wounded healer peer recovery coaches are responding to and supporting the mental and emotional needs of others, it is an example of care work. Regarding emotional expressions in an organization, it is assumed that individuals in care work will be “focused on the impact of the emotion displays on others rather than on the felt emotions of the individual,” meaning they are generally expected to self-sacrifice to maintain appropriate face within their organization (Kramer & Hess, 2002, p. 76). However, this self-sacrifice is not always negative as Kim and Williams (2022) found that within care work, individuals sustain themselves “by engaging in meaning-making as they communicated with clients” (p. 2). In this sense, emotional labor serves a dual purpose as

individuals are meeting their organization's expectations and deriving meaning from their work through their emotional expressions.

Emotional expression in the workplace has long been a contentious issue. Because of this, emotions in the workplace have previously been thought of as “inappropriate, disruptive, illogical, biased, and weak,” with authentic emotional expressions being discouraged depending on the industry (Putnam & Mumby, 1993, p. 36). For example, in service industries, employees put effort into expressing emotions that their customers find acceptable (but may not be authentic), but in social work professions, more genuine expressions of caring and compassion are expected (Hochschild, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Yanay & Shahar, 1998). In any case, organizations cannot be parsed from emotion because we are all human—meaning that emotional work is happening regardless of an organization's expectation, and emotional labor is occurring when emotional performances are expected and controlled by an organization as a requirement of the role (Mishra, 2006). Furthermore, organizational members are socialized into performing appropriate emotional expressions to adequately do their job (Scott & Meyers, 2005). However, if the performative emotional expressions are expected to be empathetic, caring, and compassionate, as they often are in human service work, organizational members can develop strong connections with clients that can be both positive and negative, impacting the sustainability of an organization and its members (Hullett, et al, 2000; Kim & Williams, 2022; Karabanow, 1999; Miller, et al, 2007; Tracy & Tracy, 1998). Therefore, expressions of emotion in organizations are not mutually exclusive and organizational members experience a range of emotions shaped by the intersections of their personal, professional, and personal/professional lives, all of which are experienced and interpreted across time, necessitating an exploration into the relationship between temporality and emotion.

The temporality of emotion is described by three dimensions of time—inner time, concert time, and spaced time. Inner time exists within an individual’s physical being and is related to how they experience the passage of time (Mattley, 2002). The importance of inner time in relation to emotion is that it is where an individual’s emotions occur and, because it is internal, adaptable, and adjustable, inner time allows a person to simultaneously experience past and present emotions (Mattley, 2002). Concert time occurs when an individual’s inner time is aligned with the inner time of another person, creating congruency and generating a feeling of togetherness (Mattley, 2002). To produce concert time, at least two individuals must select and share relevant past experiences to create unity in the present. This feeling of togetherness exists in time for as long as all involved parties agree to adhere, making concert time a socially constructed product that is reflected by the thoughts, behaviors, actions, and communication of participating members. The final temporal dimension of emotion, spaced time, helps individuals “develop a sense of order and predictability” (Mattley, 2002, p. 366). Spaced time helps us acknowledge the past and future to organize the passage of time—meaning time is socially organized to create a shared structure of time (Mattley, 2002). Without spaced time, time would feel like a personal experience (inner time) with no shared order (Mattley, 2002). Spaced time is the external framework of time that organizes how time is collectively felt and experienced. Spaced time is particularly important to emotion in organizations because it is where organizational rules related to emotional expressions are enforced. Spaced time structures organizational life by anchoring emotional expectations to specific temporal moments, regulating emotional expressions.

At the same time, the temporality of emotion is not linear, but rather cyclical and reflexive. Denzin (1984) explains:

The future, past and present are vividly and reflectively interconnected in the person's emotional acts. The temporality of emotion as lived experience blurs the distinction between the past, present, and future. In emotion the person sits 'perched' looking two directions at once. In the 'saddleback' element of emotional time, the person looks forward and backward at the same time while being pulled into and through the present. (p. 58).

This means that emotions are both experiences and thoughts and they can be reconstructed through memories, a process that can make an emotion be felt anew (Denzin, 1984). Mattley (2002) suggests that this reconstructive quality enables individuals to temporally shift between the past and the present, relying on interpretations of past emotions to make sense of those experienced in the present. Spaced time provides the structural conditions necessary to organize emotional experiences, and the cyclical and reflexive nature of emotional experiences explains how individuals actively interpret and rework their emotions over time. Though existing scholarship has conceptualized emotion in organizations as communicative, socially constructed, and organized by time, it has not investigated how emotional experiences are co-constructed and temporally negotiated within relational contexts like wounded healer peer recovery coaching.

Taken together, the literature on community reentry, peer mentorship, organizational socialization, and emotion in organizations emphasizes the fundamentally communicative and relational nature of wounded healer peer recovery coaching. While existing scholarship has explored the process of community reentry, the role of a peer mentor and the wounded healer, the efficacy of peer mentorship in the process of community reentry, the process of organizational socialization, and the role of emotion in organizations, little is known about how each of these bodies of literature exist in relation to wounded healer peer recovery coaching. This scholarly gap is worthy of exploration because the need for certified peer specialists continues to grow and it is imperative that we create and maintain the infrastructure necessary to support their lifesaving work. To do so, this research asked the following questions:

RQ1: What is the experience of a justice-impacted peer-recovery coach?

RQ1a: What is the socialization experience of a justice-impacted peer-recovery coach?

RQ1b: What is the emotional experience of a justice-impacted peer-recovery coach
during mentorship?

RQ2: How do justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients communicatively build their
mentoring relationship?

Chapter Three: Methods

This engaged qualitative project was performed using a case study approach, interviewing, and ethnographic observation to collect data with justice-impacted peer mentors (coaches) and mentees (clients) at Hoist Healing (HH).⁴ The following methods section provides my positionality as a researcher, this project's research design, an overview of the case study approach with a site description, data collection procedures, data analysis, and qualitative rigor considerations.

Researcher Positionality

My interest in this project is deeply personal and stems from my curiosity about and experiences with justice-impacted communities. As such, it is imperative to acknowledge how my personal interests have shaped this study. Research is a shared space shaped by the identities and perceptions of both the researcher and participants (Bourke, 2014). This co-shaping of research is best explained by England (1994) as a "*process*, not just a product" (p. 82). The process of this project began in the Fall of 2021 when I taught my first class in prison. I worked with the same cohort of students through the Spring, never meeting them in person due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was not until June of 2022 that I was able to go in person to "meet" the students with whom I had spent nearly a year learning. During our first meeting for a communication and diversity class, I began with the assumption game, asking each student to look at me in person for the first time and say whatever assumptions came to mind. They all sat

⁴ The terms coach and client are used in place of mentor and mentee as they are the preferred terms used by Hoist Healing. Hoist Healing, and all names used in this dissertation, are pseudonyms.

quietly for a moment before one student, Derrick, sitting pensively in the back, looked me in the eye and firmly said “You’ve never experienced struggle in your life.” I was completely taken back as I had been anticipating the activity would start and stay silly. Instead, I found myself standing in front of a room of 20 incarcerated men, wondering about the meaning of the word “struggle.” Comparatively, I have not struggled in the same way as many of my students—I have never experienced homelessness or food insecurity, I am not a substance user, and the only interaction I have ever had with law enforcement was with a police officer at Walt Disney World whose badge was in the shape of a mouse (I did not get a ticket, in case you were wondering). As I stood there, thoughts of the meaning of “struggle” running through my head, I heard chuckles throughout the room. Clearly most of my students agreed with what Derrick had said and found humor in our differences.

In the moment, I laughed it off and encouraged them to keep going. However, I have thought about that comment nearly every day since it happened, using it as a reminder to stay curious, conscious, and intentional in understanding how my role “may both assist and hinder the process of co-constructing meanings” (Berger, 2015, p. 220). In doing so, Derrick eventually disclosed some of the struggles he had experienced in his life including homelessness, addiction, and complicated family relationships, all of which factored into his incarceration. It was during his incarceration that he enrolled in the Prison Education Program for which I taught and became one of my students. During his time as an incarcerated student, he received his certificate in strategic communication, taught his own series of public speaking classes at a different correctional facility, received his peer mentorship certification while incarcerated, and was paroled in January of 2024. Since then, he co-founded and directs HH, the organization at the

center of this case study. In collaborating with him and his organization this project sought to center and celebrate “the contributions that imprisoned persons can and do make” (Harriott & Aresti, 2018). This project is the culmination of years’ worth of my and my collaborators’ work, and the following research design is the result of collaborative conversations with both HH and my dissertation committee.

Research Design

This project investigated the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients. More specifically, the study asked about the socialization and emotional experiences of peer recovery coaches (RQ1) and how the relationship between coach and client influences a coach’s socialization experience (RQ2). This research used an engaged approach, seeking to “empower social groups to be given the tools to speak for and by themselves” (Milan, 2010, p. 857). In conducting engaged research, there is an inherent tension between doing research *about* and doing research *with* (Milan, 2010). To effectively do research *with* an organization, there must be “a commitment from both sides to collaborate and come to terms with the reciprocal differences, a long-term time frame, recurrent cycles of reflection, and constant adjustments along the way” (Milan, 2010, p. 858). This project was intentional in its design, using a community engaged approach to research through collaboration with HH. It is important to note that while none of the participants in this study were actively incarcerated during the time of their participation, their being justice-impacted raised many of the same concerns scholars conducting research with currently incarcerated people experience. Because justice-impacted people are regularly hidden from public view, and have experienced historic mistreatment and inequities, they are often hesitant to participate in research (Haverkate, et al., 2020).

One way that this project responded to this hesitancy was through ethnography—Derrick and I agreed it was important that I share space with both coaches and clients to demonstrate my commitment to their wellbeing and desire to learn *with* them, not about them. I first built rapport with coaches by attending outreach events with them. Outreach events were held at day resource centers, homeless shelters, ready to work program centers, and churches. The coaches at HH attend and host outreach events to find prospective clients, distribute business cards and flyers with their services listed, and provide services like cell phones, rides to sober living houses, and enrollment in Medicaid. To my delight, building rapport with coaches was a natural segue into building rapport with clients as they became familiar with my presence and aware of this project. As part of the research design, the process of building rapport with coaches and clients placed justice-impacted people at the center of this research as it related to them and their experiences. Furthermore, it invited them to define the problems they face and participate in the creation of solutions to them (Haverkate et al., 2020). This was an attempt at mitigating the “problem of speaking for others,” as this project created space for justice-impacted people to exercise their voice (Alcoff, 1991, p. 7). Using such engaged practices made this project better as it sought to “respect that which is other and different” (Deetz, 2008, p. 295). This is especially relevant as academics have historically “used incredible social and economic resources to produce a lot of stuff that is unavailable and unreadable in a time of incredible social need” (Deetz, 2008, p. 290). It was crucial for this study to use an engaged approach, not only because justice-impacted people are the experts in their own lives, but because it is important that as we do research, we work to not replicate past harms. Doing so helped prevent this research from becoming yet another “unavailable and unreadable” production of knowledge, instead co-creating something meaningful for my collaborators and me.

In co-designing this project, an additional concern arose related to power differentials within engaged research. Power inherent to the role of “researcher” can privilege the standpoint of a scholar as “knower,” implicitly pitting them against minoritized groups, like justice-impacted people (Payne & Bryant, 2018). Responding to this implicit pitting, this project was intentional in its collaboration, ensuring participants were aware of HH’s involvement in the research design. However, an additional consequence that can arise from the use of an engaged approach is the assumption that engaged research is anecdotal and lacking in objectivity and academic rigor (McAleese & Kilty, 2019). Engaged scholars have responded to this critique by “discursively construct[ing] themselves in dual roles of academic-community member, advocat[ing] for researcher reflexivity to manage power dynamics, and privileg[ing] theory-practice integrative outcomes” (Wolfe & Champine, 2023, p. 146). As engaged scholars seek to contend with what it means to produce “good scholarship,” they are uniquely positioned to provide opportunities to involve their collaborators in meaningful ways. This study did just that through its collaboration with HH.

To produce good scholarship, I proposed this project to Derrick in December of 2024, a month after he had opened HH, and we began by thinking through what a collaboration between the two of us would look like. I entered the project interested in the experience of justice-impacted peer-recovery coaches (RQ1). Derrick shared these interests and asked that we include a client component—in addition to excitement about learning how to better support his employees, he wanted to know more about how his clients were experiencing his organization and how we could use this project to benefit everyone affiliated with HH. In response to this request, I worked with leadership to create the questions they wanted asked of their coaches and

clients. These questions were added to the appropriate interview protocol to serve HH's interests and, after data collection, responses to these questions were made anonymous, cleaned, and made available to leadership at HH. Examples of questions they wanted me to ask coaches include "Is the reward of a being a peer recovery coach greater than the sacrifice?" and "What can we do to make it easier for you to do what you do?" Examples of questions they requested I ask of clients include "Do you feel as though your coach at HH is meeting your needs?" and "What can your peer coach do to make it easier for you to be successful?"

Throughout my conversations with HH, we heeded Milan's (2010) advice and "regularly question[ed] our identities and roles" as we co-created our project "in a complex and challenging social world" (p. 858). For example, we regularly discussed how my understanding of being justice-impacted comes from what I have read and conversations I have had with justice-impacted students in carceral facilities, whereas Derrick's understanding comes from lived experience, or, as he described in his leadership interview his "master's degree in understanding the struggle." We discussed the importance of our working together to legitimize underrepresented voices and highlight the needs of justice-impacted people. Finally, we talked about the political climate, nationally and locally, and how justice-impacted people continue to be scapegoated and stigmatized. These conversations resulted in a stronger project as we critically considered the social problem this project sought to investigate and why we were the best people to do it.

These conversations proved more necessary than we had initially anticipated when, midway through data collection, HH experienced an unanticipated funding crisis. For context, coaches at HH are paid only for time spent providing peer coaching services to clients. This means that to get paid, they must have a client's Medicaid number and, after tracking the hours

they spend providing services including intake questionnaires, individual and group therapy sessions, transportation, resource connection, and more, they submit their client facing hours to Medicaid for payment. On July 1, 2025, Medicaid in the state where HH operates cut their hourly reimbursable rate for peer recovery coaching services in half. This caused leadership and staff at HH extreme concern as overnight every coach's pay was slashed and there were serious concerns as to whether HH would be able to continue operating. Furthermore, there was not an additional source of funding available as Medicaid is the only insurance that covers peer recovery coaching services (billing them as outpatient behavioral health services). Fortunately for HH, they were able to weather the storm and since the completion of data collection they have expanded their team of coaches and created a nonprofit to further support their efforts. The collaborative design of this project is one of the primary reasons this study was able to weather the storm alongside HH and the findings have since been used to support the organization's expansion efforts. For example, one of the needs regularly identified by coaches and clients was housing and in response to the funding cuts, Derrick has since begun the process of transforming one of his peer recovery locations into transitional housing and a day resource center for HH clients to use. This example demonstrates this project's engaged commitment "to be *in* [emphasis in original] the world rather than *about* the world," as the findings have been made practical and put in conversation with community (Deetz, 2008, p. 290). This was especially important as we continuously considered the various justice-impacted identities that participated in the project and sought to ensure participants felt their experiences were being honored. In the following section, I provide an overview of the case study approach, why it was selected for this project, and further information about HH through a site description.

Case Study Approach

A case study approach provides an opportunity to develop an in-depth, detailed understanding of a phenomenon at a particular site. This approach was selected for this research because people generally arrive at their understandings of the world through experience to “help them understand social problems and social programs, we must perceive and communicate in a way that accommodates their present understandings” (Stake, 1978, p. 5). This requires that we attend to the more effective ways in which we can extend understandings—by detailing and providing the experiences of others to “acquaint man with himself” (Stake, 1978, p. 5). Case studies are largely comprised of narrative, and “good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life.” A case study was well suited for this project because it allowed me to delve into the lived experiences of justice-impacted peer-recovery coaches and clients at HH through an invitation to tell their stories (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 237). Indeed, people are “story-telling animal[s]” and narrative provides us with insight into those experiences we have already lived, those with which we look forward to living, and the alternatives to everything in between (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 214; Mattingly, 1991). As Flyvbjerg (2006) claimed, narrative inquiries “cannot start from explicit theoretical assumptions. Instead, they begin with an interest in a particular phenomenon that is best understood narratively” (p. 240). The pursuit of narrative inquiry creates an opportunity for richness and depth of a particular phenomenon that a case study approach is well-suited to explore. Case studies are tried and true when it comes to improving understanding and adding to experiences in discovering the truth of a particular occurrence—hence the reason this approach was selected for this project as it sought to understand and improve the socialization and emotional experiences of HH’s coaches and clients.

Site Description

The site chosen for this research is HH, a peer-recovery coaching organization founded by Derrick in November 2024, providing peer recovery services to justice-impacted people by justice-impacted people. At the time of data collection, HH was only located in Pondtree, USA, a suburb of a large capital city in the Western part of the United States. However, since the completion of data collection HH has expanded and now has an additional facility in Granola Fountain, USA, an hour south of Pondtree. At the time of data collection, HH was led by Derrick, Adam, and Ellen who, in addition to their work as leadership, coached for HH and managed their own client caseloads. There were three additional coaches at HH, Becky, Calvin, and Murphy. In addition to HH leadership, all coaches were supervised by two Licensed Practicing Clinicians (LPCs). One of the LPCs, Cindy, was interviewed for this project to provide additional organizational context and sensitize me to an LPC's role in the process of peer recovery coaching. While data from her interview does not appear in the findings, it was instrumental in my understanding of the organization. Coaches at HH had an average caseload of between 15 and 30 clients. Derrick explained that a "healthy" caseload was 15-20 and that once coaches exceeded that, it became difficult to manage. However, because coaches are paid by hours spent per client and many clients receive coaching services inconsistently due to their circumstances, most coaches carry a higher caseload. HH provides outreach services to local justice-impacted communities by attending and hosting outreach events, what they refer to simply as "outreach," to meet with current and potential clients and connect them with the services and resources they need. Services offered through outreach include help with "documentation, employment, housing, recovery, food stamps, Medicaid, free SIM cards and

phones.” These services are listed on the flyers distributed at outreach, and Murphy, a coach at HH, spoke on their usefulness saying:

One thing that Hoist Healing did that was a great thing, [points to flyer] is that it shows on there “Do you need a solution? Do you need help with documentation, employment, all of that?” That was smart for them to do that because if I don't have this, and I tell people I'm a peer recovery coach, the first thing they think about is addiction and there's some people who are not drug addicts, never used, but are homeless, are slightly offended when I tell them I'm a peer recovery coach, ask them “do you need a peer recovery coach?” They're offended because they think I'm calling them an addict.

These flyers proved useful for coaches because during outreach events I regularly observed coaches distributing flyers as they onboarded new clients, set appointments to complete intake questionnaires with Cindy, their LPC, and made appointments for clients at the DMV to get documentation. To begin their onboarding process, clients had to complete an outreach form for recovery services that includes information like client first and last name, their date of birth, contact information, Medicaid number, social security number, and signature. In addition to their outreach forms, clients receive a pamphlet that explains HH's purpose as:

creat[ing] a supportive community where individuals can engage in meaningful peer-to-peer relationships that facilitate healing and personal development. We aim to provide the tools and guidance necessary for individuals to build life skills, practice self-care, and develop effective crisis strategies, ultimately guiding them towards sustained recovery and the achievement of their personal and life goals.

The pamphlet also provides an overview of the peer support and counseling services provided by HH including:

Peer support: Goal setting and motivation, emotional support through shared experience, resource navigation, crisis support and safety planning, life skills coaching, support group facilitation, reentry and legal support, and free phones and SIM cards.
Counseling: Depression, anxiety, substance use, trauma, PTSD, and much more.

At the time of data collection, their Pondtree location was used to provide on-site coaching, a community kitchen, job readiness center, interview preparation and clothing, charging stations, a restroom, and as a gathering place for clients. At HH, their mission is to:

Foster a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers individuals on their unique journeys to recovery. We cultivate transformative peer-to-peer relationships and provide vital resources that promote healing, personal growth, and resilience. Our mission is to instill hope and purpose, while equipping individuals with life skills, self-care practices, and effective crisis strategies, guiding them toward their recovery, wellness, and life goals. We embrace multiple pathways to recovery and are dedicated to dismantling the stigmas surrounding addiction, harm reduction, mental health, and recovery. Together, we elevate individuals to new heights of success and fulfillment, transforming lives and enriching communities along the way.

Taken together, the materials and services offered by HH exemplify their commitment to their clients and interest in supporting sustained recovery pathways, a commitment that was further demonstrated by their willingness to participate in this research.

Data Collection

Following study approval from Colorado State University's (CSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB), data collection began. Participation criteria for both ethnographic and interview data collection required participants to be eighteen or older, be providing or receiving peer-recovery services at or from HH, and be justice-impacted/have lived experience. Lived experience was defined by HH as having experienced struggles with homelessness, addiction, substance use, mental health, and more. As collaborators in this study, HH's assistance in recruiting participants for this study was vital to the success of the project and attaining a representative sample (Morgan, 1997). Participant screening occurred through conversation to ensure prospective participants met study eligibility criteria.

Ethnography

Ethnographic fieldwork was an appropriate method for this study because it allowed me to observe coach's communicative practices in their natural context. For example, I would have never understood the importance of providing clients with phones if I had not been at multiple outreach events where every single conversation began with "Y'all got any phones?" and ended

with a coach having a new client (that they were able to contact through their new phone). Put in conversation with the case study approach used in this study, an ethnographic case study enabled this project to observe how coaches at HH build their clientele through community outreach, how HH coaches and HH clients informally communicate (no private coaching sessions were observed in this study), and how HH clients communicate with one another about peer recovery coaching. As a form of data collection, ethnographic fieldwork is useful in learning about the everyday experiences and practices of participants (Gill, et al, 2014). There are significant advantages to engaging in ethnographic data collection including:

insight into otherwise invisible aspects of people's work; offer[ing] individuals opportunities to explain what they are doing, when they are doing it; allow[ing] connections to be observed across dispersed work teams; and yield[ing] a holistic understanding of work that may be missed through traditional interviews (Gill, et al, 2014, p. 70).

This approach to understanding allowed for a focus on the complex, interrelated processes that constitute our social relationships as opposed to just the individual (Gill et al., 2014; Quinlan, 2008). As an engaged project, this research was interested in using ethnography to gain insight into the otherwise invisible aspects of justice-impacted peer recovery services to learn from justice-impacted coaches and clients how they do what they do. Engaging with participants in this manner created opportunities to better contextualize and understand the phenomenon of peer recovery coaching through dialogue, repetition, and exposure, creating depth. By depth, I am referring to the rich, nuanced, and contextually grounded understanding of justice-impacted peer recovery coaching at HH that emerged through sustained engagement with participants as they shared, and I learned from, their lived experiences. This depth is known most intimately by the people providing and receiving coaching services and ethnography was useful in observing how such services were provided and experienced at HH. It is important to note that, as is with all

methods of data collection, there are limits to depth possibilities as relationships with participants can change throughout the duration of the study and as the researcher makes decisions about who and what they choose to shadow (Gill et al., 2014; Gilliat-Ray, 2011; Quinlan, 2008). Despite these limitations, ethnography is a useful method of data collection in studying justice-impacted populations, as is demonstrated by previous scholarship that has used it to study the implementation of a community court model, the practice of punishment in a youth-offender facility, and how the entry portal of the US detention system operates (Gal & Dancig-Rosenberg, 2020; Gray & Salole, 2006; Wacquant, 2002). In each of these contexts, ethnography was used as an embodied methodological practice to investigate relationships between the field, the self, and knowledge with justice-impacted communities.

Participants. Ethnographic participants include justice-impacted peer-recovery coaches and clients at HH. Ethnographic data was collected on-site at HH and during outreach events at day resources centers, homeless shelters, ready to work program centers, and churches. There were no formal recruitment strategies used to collect ethnographic data collection as HH provided organizational consent to conduct observations. At events/locations where ethnographic data were collected, coaches and clients were advised that a researcher was on the premises and that if they did not want to participate in the study they need only inform the researcher or a coach.

Procedures. Ethnographic data was collected from June to September 2025. To collect ethnographic data, I used Cruz's (2016) conceptualization of ethnographic trace. This method includes a detailed record of a researcher's experience in the field including daily observations and personal reflections. Cruz (2016) further described this type of ethnographic data collection as "residues of something long lost—as a methodology to study the shadow in traumatized

communities” (p. 218). The trace component involves special attention to how members of traumatized communities make sense of their experiences, particularly in relation to other members of their community. My decision to use this approach is trifold. First, trace ethnography is particularly well suited to studying communities wracked with trauma, as justice-impacted communities commonly are. Second, because trace ethnography is sensitive to how traumatized members make sense of their experiences in relation others, it was useful in considering how the idea of the “wounded healer” shows up in coaching relationships. And third, as an outsider, “[being] removed from the traumatized community, I was able to sense disconnects between the normalcy of the everyday and the realm of the repressed,” (Cruz, 2016, p. 219). For example, during one of my visits to HH, I watched as three homeless clients left HH at the end of the day only to stop each time they saw something they needed on the ground—change, nearly empty water bottles, a sock—all items I regularly overlooked or would pick up to discard as trash, but for these clients, these items were necessary for their survival in some capacity. Throughout my ethnographic data collection, I was repeatedly reminded to be humble and stay curious as I had been invited into a world that I had not previously experienced.

I completed a total of 30 hours of ethnographic observation at sites including day centers, sober living houses, ready to work program centers, and churches. Fieldnotes were collected throughout my observation and revisited each night. Fieldnotes resulted in 16 pages of handwritten notes. During my drive home from each location, I recorded voice memos summarizing the day’s observations and providing my commentary and initial analysis. These voice memos resulted in 1 hour and 30 minutes of audio and, once transcribed, 17 pages of single-spaced text. As I revisited my notes, they were cleaned and read for clarity to produce “fresher, more detailed recollections that harnessed [my] involvement with and excitement about

the day's events" (Emerson, et al, 2011, p. 49). Doing so allowed me to both release the weight of what I had observed and focus my analysis on reviewing, remembering, and writing, preventing the immediacy of the events from fading, making the process of writing the ethnographic accounts more accurate and fun, and providing rich, detailed notes for use in my analysis (Emerson, et al, 2011). As data collection progressed, this reflective time became increasingly sacred as the weight of coach and client experiences began to weigh on me. During this time, I felt deep and profound gratitude for each of my participants as their willingness to be vulnerable is the reason this project exists.

Interviews

Interviews are useful in collecting data because they allow for an in-depth understanding of a particular experience from someone who has lived it. They are well suited to gather information and stories from people about a particular experience (Ellingson, 2017). When using face-to-face interviews, the researcher and the participant can connect with one another and honor the experience and time being shared. Gemignani (2017) argues that during an interview, a researcher is "a facilitator, collaborator, and 'travel companion' in the exploration of experience" (p. 127). Because this is an engaged study, the collaborative aspect of interviews was particularly useful. Qualitative scholars *actively* engage in interviewing as participants and researchers "generate meanings within the encounter, through verbal and nonverbal communication, framing interviewing as a co-construction within a specific context" (Ellingson, 2017, p. 102). This active engagement is beneficial to the process of co-constructing knowledge as participants and the researcher create shared meaning. It is this active relationship between consenting parties that "activates" the production of a narrative and sharing of an experience (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p. 123). Narrative activation comes from "questions, probes, and comments, [and] physical

appearance, facial expressions, gestures, posture, proximity, [and] voice signals including tone, inflection, speech rate, and volume” (Ellingson, 2017, p. 102). It is this interaction that creates and constructs knowledge. Previous scholarship has used interviewing to better understand the lived experiences of justice-impacted people, noting ethical and methodological considerations, motivations of behavior modifications during incarceration, the influence of social support networks on the mental health of incarcerated people, and the ways in which perceptions of physical confinement and time relate to the process and analysis of data collection (Abad et al., 2015; Solbakken & Wynn, 2022; Tunnell, 1998). Within each of these studies, interviewing was used as a collaborative tool to make sense of the experience of justice-impacted people. Building from this body of research, this study used interviews to investigate the experiences of justice-impacted peer-recovery coaches and clients to better understand their socialization and emotional experiences.

Participants. Interview participants ($n=31$) included justice impacted peer-recovery coaches and clients at HH and one of HH’s LPCs. Recruitment strategies for interviews included recruitment flyers (see Appendix A) posted onsite at HH’s Pondtree location and at outreach events, recommendations by HH through personal networks, and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a recruitment strategy in which participants are asked to identify and refer other individuals who meet the study’s criteria (Lindolf, 2002). I conducted four interviews with HH leadership, six interviews with HH coaches, and twenty-four interviews with HH clients. Three members of the leadership team are also coaches, resulting in an overlap and equaling 31 total participants and 34 total interviews. Participants were asked to self-identify their age, race, and gender.

The age range for leadership was 33 to 47 ($M=40$). All leadership at HH self-identified their race as White. Leadership at HH included two females and two males. Total time in peer recovery services for leadership at HH ranged from 5 years to 10 years ($M=7$ years and 2 months). Their time in leadership with HH ranged from 1 month to 9 months ($M=6$ months and 1 week).

The age range for coaches, including the three also in leadership, was 33 to 47 ($M=42$). Five coaches at HH self-identified as White and one as Black. Nationally, 18% of peer recovery coaches identify as Black or African American and 67% identify as White, making this a representative sample (Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts, 2023). Coaches at HH included three females and three males. Total time in peer recovery services for coaches ranged from 6 months to 8 years ($M=3$ years and 6 months). Their time as a coach at HH ranged from 6 weeks to 9 months ($M=6$ months and 2 weeks).

The age range for clients was 25 to 59 ($M=43$). Client self-identified races included White/Caucasian ($n=8$), Hispanic/Latino ($n=7$), African American/Black ($n=4$), Black Asian ($n=1$), Black Caribbean ($n=1$), Middle Eastern ($n=1$), Mexican Native ($n=1$), and Mixed ($n=1$). Client gender included 7 females and 17 males. Total time receiving peer recovery services ranged from 3 weeks to 5 years ($M=6$ months and 2 weeks). Their time as a client with HH ranged from 2 weeks to 5 months ($M=2$ months and 3 weeks). See Appendix B for full participant demographic data.

Procedures. Interview data were collected in-person from July to September 2025, resulting in a total of 24 hours and 23 minutes of audio recording. After receiving participant consent (see Appendix C), this project used semi-structured in-depth interviews with unique

protocols for leadership, the LPC, coaches, and clients. Individual interview protocols were designed to account for the different roles and experiences of each participant group.

The protocol for leadership (see Appendix D) asked questions about their responsibilities at HH, expectations for their organization's participation in this project, and the training provided to coaches at HH. Example questions for leadership include "What training is provided to coaches at HH?" and "If a coach is no longer able to provide services to their clients, what do you do?" The protocol for the LPC (see Appendix E) asked questions about her role at HH and how she perceived peer recovery coaching at HH. Example questions include "What is the relationship like between clinical and peer recovery staff?" and "When a coach is onboarding a new client, what is your role in that process?" Leadership interviews ranged between 19 and 48 minutes ($M=30$ minutes), resulting in 48 pages of single-spaced text. Interviews with leadership were used to sensitize me to the organization and responses were not included in the findings of this study, though they were coded to ensure I had a comprehensive understanding of HH.

The protocol for coaches (see Appendix F) included broad questions about their experience as a peer recovery coach and specific questions about their socialization and emotional experiences at HH. Example questions for peer recovery coaches include "How does your personal experience with the justice system influence your approach to coaching?" and "What is the most difficult part of providing peer recovery coaching?" Coach interviews ranged between 50 and 85 minutes ($M=1$ hour and 3 minutes), resulting in 99 pages of single-spaced text.

The protocol for clients (see Appendix G) included broad questions about their experience receiving peer recovery coaching and specific questions about their emotional experience with their coach at HH. Example questions for peer recovery clients include "What

role does your peer recovery coach play in your life?” and “How do you let your peer recovery coach know you are struggling?” Client interviews ranged between 19 and 71 minutes ($M=40$ minutes), resulting in 209 pages of single-spaced text.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, I offered coaches and clients the opportunity to engage in creative drawing. Creative drawing is an arts-based approach that Liebermann and Parker (1991) found to be restorative for people experiencing trauma as it provides an outlet for participants to process and express complex and subtle information that might otherwise be difficult to verbalize. In addition to helping people process trauma, arts-based approaches are also beneficial for exploring emotionally turbulent topics (Kearney & Siegman, 2004) and describing workplace experiences through visual metaphors (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2015). Coaches were invited to “illustrate how it feels to provide peer recovery coaching,” and clients were invited to “illustrate how it feels to receive peer recovery coaching.” In total, 5 of 6 coaches and 10 of 24 clients interviewed chose to engage in creative drawing. Participants who did a drawing were asked to explain their drawing at the end of the interview. An arts-based approach was used in this project to invite participants to think about the role peer-recovery coaching plays in their life while also providing a potential opportunity for them to process some of their own trauma. The methodological addition of an arts-based creative approach increased the richness of this study as it provided additional depth to participants’ stories and experiences.

Data for this project were collected in phases. The first and ongoing phase, ethnography, was used to build rapport with coaches and clients and introduce the project to potential participants. The second phase was the completion of interviews with leadership, coaches, and HH’s LPC, in that order. The third phase was the completion of client interviews. Though it was the first phase, ethnographic data were collected throughout each of the three phases and ceased

when the final client interview was conducted in September 2025. Data collection was staggered in this way to align with best practices for engaging with justice-impacted communities as it was important to establish trust and rapport prior to conducting interviews (Cabral, 2026). All interview participants received a \$25 Walmart gift card for their time. Walmart was selected in collaboration with HH as Derrick and Adam felt it was the most accessible and appropriate location for their coaches and clients. Data were collected until it was determined that saturation had been reached, meaning no new information or themes were observed (Guest, et al., 2006). After completing data collection, I moved to the data analysis phase.

Data Analysis

Data collected from this study were analyzed using Tracy's (2020) phonetic iterative approach. This approach was helpful in identifying and understanding the dynamic and fluid nature of social action and the situated meanings that constitute social interaction (Tracy, 2020). Alternating between emergent and existing models of data, an iterative analysis refers to "a systematic, repetitive, and recursive process" (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, p. 1). After completing data, the data were analyzed to "address and transform real-world concerns" (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, p. 1). An iterative approach was used because the data collected in this study is actively related to existing literature, priorities, and theories within the academic and practitioner communities (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). As an interdisciplinary project, this study draws upon multiple bodies of existing scholarship, bridging gaps between organizational communication, sociology, and criminology. Relevant to my research questions, I returned most often to existing literature on organizational socialization, organizational emotions, and the wounded healer to guide my analysis of the data while simultaneously allowing emergent themes to naturally extend previous literature (Tracy, 2018). This approach allowed me to vacillate between an inductive

and deductive approach and required that I visit and revisit the data to connect it with emergent and etic insights (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017).

The first step in my data analysis was the data immersion phase wherein I talked with my project collaborators, participants, peers, and mentors about my initial interpretations and read through my notes and transcripts. As initial themes began to emerge, I began the process of primary-cycle coding. Codes are “salient or evocative attributes of the data” that relate to a certain interpretation—it is the “active process of identifying data as belonging to or representing” something with which we are already familiar (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, p. 4). To begin primary-cycle coding, I uploaded my data into MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software system, and created three folders for my project—one for leadership, one for coaches, and one for clients. Primary-cycle coding is the process of coding activities that are occurring more than once and assigning them words or phrases that capture the essence of their phenomena (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). During this phase, codes are referred to as “first level” and they focus on the content of the data, or the “who, what, where, when” (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, p. 4). Such codes are descriptive and emphasize the basic activities and practices surfacing in the data.

Primary-cycle coding is an emergent phase of analysis, meaning that it is not necessary to return to previous literature to make connections as the primary goal is to allow the data to reveal itself. During this phase of analysis, data were explored and assigned words, definitions, and phrases to capture the essence of the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients. Participant drawings were coded based on participants’ descriptions of their drawings. Primary-cycle coding resulted in 18 initial codes for leadership, 69 initial codes for coaches, and 24 codes for clients. Example codes that emerged for leadership include: role description, leader

responsibilities, emotional work, lived experience, and client serving. Example codes that emerged for coaches include: building emotional relationship with clients, clients need to help themselves, formal training to be coach, informal training, learning to persevere through failure, and temporality of coaching. Example codes that emerged for clients include: accountability through peer coach, emotional support from coach, material resource provided through coach, relationship with peer coach, and shared experience. After assigning these primary-cycle codes, I felt confident that no new themes were emerging in the data and that saturation had been reached as participants were repeating similar experiences (Saunders et al., 2018). The process of primary-cycle coding was important to the analysis phase because it allowed me to interpret the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients through the language and terms of my participants, assisting me in mitigating my own biases (Strauss, 2010). At the conclusion of primary-cycle coding, I noted that my codes provided insight into the relational component of organizational socialization as coaches and clients learned how to be a coach/client as they experienced it.

Secondary-cycle coding began with a critical examination of my primary-cycle codes to organize and synthesize emergent themes. This phase of analysis required me to critically reflect upon my primary-cycle codes and categorize them into second-level codes that “explain, theorize, and connect the data” (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, p. 6). As codes collapsed from primary to secondary-level, the data needed to be connected to relevant literature and theory to help explain the phenomena. Furthermore, as first-level codes collapsed into themselves and with others like them, I engaged in the practice of hierarchical coding wherein codes were organized into categories that made conceptual sense with one another (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017).

Throughout this process, I progressed from “inductive and descriptive coding to more focused and analytic coding” (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, p. 6). This allowed me to move freely between emergent themes and prior scholarship to sort data according to what we know and what was new.

During this phase I engaged in hierarchical coding and weaved my primary-cycle codes for leadership, coaches, and clients together. The first phase of layering these codes resulted in 13 codes. Example codes include: learning to coach, experiences of and influences on peer coaches resulting from being justice-impacted, being a coach, emotionality of coaching, embodying peer support, and dangers of coaching. At this stage of analysis, I revisited my ethnographic notes and identified examples from my observations that mapped onto my hierarchical codes. For example, one of the notes I made during my observations was that in areas surrounding the day resource centers we attended there were often people using drugs and some of the coaches made mention of the fact that they were occasionally triggered by this. They explained that being surrounded by people using made them more aware of their own sobriety and noted that on occasion, they had left outreach events to protect their own recovery. Layering my hierarchical codes with supporting ethnographic examples helped me to organize and reorganize my ordered codes, and I regularly revisited the literature during my analysis to make sense of my hierarchical coding. As I continued to refine these codes, the combination of my hierarchical mapping and existing literature ultimately resulted in 5 themes that describe the relational process of coach and client organizational socialization and emotion at HH.

After drafting my initial findings, I completed member reflections to help establish validity. Member reflections established validity by providing an opportunity for participants to

reflect on analytical interpretations and offer opportunities for reflexive elaboration (Candela, 2019). In doing so, participants were invited to provide input on initial findings, allowing “for sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study’s findings, providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). The use of member reflection was another way to ensure this project remained engaged and collaborative with HH as it was an opportunity for me to establish trust and introduce additional ways for their voices to be heard in the research process (Candela, 2019). This was a critical step in this engaged project as I was mindful of my own biases and experiences shaping my interpretation of the data. Being mindful of Deetz’s (2008) claim that engaged scholarship is best when it is a conversation between parties with different perspectives and experience, member checking was crucial in putting my interpretations of the data in conversation with my collaborating organization and participants to ensure the findings were not only accurate, but practical and accessible. I attempted to contact five of the clients interviewed for this project but did not receive a response. However, I was able to meet with and discuss initial findings with three coaches at HH, and they all agreed that their experiences had been described accurately. Each of the coaches noted that they found it interesting to hear about the collective emotions they experienced, especially in relation to the organizational changes that were occurring at the time of data collection. When discussing the negative emotions felt by many coaches, Adam shared that he had not realized just how many of his fellow coaches were also struggling and the emotional toll the work was taking on them.

Qualitative Considerations

As an engaged qualitative project, it was important to build rigor checks into the research design. This is due in part to the critique that both engaged scholarship and qualitative scholarship are anecdotal and lacking in rigor (McAleese & Kilty, 2019). There have been shifts in methodological thinking from dismissing qualitative research as anecdotal to valuing its benefits to society through participant experience (McAleese & Kilty, 2019). Because our social world is constructed by the stories people tell and how we perceive and understand them, we should conduct research in ways that honor and celebrate this construction. For example, within this research each participant's experience of being justice-impacted and receiving peer-recovery coaching is unique, but when woven together and examined through theory and qualitative analysis, a vibrant tapestry telling a collective story appears. The emergence of such a tale provides both theoretical and practical implications for the social world that we construct, crafting new stories that help us better understand ourselves and our world. This exemplifies the process of research as it helps us organize, assemble, and summon our beliefs about particular experiences and problems, shaping how we feel about things as they are presented to us (McAleese & Kilty, 2019). After all, as Christensen (2012) said, "At its heart, research is storytelling" (p. 232). To ensure the qualitative storytelling in this project maintained qualitative rigor, Tracy's (2010) eight criteria of quality in qualitative research—worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence—were evaluated and used in the design of this project. In what follows, I attend to Tracy's eight criteria of qualitative rigor, providing a definition of each and detailing how they were incorporated into this project's research design.

The first criterion, worthy topic, necessitates that the topic of research be “relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative,” with Tracy arguing that worthy topics can grow from theoretically and/or conceptually compelling sites and societal or personal events (p. 840). This project grew from personal curiosity with my experience as a prison educator as I witnessed the struggles previously incarcerated students faced when transitioning back into the community and the positive effect justice-impacted peer recovery coaches had on post-release success. Furthermore, this research sought to shake readers from their “common-sense assumptions and practices” by challenging the negative stereotypes associated with justice-impacted people and providing individually defined stories of success and transformation, meeting Tracy’s standard of worthiness.

The second criterion is rich rigor. Rich rigor requires descriptions and explanations of phenomena be rich, generous, unstinting, and bountifully supplied (Tracy, 2010; Weick, 2007). This type of rigor can be achieved through requisite variety, as it was in this project through the use of case study, ethnography, interviews, and a creative arts-based approach for data collection. Questions of rigor often ask if there is enough data to support claims, if enough time was spent to gather interesting data, if the sample is appropriate given the goals of the study, and if the researcher used appropriate procedures in data collection (Tracy, 2010). This project answers each of these questions with a resounding yes as this project incorporated four different sources of data, included participants on both the provision and reception side of peer recovery coaching, included a combined total of over 50 hours of in-person data collection (30 hours of ethnography and 24 hours of interviews), and used an engaged approach to research to ensure the project was meaningful and ethical.

The third criterion of qualitative rigor is sincerity. Sincerity is used by Tracy “to relate to notions of authenticity and genuineness,” meaning that “the researcher is marked by honesty and transparency about the researcher’s biases, goals, and foibles as well as about how these played a role in the methods, joys, and mistakes of the research” (p. 841). As is noted in my researcher positionality, I entered this project aware of my position and chose to take an engaged approach to this project due, in part, to my commitment to sincerity. Because sincerity requires a researcher to be self-reflexive and transparent, I was sure to explain my entry to and interest in the project with participants. It was of the utmost importance to me that each of my participants felt respected and seen as human beings and that they knew their lived experience was valued and honored.

The fourth criterion, credibility, is achieved through thick description, crystallization and triangulation, multivocality, and member partiality to ensure qualitative research findings are trustworthy. This project met this criterion by reporting the findings with rich examples, engaging in 30 hours of ethnographic data collection to provide an in-depth illustration of HH, gathering multiple types of data from varied sources, and using member reflections to provide “opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and [. . .] collaboration” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Put in conversation with the second criterion, rich rigor, this study is designed to be methodologically rigorous through its use of methodological requisite variety, leading to trustworthy research findings.

The fifth criterion, resonance, refers to the impact a researcher can make in the world through their project. Tracy (2010) contends that each qualitative study achieves resonance differently but argues that “all high-quality qualitative reports must have impact” (p. 845). As a

community engaged project, this research was created in collaboration with HH with the goal of making a positive impact within the organization as it sought to provide insight into the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients to assist HH in better supporting their members. Additionally, in providing opportunities for justice-impacted participants to share their voice and experiences, it legitimizes the experiences of others. This is important in the context of community reentry because legitimizing the difficulties of such a critical transition might make it easier for those experiencing it to seek and receive support. Furthermore, investigating the relational aspect of organizational socialization and organizational emotion in the context of peer recovery coaching provided critical insight into how the relationship between a coach and their client informs their understanding and performance of coaching.

The sixth criterion, significant contribution, asks that research provide a theoretical contribution that demonstrates how existing theories or concepts make sense in a new or particular context. As has been noted, within the field of communication scholarship there is a deficit of research related to the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and/or clients, save for Koschmann and Peterson's (2013) case study of a peer recovery organization wherein they examined the role of a peer recovery coach as a communication link for justice-impacted people reentering their community. Moreover, within organizational communication scholarship, organizational socialization has yet to be investigated through a relational lens. As such, this study provides significant contributions in that it a) bridges the gap between disciplines examining justice-impacted peer recovery coaches/clients and communication by investigating it as a *communicative* phenomenon and b) extends our understanding of organizational

socialization through the exploration of relevant relational processes. This study is grounded by and uses communication theory and methods in an understudied context to make its contribution to both the discipline and community.

The seventh criterion, ethics, includes a) procedural, b) situational, c) relational, and d) exiting ethics. First, procedural ethics refer to actions deemed necessary by governing organizations, like IRBs. Such actions include avoiding fraud, omission, and fabrication of data, and ensuring that research participants know their participant rights and that their participation is voluntary. To meet Tracy's procedural criteria, a researcher must do their best to safeguard participants from unnecessary risk by protecting their identity and participation. This study met this ethical criterion by ensuring participants were made aware of their rights and voluntary participation, deidentifying all data, and maintaining the integrity of collected data. Second, situational ethics assumes that, within research, all situations are different and that researchers "must repeatedly reflect on, critique, and question their ethical decisions" to determine whether the methods and data are "worth exposing" (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). As an engaged project, this project met situational ethic requirements through collaboration with HH. A collaborative approach to this project created opportunities for me as the researcher to repeatedly involve leadership and coaches at HH in the data collection process, allowing us to reflect on how data were collected and what was most relevant to the study and useful for the organization. Moreover, as data were collected, I had regular conversations the Principal Investigator of this project, my academic advisor, to discuss how to best honor participant stories and not just get a "great story" (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). Third, relational ethics require that a researcher be mindful of their character, actions, and impact on participants. This means that researchers should seek to do

no harm and develop reciprocal relationships with participants. To meet this criterion, I received feedback for each interview protocol from HH and staggered data collection to establish myself and my credibility in the spaces HH operates within. Furthermore, I began each interview by expressing my gratitude to my participants and, towards the end of each interview, invited participants to share any successes they would be comfortable celebrating with me. I also provided participants with a list of mental health resources to access in case anything they discussed during their interview was triggering for them and compensated them for their time with a Walmart gift card, as was advised by HH. Each of these acts helped me to express my genuine care for my participants and invest in a reciprocal relationship with them. Finally, exiting ethics are those considerations that must be made about how to leave the research scene and share the results. Regarding exits, Tracy suggests that qualitatively rigorous projects “not confuse voyeuristic, scandalous tales with great research stories,” and that sensationalizing stories about already marginalized participants serves to reinforce already negative stereotypes, creating harm to participants (2010, p. 847). In exiting this project ethically, I heeded Tracy’s advice and used member reflections to discuss findings with both participants and leadership at HH to ensure that the findings were appropriate to answer our co-created research questions and sensitive to the marginalized identities of participants.

The eighth criterion, meaningful coherence, requires that a study does what it says it would do. Tracy explains that meaningfully coherent research should “a) achieve their stated purpose; b) accomplish what they espouse to be about; c) use methods and representation practices that partner well with espoused theories and paradigms; and d) attentively interconnect literature reviewed with research foci, methods, and findings” (Tracy, 2010, p. 848). To

accomplish these goals, a study should weave its design, data collection, and analysis into the tapestry of its theoretical framework and situational goals. In creating, conducting, and completing this study, the goal was to collaborate with an organization providing peer recovery services (HH) to better understand how justice-impacted people provide and receive such services. In doing so, this project sought to uncover information that would be of both theoretical and practical use, extending organizational communication's conceptualizations of socialization and mentorship and providing tangible data to be used by HH, and other peer recovery organizations, as they work to expand and sustain their efforts. This study achieved meaningful coherence by involving justice-impacted individuals in each stage of the research and ensuring reported findings were connected to each element of the project's design and relevant to HH.

This chapter discussed my positionality as a researcher and entry point to justice-impacted communities, explained the data collection procedures, summarized how data were analyzed, and reviewed the qualitative rigor of this study according to Tracy's (2010) criteria for qualitative excellence. As a final note on this study's methodology, before beginning data collection with HH's coaches and clients, I asked leadership what they thought would be the most important thing for me to know going into this project, and they shared the following:

Adam: I think it's important for you to know that the work that we do is extremely difficult and strenuous and that I think that without peer support, there would be a lot of suffering and a lot of harm that does not need to happen. I think that we're boots on the ground. We're out there, like, we're saving lives. I've literally Narcand someone that was face down on the sidewalk. We're out there in the field and we see these people that are just in the midst of their addiction and we're pulling them off the streets and giving them opportunities and honestly, we're literally saving lives and I want people to know that and I want you to know that.

Derrick: I think you're going to be extremely like blown away by some of the stuff that goes on, but on both ends, negative and positive. I think there's a lot of negative things about the field and then I think there's a lot of extremely positive things either way. I

think you're going to be extremely satisfied and I think this project is going to add a lot of value in your life.

Ellen: Oh, wow. I guess I would like to get the coaches feedback because they. . . we don't take care of ourselves enough. We don't make time for ourselves. We don't, because like me and my husband, we work every day, all day, like it's just nonstop and it's like you have to take that time. Maybe just knowing that, I just think that coaches are really, they get burnt out. I think clients just knowing that, I don't know, I just. . . every story is different and so you have to be nonjudgmental and just take it in.

I kept their words with me throughout the duration of this project, often revisiting them to remind myself that this study was designed to do more than live on ProQuest—it was always meant to celebrate, honor, and legitimize the participants of this study and those like them.

Derrick was right when he told me this project was “going to add a lot of value in your life,” and that value is a testament to the willingness of my collaborators and participants to share their experiences with me. The following section discusses the findings that resulted from the data collected for this project.

Chapter Four: Findings

The experiences of peer recovery coaches and their clients are complex and the relationship between a coach and their client is constantly being negotiated. Coaches are tasked with learning how to leverage their lived experiences with the justice system, addiction, homelessness, damaged family and community relationships, and chronic and critical mental health issues in service of their clients, while their clients are actively experiencing the same. Through interviews with 6 peer recovery coaches and 24 clients and 30 hours of ethnographic data collection with Hoist Healing (HH), participants currently providing and receiving peer recovery services highlight the socialization and emotional experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients. This research project asked about the experience of a justice-impacted peer recovery coach (RQ1) through the lens of organizational socialization (RQ1a) and organizational emotion (RQ1b) and how coaches and clients communicatively build their relationship (RQ2). In what follows, five key themes—a) *learning*, b) *constructing*, c) *feeling*, d) *being* and e) *risking*—are identified and explained through interwoven coach and client examples. Because the coach and client relationship is inextricable in the process of peer mentorship, their experiences are put in conversation to holistically evaluate the experiences of participants. Additionally, though these findings rely upon the stage model of organizational socialization as a theoretical framework, the process of organizational socialization is rarely linear, meaning each theme will have a named stage and the permeability will be further explained in the discussion.

Learning

Coaches and clients at HH learned about peer recovery coaching in unconventional ways. In the case of the coaches at HH, none of them were aware peer coaching existed prior to either incarceration or receiving services as clients themselves. It was not until after they learned about the existence of peer coaches that they discovered the skills and training necessary to perform the role. This ordering significantly influenced how they anticipated their role, mapping the theme of *learning* onto the anticipatory and encounter stages of organizational socialization. Clients at HH learned about peer recovery coaching in ways nearly identical to coaches, meaning their previous experiences with peer coaches directly informed their expectations of HH coaches. The first theme, learning, encompasses three subthemes—a) coaches discovering peer recovery coaching, b) clients experiencing coaching and creating expectations for HH, and c) the formal and informal training coaches received before becoming a coach.

Coaches discovering peer recovery coaching

All six of the coaches at HH are justice-impacted and each only learned about peer recovery coaching through their involvement with the justice system. Adam, Derrick, and Murphy all learned about peer coaching while they were incarcerated. Adam and Derrick were incarcerated together, and Adam shared that one of his friends “was offering this training to do peer recovery coaching, and honestly, I didn't know that I was ever going to actually apply it to my life, because I was incarcerated.” From his statement we can see a lack of conscious anticipatory socialization—his saying that he did not see how it was going to apply to his life demonstrates just how little he knew about the profession and the ways in which he would be able to perform the role of a coach not only within his correctional facility but in the community. Despite his initial hesitancy, Adam participated in the training and introduced the opportunity to

Derrick who said “when I first learned about peer coaching, I was in prison and they were offering all these classes and it was a foreign concept to me.” Much like Adam, Derrick’s comment that peer coaching was a “foreign concept” demonstrates how little he knew about the role, let alone the profession. Like Adam and Derrick, Murphy was incarcerated when he learned about peer recovery coaching, but unlike Adam and Derrick, he was incarcerated in a private correctional facility that was interested in introducing programming that would increase operational efficiency and improve relations between incarcerated people and carceral staff. Murphy explained his learning by saying:

In prison, they have what's called a mental health peer assistant [. . .] So what the job description was for mental health peer assistant was pretty much a middleman to slow down how many people would go to medical or to see the therapist, or just a middleman between us and medical care, or between the inmates and medical care, because a lot of people will go down there with issues that might not necessarily be considered an emergency, and then it will prevent other people from being seen who would have an emergency so that's essentially how I got into it [. . .] I didn't know that it existed out here with a different title, which is a peer recovery coach.

Murphy explicitly states that he did not know peer recovery coaching existed outside of prison, let alone that it was the same work he had been doing while he was incarcerated. Adam, Derrick, and Murphy, did not learn about peer recovery coaching until after such services would have been benefitted them pre-incarceration. More than that, even after learning about peer recovery coaching, they were not aware that the opportunity existed to be a coach outside of prison.

The other three coaches at HH, Becky, Ellen, and Calvin, learned about peer recovery coaching in justice-adjacent ways while in the community. For example, Becky shared that during COVID she was struggling with mental health issues and addiction and sought help from a community reentry organization. It was at this organization that she first received peer coaching services and decided she wanted to become a coach, saying “I had friends through them

that were becoming coaches [. . .] so that's how I learned about it and what's done and how it's done." Becky explained that she only learned about coaching because she was seeking help for her "issues" and that she was grateful to learn that there were more options available to her than just Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. Ellen learned about peer recovery coaching shortly after overcoming a drug addiction when "a friend of mine met the owner of [peer coaching organization] and said, 'you need to come do this, you need to, this is great work.' So, I just, I tried it out." Ellen noted that the friend that introduced her to coaching had also struggled with addiction and shared that coaching was an opportunity to use what they had been through to help other people. Eventually, Ellen introduced her husband Calvin to peer recovery coaching, with Calvin sharing:

I got into peer recovery coaching because of my wife. She, as you probably already know, she's been coaching for like five years. During most of the time of her coaching, I was in active use but I sat and I watched her, and I thought what she was doing was cool. I just wasn't about that at the time.

In each of these experiences we can see one of the communicative functions of mentorship, the sharing of information, happening as coaches explain how they learned about peer recovery coaching with each example stemming from an interaction with another coach.

Clients experiencing coaching and creating expectations for HH

For clients at HH, their discovery of peer recovery coaching came in similarly justice-related ways but, importantly, their previous negative experiences with peer recovery coaches directly informed their expectations of coaches at HH. These experiences are important to investigate because of limited anticipatory opportunities related to peer recovery coaching—if people are predominantly learning about peer recovery services through primary experience, then it is these experiences that inform their understanding of the role of a peer recovery coach. In essence, a negative organizational encounter with a peer recovery organization prior to HH

shapes how a client anticipates coaches at HH to perform. These expectations create an interesting tension for HH coaches to navigate as they must reconcile their client's negative anticipations with HH's positive intentions. Examples abound from clients reflecting on poor experiences with previous coaches, like Rocky who said:

I used to have [name] to do my peer coaching and stuff, and he ended up getting me into it and he put more stress on me than it needed to be [. . .] I think [name] was all about the money because he receives money from us every time he tries to do it and he doesn't provide the AA classes like he's supposed to, or the anger management and he's always, he has a band that he plays in, and it seems like he's more about his band than he is doing, helping us. That's not helpful. Then he's always on vacations and stuff. You can't get ahold of him. And he, if when he is in town, you try to get ahold of him, he's nowhere to be found, you can't reach him.

From Rocky's experience we can see how expectations of coaches are developed and how Rocky struggled to reconcile his perception that his coach was meant to help him with the reality that his coach was "more about his band." Rocky explicitly names his previous coach as "not helpful" and his comment that he was "all about money" was echoed by many other clients. For example, Janet said "there's a lot of peer recovery coaches that don't take this seriously that take it for granted. They use it to get money and stuff like that." Leland said he talks about peer coaches with other clients and "what they do and how they offer. . . whether or not they're just trying to be a peer coach to make money through the Medicaid or are here really to help us, you know, because we're serious about this." Janet and Leland shared Rocky's concern that some coaches were only interested in the money, but they also expressed doubts about whether their coaches were genuinely committed. This notion of taking coaching "seriously" is important to consider because for many clients, achieving sobriety and stability is serious and they wanted to feel like their coach was investing in them the same way they were investing in their coach. This desire for sincerity was rooted in the belief that a coach was meant to help, not hinder, their

clients and that to do so, they should make themselves available to their clients and be willing and interested in providing beneficial services.

Expanding upon this notion of coach sincerity, many clients expressed apprehensions related to coach intentions. Janet explained this apprehension as frustration with coaches who she feels are not coaching for the right reasons, saying:

People are already in need of help and so to kind of prey on those. . . that hurts the most and like it deters you and especially like if you're doing so good, you're not getting high, you're doing everything you're supposed to do and you get a bad peer coach and especially if you get one that's using or you can tell that they're using and stuff like that that's bad to have around.

Cody echoed Janet's sentiment and said:

If you say you're gonna be a recovery coach, be a decent person. It's sad to see, if you're gonna say you're gonna help somebody and you don't have your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors under control saying you're gonna help this person and that person and then just blowing everything out. Yeah, it's the empty promises that do more harm.

Both Janet and Cody explain negative interactions with peer coaches as causing more harm, a notion that relates to Rocky's comment about his previous coach being unhelpful. From each of these examples we can see that clients have an expectation of being helped but have had an experience of being harmed. These experiences then culminate in apprehensions and hesitations about the efficacy of peer recovery coaches. Indeed, when clients have poor experiences with coaches outside of HH, their perception of peer recovery coaching as a whole is impacted.

Coaches at HH are acutely aware of these perceptions and the ways in which they affect a coach's ability to provide recovery services. For example, Ellen shared that "A lot of people have had bad experiences with peer coaches," and Murphy said:

There's so many peer recovery services that are not genuine. I don't want to slap this field in the face, but it exists. I guess in every career field you have people who have a different motive on what it is. So some people will tell you what they gonna do for you, then try and get compensated for it and then give you the bare minimal help. Which, believe it or not, a lot of these clients have experienced that, so it makes them be reserved

on trying to deal with somebody in that manner [. . .] And they probably been through so many people who let them down, you know what I mean?

Thus, poor experiences with previous coaches directly influenced client perceptions of peer recovery coaching at HH and a coach's ability to provide those services. Many clients learned from their initial coaching experiences that coaches are only in the profession for the money and that when they truly need them most, they might not be there. However, just as clients learned to expect this disappointment, coaches at HH learned to anticipate negative experiences and overcome them by, as Calvin explained, "actually follow[ing] through with these promises that I'm making."

Formal and informal training

Coaches at HH receive both formal and informal training to provide peer recovery coaching services and much of their training occurs prior to their being employed by HH. For example, in alignment with state regulations, all coaches at HH must successfully complete a 60-hour approved certification. However, in addition to this minimum certification, many coaches at HH have participated in various opportunities to expand their coaching tool kit. Derrick explained:

I'm super intentional about education. I have my state certification, my national certification. I have a bunch of like. . . trainings, like a bunch of extra trainings that just kind of add value to the situation, and then I'm about to, I think by the end of the week, I'm going to be RCP (recovery coach professional) certified, and then I'll be certified to facilitate the trainings.

As the owner and co-founder of HH, Derrick's interest in continuing education is something that he shares with his staff as he encourages them to diversify their skill set in service of their clients. His mention of "extra trainings that just kind of add value to the situation" highlights the emphasis he places on continuing education as he made it clear throughout his interview that the more he learns, the better he coaches. Through interviews and observation, it became clear to me

that HH is committed to training and development. While all coaches at HH met state certification guidelines, HH also strongly encouraged, and would pay for, their coaches to become Qualified Behavioral Health Assistants. This additional certification helps develop their clinical knowledge base in addition to their lived experience, thus improving collaborative efforts with HH's LPC and providing greater opportunities for coaches to understand and support the needs of their clients.

Other members of leadership at HH shared Derrick's sentiment about continuing education, like Ellen, saying:

The extra classes that I've taken really help. Like, there's ethical considerations. There's recovery coaching in the judicial settings. There's professionalism. There's all kinds of different classes and when you take that class and you do it online, it's really interactive. So she, you know, puts you in breakout rooms and you talk with other coaches and that's where I really learned a lot of stuff, too. So those extra classes are, I feel like they're a must.

Ellen's belief that extra classes are a "must" underscores Derrick's emphasis on being intentional about education and demonstrates the organization's belief in coaching as a process. This is supported by Adam's training, too. As was previously noted, Adam's formal training began while he was incarcerated and has continued in his role at HH. Reflecting on his formal training journey he shared:

I got involved in peer work while I was incarcerated, I started as mental health peer assistant. I was actually in one of the first classes, the first trainings that DOC (Department of Corrections) offered to do that [. . .] I actually got certified, while I was in there with my national certification and I took my choices training, which is one of the, it's basically like a CCAR training (Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery), the 30-hour training I've gotten my ethics training, my professionalism and then you know different trainings that the LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor) offers, like we talked about biases, prejudices, stuff like that, different ways to connect with your clients [. . .] I think a lot of the training that I received actually happened in restorative justice, learning how to sit with difficult emotions that come up instead of, like, pretending that they're not happening, shielding yourself from them, just kind of, and it's very hard to do, you know, staying with those things and kind of processing through it in a healthy way, instead of, like I said, instead of pretending like they're not going on. I think that that's probably

served me the best, and I learned how to do that while I was inside doing restorative justice practices.

Of note in Adam's formal training is his attention to what he learned from his participation in restorative justice programming. Though it is not directly tied to his certification to be a peer recovery coach, it was still formal training that he received related to how to "sit with difficult emotions." His ability to navigate emotional situations, like those where he might be immediately distrusted because of his association with peer recovery coaching as an industry, is useful as he works to cultivate meaningful relationships with his clients. In reflecting on learning how to coach people through various emotional states, particularly as they relate to mental health, Calvin explained that he did not initially realize how important his training was, saying:

I don't think I realized how important it is. . . because there's. . . you're just gonna run into all. . . dealing with people's mental health. So we talked about it in the training, and we acted it out between the, you know, trainees, what it would look like if somebody came in with a mental health disorder or whatever, but it's different when you're actually dealing with somebody that is, that has real serious mental health.

Calvin's realization of the importance of his training highlights one of the reasons leadership at HH encourages coaches to be intentional in pursuit of continuous education—because no matter how prepared you think you are to support clients, there is always room for improvement and one of the ways coaches repeatedly mentioned as helpful in growing as a coach was through informal training.

Informal training refers to those opportunities that exist outside of formal certifications and, for coaches at HH, primarily included lessons they learned from interacting with their peers and clients. For example, Ellen said that she often relies on her husband, Calvin, to help talk her through difficult client experiences, saying "Sometimes I just have to go in the other room and say 'hey, this is what's going on,' and he'll just talk me out of whatever." Ellen went on to explain that she feels she can sometimes get too emotionally invested in her clients and that

talking to Calvin about professional boundaries, and how to set them, helps her consider how much emotional energy she has and how much she is willing to spend. Furthermore, Ellen said she feels:

stepping out for a minute and taking a breath and getting somebody else's opinion or seeing if . . . you know, it helps a lot. With my husband [Calvin] being a coach, just us talking about stuff, you know, and just saying, “oh, that's a really great way to do that,” instead of “I've been doing it this way or whatever,” you know, helps.

Calvin echoed the benefits to having a spouse in the same industry as he reflected on how overwhelming coaching can be:

That's where having, like, my wife, Ellen, that's why I just love her to death, because she's really good at like, this is why her and I work real well, because she's really good at, like, seeing that in me and then gently reminding me, or sometimes not so gently reminding me, that it's. . . everything's gonna be okay, and that I need to take time for us and the family, or even just for myself. She still coaches me all the time. I just love her to death.

For Ellen and Calvin, their informal training comes primarily in the form of emotional support for one another. They both highlighted how helpful it is for them to be able to talk about how they are feeling and bounce ideas off one another. Moreover, Calvin explicitly stated that Ellen “still coaches me all the time,” a powerful comment demonstrating how coaching is not something they feel they can turn off, even within their marriage. Adam provided insight into how HH tries to create structured opportunities for informal training, saying:

Informally, we do sit around and talk. We have meetings in the mornings, typically on Monday is our big meeting, and we talk about clients we're having difficulty with, different kinds of behaviors that we're seeing and stuff like that and just by having those conversations, I think informally, we're learning how to become better coaches, we're learning how other people are approaching different situations, and just kind of figuring out [. . .] we're better prepared when we see that situation for ourselves.

Indeed, HH's creation of structured informal training, where coaches come together to discuss client situations and crowd source ideas, helps them further develop their coaching tool kit. As

Adam said, this helps them be “better prepared” when they see a situation for themselves and builds a culture that encourages its members to learn from and share with one another.

The process of informal learning extends past continuous communal learning and into the coach/client relationship. This extension means that coaches must be open to receiving feedback from clients and to using clients as sources of information. For example, when Ellen thought about how she learns from her clients she said:

I think you learn most from the clients and what they connect to, what makes them want to come back and how you're helping. I think that's the big thing. You know, they tell me, “hey, I don't like that.” You know what I mean? Or whatever. And I'm like, okay. So, yeah, just the feedback from the clients and stuff helps too.

Ellen’s comments exemplify a key part of coaching—the need to connect with clients. This connection is central to developing and maintaining a peer mentoring relationship and it relies heavily on a coach’s ability to provide clients with the services and supports they need. HH does not have a formal structure in place for clients to provide feedback to their coach, so Ellen’s approach includes doing regular check-ins wherein she invites her clients to share how they are feeling about their relationship and how she can improve as a coach.

In addition to this feedback, one of the areas coaches are always seeking to improve in is their knowledge of community resources. Calvin noted that he often learns about resources from his clients, saying:

A lot of them have been doing this homeless thing or this recovery thing for a long time so sometimes things that haven't worked for them in the past, they'll tell me “Well, you know, this program does this and I didn't like that about this program,” and I’m like, “oh, what program is that?” and then I would find it. Or they'd say, “Well, I've gotten rental assistance from this place before, so maybe, I can't go there now, do you know of any other ones?” “I do, but which ones are you talking about?” and then I'll write those down and then contact those people. I've actually gotten a lot of resources like that. Clients have a lot of knowledge in this stuff we're trying to help them with as well. They just may have burned the bridge already, or already used up the resource, so it's nice to have resources that I know about that they don't, but they also know about resources that I don't.

From Calvin's response we can see the importance of coaches being willing to learn from their clients as they "have a lot of knowledge in this stuff we're trying to help them with." Outside of learning about and/or connecting clients with resources, Derrick explained that much of his informal training came from "in the field work," saying:

I think a lot of in field training, especially with outreach, right? Like, when you go out and you're like, "You got to find your own clients." You're like, "What? How do you do that?" So I think a lot of that in the field work was super helpful for me and watching other coaches and they're like, "hey, you know, this is what you should do. You should try this, you should try this, you should try this," and now I find myself in the land where it's like, "I got you, bro." That's like, the easiest part for me. I'm like, "Let's go." Like, I want to go talk to people. I love it. I love it. I remember when I first started doing it, I would see people, like homeless people walking, or anybody just somebody that looks like they're down on their luck and I'd be like, "Hey, bro, you need a ride somewhere?" I'd literally just have random people get in my car [. . .] I've never had a bad experience. There was this one dude who was super crazy and he would wear a tin hat to block the government. . . that type of situation. But outside of that, it's always been extremely great conversation. It's just always so rewarding to just meet somebody, and be like, "Hey, what's up? Where are you going? I'd love to, let's go," and then just have a great conversation with them and just see where their life is at and what they're doing.

Derrick's initial confusion regarding how to find clients was quickly replaced by excitement as he developed the skills to build relationships with clients through outreach. Notably, Derrick mentioned an experience with a client who was "super crazy," a comment that calls back to the importance of formal trainings in preparing coaches to interact with clients in various situations and states of mind. Derrick's training in this area was brought up again later in his interview as he described such interactions by saying "they're human beings, and if you treat somebody like a human being, then you're going to be fine and oftentimes people who have struggled in life and are currently struggling, they have incredible stories, and I love hearing those stories." Though coaches at HH felt that their informal, "in the field" training was what better prepared them to coach, it is clear from their stories that much of their in the field success came from their formal foundations.

Learning exemplifies how peer recovery coaches and clients discovered peer recovery coaching across the anticipatory and encounter stages of organization, highlighting the permeability of stages in organizational socialization. From these examples we can see how HH's coaches and clients encountered coaching prior experiencing it. As a result, the anticipatory and encounter stages of socialization occurred concurrently, creating expectations about coaching as it was provided/received. Furthermore, this theme demonstrates how, for justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients at HH, their learning about peer recovery coaching was an iterative process shaped by past experiences, present expectations, and an evolving understanding of both a coach's role and function and the needs of their client.

Constructing

The process of constructing a relationship between coaches and clients is largely dependent on a coach's ability to effectively leverage their lived experience with the justice system in service of their client. In so doing, clients recognize and expect their coach to practice empathy through crises related to relapse, homelessness, fractured family relationships, and more. Indeed, most participants said that it was important to them that their coach be justice-impacted as they did not trust that someone who had not been through similar crises would understand or know how to support them.⁵ This means that coaches must have a clear understanding of the identities and/or experiences they share with their clients and how those similarities can be used in support of their client's wellbeing. Resulting from this justice-impacted awareness is *constructing*, the process of a coach and client co-creating their coaching relationship and identity as a coach/client. *Constructing* maps onto the anticipatory, encounter,

⁵ Clients commonly described their mentoring relationship as needing to be built from shared experience. One participant explained that he would not take parenting advice from someone who was not a parent and that sentiment was echoed by nearly every other participant—participants expected their coach to have shared justice-experiences that they could use to help their clients make different choices.

and liminal stages of organizational socialization. Thus, *constructing* includes three subthemes— a) coaches finding strength in being justice-impacted, b) shared lived experience as an expectation of coaching, and c) using shared identities to construct a peer mentoring relationship.

Coaches finding strength in being justice-impacted

Every coach at HH shared that their being justice-impacted was a strength in their coaching and that learning how to leverage that experience with clients was something they were constantly refining. For Calvin, his experience with the justice system helped him understand both how his clients were feeling and why they might feel frustrated with him, saying:

I think having lived experience, like we've talked about a few times, is important. I think a lot of times they want you to just be understanding. It's important for a coach to understand, to try to put themselves in that situation, to try to understand the emotion and the desperation sometimes behind some of like our, when our, some of our clients get a little pushy sometimes, or they get a little irritated because things aren't happening fast. I try to just put myself in that situation and remember what it was like.

Calvin's ability to "remember what it was like" exemplifies his care for his clients, his willingness to practice empathy, and the ways in which he constructs his role as a coach through his own lived experiences. Similarly, Murphy shared that his approach to coaching and assumptions about his clients are directly shaped by his previous experiences. He said that most people do not give his clients enough credit for how sharp they are, instead assuming ignorance. However, as he continuously constructs his coaching identity, he says:

I give them credit. Like you're human, you have a brain. I don't care if it's altered or whatnot. You smart, and I'm smart too, so, and I want them to know you intelligent, that I'm sharp too. So we gotta meet in the middle. I'm not gonna let you run game on me. I came from somewhere where there's people who are locked up because that's what they did, was run game on all kinds of people. I'm already prepared for that. Then it changes the dynamics when they're like, "oh, he respects me. He says I'm smart. He sees that." I see, you know, probably that stuff probably works on a lot of people out there who aren't and I got to give credit to the training that I've received from peer recovery coaching, from [program name], from being in prison, from life experiences, all of that is training that has helped me to be able to deal with all these different situations.

In reflecting on how he works to meet his clients in the middle, Murphy makes note of how his life experiences have served as a type of training that “helped [him] be able to deal with all these different situations.” Calling out lived experience as an important tool in *constructing* their coaching identity was common among coaches at HH, and the training they received through lived experience was markedly different from those trainings discussed in *learning*.

Reflecting on how her life experience prepared her to be a coach, Becky said:

I think you have to have that experience. You have to because there's such a stigma around addiction. There's such a stigma around mental health. There's such a stigma around homelessness. It's like I need to be able to talk to a client and say, “Are you using? Are you drinking?” And it's okay because I'm an addict. I understand. There's no judgment, I think with all the stigma, it's very, very hard for people with active addiction or active mental health issues to open up to people and feel supported and feel they're advocated for and feel that they are heard and listened to and understood, unless that person has been down that road. I know that it was very hard for me, myself, the judgment that you feel, and the guilt and the shame that you feel in active addiction and in recovery, to be able to relate to somebody and have them know that you relate to them is why that is the foundation for peer coaching. Like, how do we navigate these issues if we have not already done them for ourselves?

For Becky, being a peer coach was an opportunity for her to extend the same grace to her clients she had been given as she struggled to get and stay sober. She notes that part of the usefulness of her experience is being able to talk to clients about relapsing without judgements because she's been there, saying “I expect that [relapse] because, a lot of people, just like with when I was getting clean, my relapses. . . I would get two weeks and then I'd relapse, and then I'd get a week, and then I'd relapse.” Thus, her relapses are a strength that directly inform her approach to coaching as she attempts to construct realistic (or what she views as realistic) expectations for her clients based on her own experience.

More than just expectations, Calvin noted that his previous experiences have been helpful in him learning not only what resources are available to his clients, but how those resources can be used:

I think just being an active addict, just living life in active addiction. When I was in active addiction, I learned a lot of these resources that I use now, but I would use them for not good purposes, like, let's say the house I was selling dope at was, like, they couldn't pay their rent. So I would help them find, like, [community housing program], and some of these other resources I used to save my dope spot really, so I would help them find rental assistance, just so that I could continue to sell drugs out of their house or stay there, or whatever the case may be. So I think that definitely, because I used to do a lot of, I don't know if you'll call it blue collar crime, but I used to scam a lot of stuff, so I think I've used some of that prior knowledge and that, like knowing that there's always a way to make something work, like whether you're doing it for bad or for good. So I think I've taken a lot of my criminal thinking and turned it into a positive thing now in my role to try to make stuff happen for people.

Calvin names his shift from criminal thinking to coaching as a positive thing and explicitly states that in his role as a coach he hopes he can use both his experiences and his resource knowledge to “make stuff happen for people.” This is another example of the permeability of the stages of organizational socialization as Calvin was subconsciously engaging in anticipatory work as he sought to find the resources necessary to continue selling while he was in active addiction, a skill that he was able to use in the encounter phase as he was able to use those same resources to help his clients. In doing so, his statement that “there’s always a way to make something work” is indicative of the expectations he has created for himself as a coach and the information seeking tactics he engages in to learn how to be an effective coach at HH.

Derrick felt strongly that his being justice-impacted was central to his ability to coach, sharing:

Oh [big sigh], it's so helpful. It's so beneficial. It's really nice when I'm able to sit there with somebody who is going to court for something. Super helpful. When I'm sitting with somebody who just got out of prison, and I'm able to be like, “alright, well, here's some things that I struggled with, here's some things that I've identified to be helpful. Here's some things that have worked for me,” and not, never telling them, “Hey, do this, do this, do this.” Like, “Hey, this is what I went through. This is what my situation looked like,” and it tends to really help them be like, “Oh, okay. *Oh*, okay.” So it helps, it really does help alleviate a lot of obstacles that I went through. It helps them to not. . . hit those same obstacles and then make more progress faster [. . .] I think that's where that lived experience comes in, is putting yourself in their shoes and asking yourself, you're never right, right? I mean, you're not always right in what you're doing, right? We're not, we

don't have master's degrees and we're not professionals, but what we do have is a master's degree in understanding the struggle. So whenever you have a client that's, you know, just relapsed, left their transitional house, ran from the police, whatever the case is, it's like at least you could sit there and put yourself in their shoes and go, "What did I need when I was in that situation?" And if that works for them, great, if not just do your best to try to figure it out.

From Derrick's example we can see that he perceives his past experiences as strengths as he is able to better relate to his clients by telling them where he is coming from and how he might have approached a situation. Furthermore, his acknowledgement that using his experience helps eliminate some of the barriers he faced for his clients emphasizes how he leverages his justice knowledge as a strength in coaching. Murphy explained how he sees his experiences with the justice system as a strength by saying:

Peer itself is by definition, we one and the same. So I like to let them know [. . .] I was once one of them. You know what I mean, and I feel like that's everybody, to a certain extent, in some way, shape, form or fashion [. . .] I like to let my clients know, or potential clients or my peers know, like I'm not here to judge you or call the police on you, or necessarily take your drugs away from you or stop you from doing drugs. I want you to know I was once like you, so let's find a common ground where we can communicate with each other until we feel comfortable enough to make those baby steps to where you starting to see alright, well maybe I should change what I got going on. And not all of them are always receptive. And I have a lot of respect for the ones who tell me, "No, I like doing what I'm doing right now." Okay, alright, if you need me in any shape, form or fashion here's my information.

Murphy's efforts to ensure his clients know they are "one and the same" exemplify the role of empathy in coaching—his statement that he does not judge, is not trying to call the police, or even "take [their] drugs away" demonstrates the ways in which he actively empathizes with his clients in their struggle and how his ability to practice empathy is a strength. His saying "I was once like you," is evidence of his understanding and belief that his role as a coach is to support clients in what serves them and that his ability to do so is directly related to his own experiences with the justice system. More than that, Murphy's exemplar demonstrates earned redemption—a strengths-based approach that encourages justice-impacted people to be of service to their

community rather than a liability (Bazemore, 1999). This subtheme highlights how coaches construct their role and identity as a coach by leveraging their previous justice-involvement as a strength to be used in support of clients.

Shared lived experience as an expectation of coaching

Clients are acutely aware of their coaches being justice-impacted and seemingly expect that their coaches will use their own experiences to help them navigate similar situations. Many clients noted that their shared experiences helped them better understand the role their coach could (or should) play in their life. For example, when discussing her coach's past, Janet said:

I'm not saying them using drugs is good, but I'm glad that they have used drugs and they know everything about, not sobriety, but they know everything about addiction and they can talk me down off a ledge and stuff like that. So, I love that. It's not great that you did, like I'm not saying, thanks for doing it but I'm glad that you went through it because now you're helping me.

Janet reiterated how her coach's experience helps her feel secure in their coaching relationship as she later described her coach's role as "like a safety net, definitely somebody you can, you know, that you can call up or fall back on if anything were to happen or if you're feeling any type of way." Janet and her coach have constructed a relationship wherein she and her coach both perceive being justice-impacted as a strength and Janet expects her coach to use their experiences to help her. Bob expressed gratitude to his coach for not becoming judgmental of people working to achieve sobriety as he said:

Some people, when they recover, all of a sudden become like, they think they're godlike figures and they look down on people that are doing that. And they kind of treat you like a little kid and stuff. But my coach has been very, more like friend type and with similar experiences and he's younger than I am, but still he, you know, it doesn't really matter your age. It doesn't really matter your age when you're, after you come up being a heavy alcoholic or both and just listening and understanding and him trying to go the extra mile to help make sure that I succeed is very good.

From Bob's exemplar we can see the importance of constructing an open relationship supported by shared experiences. His comment that age does not matter but "listening and understanding" do demonstrates the emphasis Bob places on his coach being justice-impacted and his need to have a commonality upon which to build trust and construct their coaching relationship to be successful.

An additional expectation of peer recovery coaching that built upon shared justice-impacted identities was attention to client success. Many clients explained that they would not take advice from someone who had not been through something similar with Davy stating that having a coach who has experienced similar struggles:

Makes it easier. It feels less judgmental and more understanding of how one gets to where one is in the process of sliding back or falling down or whatever. You want to focus it, rephrase it and it's easier if the person's been down that road too.

From Davy's exemplar we can see how he felt his coach was less judgmental and more understanding as a direct result of their shared lived experience. His comment that "falling down" can be focused or rephrased is important because it highlights the ways in which Davy constructs his relationship with his coach—to be successful Davy expects that his coach will be more understanding of his "sliding back" because they have "been down that road too." Ralph shared a similar sentiment, saying:

To be honest, that's a must for me. I would never take advice on how to raise my kids from somebody who doesn't have children and it's the same type of way of looking at it is, like, how can you give advice to somebody who has lived life as an addict, as a criminal, if you've never been there yourself? I definitely think that that's a big part of the recovery coaches is I really would or want to take advice from ones who have led the same type of lifestyle that I've led. I think that that's a must for me [. . .] Somebody you can look to for advice on things because you know that they have experienced already themselves. I don't want to seek advice from somebody who hasn't been through the same crap because I just feel like somebody who's walked in my shoes and has made the change is going to be more beneficial to go to than somebody who hasn't.

Ralph’s belief that it is more beneficial to go to someone who “has made the change” exemplifies how he constructs his coaching relationship with attention to his success—Ralph needs his coach to model what success looks like and his willingness to heed his coach’s advice hinges on their credibility as someone who “has made the change.” From these examples we can see that most clients not only expect their coaches to have lived experience, but that their coaches will use those experiences to help them be successful. This means that within the construction of the coach/client relationship, both parties perceive being justice-impacted as a strength necessary for their success. In fact, when prompted to draw what it feels like to receive peer recovery coaching, Ralph drew Figure 1 and explained it by saying:

I just drew the word “success.” Cause I mean, that's, that's all there. That's what I'm trying to accomplish and that's what I, like I said, I really feel like when I get a year of sobriety under my belt, that that's going to be, aside from raising my kids, the most successful thing I've ever done.



Figure 1: Drawing of the word “success”

Ralph’s expectation that his coach will use their experience to help him achieve sobriety, and the second biggest success of his life, is directly related to their ability to provide coaching from a place of experience. These exemplars demonstrate how clients expect their coaches to leverage their justice involvement to help others going through similar situations as they construct their mentoring relationship.

Using shared identities to construct a peer mentoring relationship

Clients at HH identified their coach's role in their life as being instrumental in supporting their wellbeing and connecting them with community resources, both of which clients and coaches explained to be important components to the construction of their relationship. For Catwoman, being supported by her coach is important, but so is being intentional in the construction of her relationship with her coach. She explained her experience with her coach thus far through a metaphor, saying "I watch a lot of homemaking shows and stuff like that, so when you're building a roof you have these supports until it's ready to stand on its own and that's kind of like what they are." She later went on to note that she feels her coach provides her with both emotional and material supports—something that came through in her drawing (Figure 2) as she explained that receiving peer recovery coaching feels like "a bunch of hands and arms coming into one to support one another."

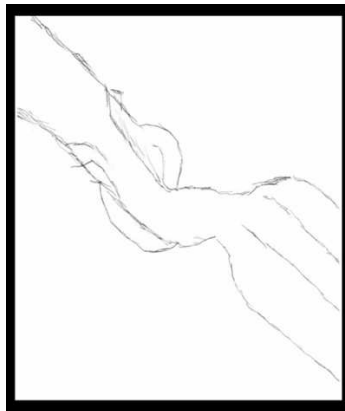


Figure 2: Drawing of "a bunch of hands and arms coming into one"

This idea of a coach being a support that clients can lean on until they are ready to stand on their own, especially concerning sobriety, was mirrored by Andrew who said that his relationship with his coach is "more than just resources, more like, 'hey man, I'm thinking about going to get high,' or 'I'm thinking about going to go get drunk because I don't care because this happened at work.'" Much like Catwoman, his feeling that his coach offered him more than resources came

through in his drawing (Figure 3) as he explained receiving peer recovery coaching as “God sent, it's heaven sent, I guess is what I'm trying to say, because it really is.”

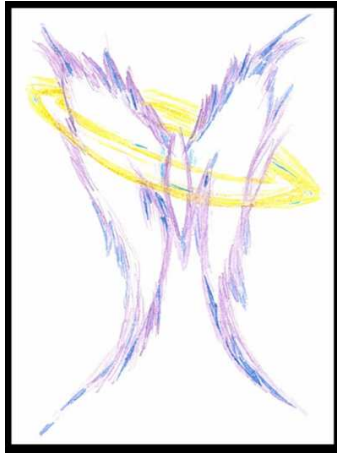


Figure 3: Drawing of an angel with a halo around its wings

Andrew’s explanation of his relationship emphasizes how coaches construct mentoring relationships with their clients through their shared justice-impacted identities by leveraging their past struggles into strengths and supporting their clients during times of need.

In addition to these emotional supports, many clients emphasized coaches providing informational or instrumental resources as being integral to the construction of a successful relationship. I observed this repeatedly, especially during outreach events. At each event I attended with HH, at least one current or potential client would approach HH coaches and ask if they had any phones. Phones as a resource would immediately invite conversation pertaining to other resource connections and more than once, in the time it took for a coach to set a client up with a new phone, they had also helped them set an appointment at a nearby DMV to get an ID, or found them a sober living house to go to. However, outreach events are more than just an opportunity to connect clients with coaches and resources, they are an opportunity for coaches to relate to potential clients as peers. For example, at an outreach event I attended with Calvin and Adam, Calvin said that he “slings resources like dope,” and when I asked him about it, he

laughed, explaining that coaching allows him to “use the exact same skills from when he was in active addiction but in a healthy way. Like the housing programs, I scammed them but it gave me a really good understanding of how to use them and it’s so much easier now because I don’t have to keep up with any lies.” Indeed, to build rapport with clients, coaches would often perform as older versions of themselves to meet clients where they were and embody Murphy’s definition of a peer, showing up as “one and the same.” The provision of these resources, emotional, informational, and instrumental, were critical to the initial construction of the peer relationship and even when they ran out of phones or did not have an answer, clients appeared to respect their honesty. For example, Leland said “there hasn’t been nothing I asked them that they didn’t have access to or they knew somebody or they knew how to navigate.” Coming from out of state, Leland repeatedly mentioned how important this was to him as he was still learning how to live in a new place, let alone how to find and use the resources available to him as an unhoused person. Another client from out of state, Elio, said that after he moved he received criminal charges and he:

didn't know how to get a public defender. He [his peer coach] helped me out with that. Helped me out cause my court papers didn't have the Zoom number, so he helped me out finding the Zoom number. He talked about his recovery and then talked about how he used to get in trouble with the law, with his DWIs.

Receiving this support from his coach helped Elio construct a trusting relationship with his coach, one that he described as “like a dream. I look to him as a mentor. Like a big brother in a way. So I get all excited every time I see him.” Davy explained that his coach helps him “look up” by connecting him with resources and guidance, saying:

I guess he’s someone to talk to and a way to access information that it's not like it's not out there. Sometimes you don't know where to find it. I guess everyone's situations are different and every problem is compounded with other problems and mine was a complicated one as far as I needed housing and work and he was able to find something that kind of, oddly enough, took care of like all my, or not all my problems, but gave me

a route to fix my problems all in one kind of, at one place as opposed to having to go through two or three different places to get it fixed.

Davy's experience highlights his reliance on his coach to connect him with resources that he might not otherwise know how to access.

However, as was previously noted by Leland, sometimes coaches do not have all the answers and clients noted that it was just as important for them to be able to admit to not knowing as it was to know. Nevaeh explained this by saying:

Even if they don't know, at least point me to somebody who I can ask or something. I prefer them to tell me they don't know and they'll help point me to the right direction, instead of telling me I don't know and figure it out. Obviously I'm asking for help. I think if I was to go ask Calvin or somebody for help, I'm sure they're, if they don't know, I'm sure they'll point me to the right direction.

Indeed, for many of HH's clients, what was most important to them was the knowledge that their coach cared and was willing to help and this caring was sometimes more important than the resource itself. This relates back to the poor experiences many clients had with previous coaches as coaches who "over promised and under delivered" made it difficult for clients to trust that their coach would follow through. However, as HH coaches worked to make promises they could keep, they were able to not only connect their clients with vital resources, but construct meaningful relationships based on mutual trust.

Constructing such relationships is not an easy feat and coaches at HH are acutely aware of the mountains they have to climb with their clients. Murphy describes himself as "a middleman between you and everything you want to do. If you trying to do it, I might could find it for you. Outside of your illegal activities, I know you probably want help with that (laughter). There are limits!" Derrick sees his role as a coach as supporting his clients in finding happiness, whatever that might look like for them, saying:

One person is content, legitimately content, living at the homeless shelter. They don't want anything else, and that's okay. Like, who are we to say that what you're doing is wrong? If you're happy, that's the goal. If you're doing what you want in life and you're living your best fucking life, then who are we to say what you're doing is not up to my standards? Absolutely not. So it's 100% subjective on the client's journey and so to really be able to sit there and like formally put that stuff out is impossible, because everybody has varying degrees of success.

Calvin takes a similar approach to coaching, but feels it is important for his clients to be working towards stability and setting realistic goals, as he said:

I try to set realistic standards, or I try to make things realistic for them, so if this is the goal we're trying to accomplish, like, these are the things that need to happen. So you need to, we need to decide what you're willing to and what you're not willing to do, right? I explain to them that everything takes time, like nothing's gonna happen today, probably, and we need to be really realistic with our expectations and stuff. Nobody's gonna just give us anything, that we have to work for everything and just helping them understand that everything's a process, and I'll walk through it with them step by step, and support them any way that I can, or they need me to, well, any way that I'm willing to, right? And just kind of, I think the biggest thing is just setting realistic expectations [. . .] if you can't follow through with your role and these things you're promising, then what's the point?

From Calvin's example we can see that his willingness to walk alongside his clients in their journey and commitment to following through on the promises he keeps are his way of investing in his relationships with his clients. His comment that "everything is a process" is directly influenced by his own experiences with community reentry as he noted that he was actively working to "kill his number"—meaning he was still under correctional supervision in the community—and his understanding of community reentry as a process, and the need to invest in his relationship with his clients to support them in this process, is directly related to his being justice-impacted. Both coaches and clients at HH perceive being justice-impacted as a strength and expect that their shared lived experiences will help them in constructing their peer recovery coaching relationship. The construction of this relationship is another example of the permeability of organizational socialization and the importance of the liminal stage—as coaches

and clients construct trust, expectations, and new identities they are using past experiences to prepare for success in situations that have yet to happen.

Feeling

The process of a coach constructing a mentoring relationship with their client is emotionally laden and many made mention of the “feelings” they get during the provision or reception of coaching. Every coach at HH either explicitly or indirectly said that coaching was something that made them feel good and/or something that helped them feel like they were benefiting their community rather than harming it. However, in addition to coaching generally making coaches feel good, it also made them feel stressed, overwhelmed, exhausted, concerned, annoyed, frustrated, and irritated. Many coaches characterized coaching as a thankless profession with more bad than good—yet they kept going, kept coaching, kept believing their clients would be successful, that they would find stability. This feeling of belief was not lost on clients who repeatedly mentioned that it was through coaching that they started to feel hope for a different future. Because *feeling* is inextricably linked to the relationships coaches develop with their clients and their functioning as organizational members, it maps on to the encounter and metamorphosis stages of organizational socialization and the experience of liminality. This theme investigates the role of feeling in the process of constructing a mentorship relationship, through three subthemes—a) the emotions most commonly felt by coaches, b) emotional demands of coaching, and c) client feelings about receiving peer recovery coaching.

Emotions most commonly felt by coaches

Coaches at HH repeatedly noted that coaching is about feeling—feeling how a client felt, feeling like they failed a client, feeling excited a client is stable, even feeling like clients could care less about them. No matter the situation, coaching is rooted in feeling and coaches

commonly shared a primacy of negative feelings followed by secondarily positive emotions. For example, Derrick explained his emotions as:

Fatigue. Stress, fear, anxiety, gratitude. . . in that order, because those last things, the gratitude, like you feel all this, and then you do feel the gratitude and the appreciation and. . . I feel fulfilled. Like, yes, X, Y and Z has been difficult, and I've made it difficult on myself, right? Like you really do get to set your own schedule, you get to decide how many clients, you get to decide a lot of factors, but I take it all on, and so I get to intensify all those things, but I feel grateful, I feel fulfilled, I feel purpose, I feel hope, I feel inspired. I feel all the positive things, but they accompany also all the negative.

Derrick's comment exemplifies an emotional duality of coaching that appeared in each coach's interview and in two of their drawings. Emotional duality refers to the simultaneous experience of two seemingly contradictory emotions within the same situation. Derrick's exemplar demonstrates this as he said he feels "all the positive things, but they accompany also all the negative." Both Adam (Figure 4) and Ellen (Figure 5) illustrated this duality almost identically:



Figure 4: Drawing of a sun and a rain cloud

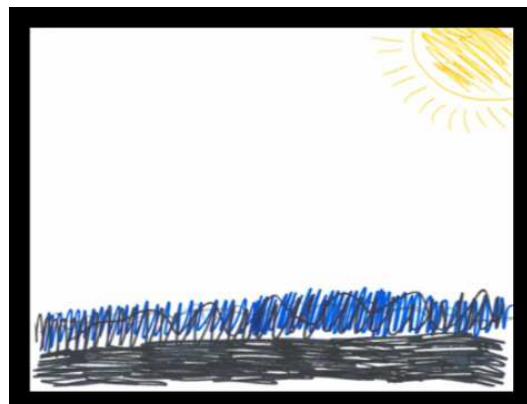


Figure 5: Drawing of a sun and a thunderstorm

Adam explained his drawing as “just every day, every day, as a peer recovery coach, you know it's cloudy and you're gonna get some rain and there's also going to be some sunshine. That's every day.” Ellen echoed Adam's feelings and explained her illustration as “the extremes, because you said to draw it on how it feels to be a coach, so I was just drawing the extremes. The happy and the sad and the excited and the angry and the, you know, just your everyday struggles.”

The notion that coaches experience extreme emotions and that their emotional experiences are shaped by the intensity of client situations was common among all HH's coaches. For example, building upon the explanation of her drawing, elsewhere in her interview Ellen explained that the emotions she most frequently experiences as a coach are:

The extremes, super excited, super happy to super sad, super just, you know. . . A lot of it is extremes. I feel like, cause in this, I feel like our clientele is just, they're extreme. You know what I mean? They're doing the most or they're not. So I feel like, but there is some, some clients, you know, and this is what's great about it is that they're stable now and they are, you know, just normal now. So I do have some, but I feel like a lot of its extremes. I mean, at the end of the day, the good outweighs the bad and you just got to keep going cause there's so many people that need help and there's so many people that want it and we can't help everybody, but we just got to try to help as many people as we can. So that's, I mean, and like I said, the success stories just make it all worth it. Even if there's one out of 20, that makes it worth it.

Clearly, for Ellen, coaching is “extreme.” She notes that because her clients are “doing the most” and are extreme themselves, all her days are spent deep in the throes of extreme emotion. From this we can see that Ellen's feelings are directly impacted by her clients, an experience that was mirrored by Becky who said that for her, mentoring “can be exhausting and I'm definitely learning what it feels like to be drained by other people because people will latch on if you're not careful.” As was previously noted, nearly all the coaches at HH foregrounded negative feelings about coaching before reflecting on the positive, except for Calvin. When sharing the emotions he most commonly experiences as a coach, he replied:

Joy. Feeling. . . feeling like a sense, I don't want to almost say. . . a sense of accomplishment. . . frustration at times, but for the most part, I find joy in it. I find peace, I find happiness, I find contentment, I find purpose. I. . . at the end of the day, I feel good when I go home. So I, I feel good.

Calvin's feelings of happiness, contentment, and purpose surfaced not only in his interview, but in observational data as well. At every event I attended with Calvin he greeted clients with a smile and a hug. He knew them all by name, remembered what they were working on, and even offered up the use of his personal phone to clients in need. Every time I saw him, he was wearing a shirt or hat branded with the phrase "Hope Dealer," a coincidence that perfectly aligns with his foregrounded emotions. "Hope Dealer" showed up on more than just apparel—Adam had a custom license plate with the phrase and Derrick wore two stacked rings, one read "sink" and the other "swim," and when I asked him about them, he told me they represent the hope he has for his future and that of his clients. Though subtle, coaches at HH had reminders of hope everywhere—from their clothes to their cars to their jewelry—and these signs did not go unnoticed by clients as many said they felt hope for the first time in a long time because of their experience with their peer recovery coach. These exemplars demonstrate how coaches understand and explain the emotions they most commonly feel as a peer recovery coach and how those feelings shape how they feel about their role as a coach.

Emotional demands of coaching

Building upon the emotions coaches most commonly feel, coaches repeatedly noted how difficult coaching can be, emphasizing that the emotional challenges they face are rooted not only in their own emotional experiences, but in the intensity and complexity of their clients', too. The emotional demands of coaching led coaches at HH to feel as though they are constantly fielding fires, resulting in feelings of being overwhelmed and spread too thin. These feelings

highlight the ways in which being a peer recovery coach is both relationally demanding and emotionally taxing. For example, Adam said:

The most difficult part of providing peer recovery coaching is meeting the expectation of the client. Sometimes I will talk to the client and kind of get an idea of where they're coming from, what their needs are, and I will tell them "Hey, we can possibly get you into this program or that program," and then if it doesn't happen they sometimes turn on you. There's one guy specifically that I'm thinking of that I met him in the spring on the streets of [city], and he wanted to come to [city]. He was in a wheelchair, and I bent over backwards to get this guy up in [city], and I was going to try to get him into a program up here. Well, on the way to [city], he told me that he had a sex offense, and the program that we were trying to get him in does not accept sex offenders and so I basically was like, "Oh no. I don't know if I'm gonna be able to get you in. Do you still want to go?" He was like, "Yeah, let's go. Let's try." And then he couldn't get in and then he turned on me, and he was just like, telling me he was gonna sue me, and I was just like, "all I'm doing is trying to help you," but sometimes they have these expectations that we're gonna be able to be this superhero and work this miracle for them and sometimes that miracle happens, and sometimes it doesn't and it's really hard, it's really hard for me to feel like I've let someone down, that's difficult for me.

From Adam's experience we can see layered difficulties—a client threatening legal action, a community resource that provides provisional resources, and client expectations—and the ways in which the culmination of individual challenges can become a difficult situation that made Adam feel as though he "let someone down." This fear of letting clients down was a common feeling among coaches at HH, with Calvin saying being a coach:

can be stressful. It absolutely can be stressful because people are definitely looking to you for answers or for support or for resources or whatever the case may be, right? Like Adam said, we don't want to give people empty promises, right? So when we go out there and tell people, "I can do this, I can do that for you," like, when you tell somebody that's in a desperate situation, like, I know what it's like to be in that desperate situation and to be let down, and it sucks. So yeah, it absolutely does.

Of note in both Adam and Calvin's examples is the notion that an inability to connect a client with a resource is a failure, even when that inability stems from something on the client's behalf. In Adam's case, his client had an offense that restricted his access to certain resources, something Adam had no control over. For Calvin, he noted elsewhere in his interview that he has repeatedly

“gotten burned” by clients who are inconsistent in their commitment to receiving coaching.

However, in his explanation of “getting burned,” Calvin made mention of his own

inconsistencies, saying:

I've learned the hard way that where people are like one thing one day, and something totally different the next, which I get, because I used to be like that when I was in active addiction. Like depending on my level of intoxication or commitment to the, you know, that day, I might have been doing good. I might've had a bunch of money in my pocket, and I didn't really care about, because I had a place to stay, or I could afford a hotel, or I had all the drugs and food and whatever I needed for the day, right? So, like, my level of commitment that day would have been very low, versus a day when I was going through it where, you know, a lot of these people get robbed on a daily basis and terrible things happen to them, so when they're up, they're up, and when they're down, they're usually in my office a lot.

Calvin's difficulty stems from inconsistent commitment from his clients and learning how to notice and respond to those inconsistencies. He explained that one of the ways he attempts to manage the emotional demands of his job is by:

Not get[ting] too caught up in emotional attachment with your client, not mak[ing] their crisis your crisis, because obviously, in addiction or in crisis mode, everybody needs something right now or they're expecting a lot of you and just understanding that there's only so much that I can do to help and still having to set boundaries with people at times when they're in crisis.

Calvin's statement that there is only so much he can do for his clients alludes to the fact that clients often “take advantage” of the services coaches have to offer.

This feeling of being taken advantage of was shared among many of the coaches at HH.

For example, Derrick explained his emotional challenges as follows:

The hardest thing for me is, oftentimes it's a thankless position. You feel taken advantage of a lot. You feel. . . and it's very common, we shouldn't be doing this, but it's very common for us to give 90 and they're giving 10 in hopes that they're going to start giving 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, and so when you've been working for somebody, and you're constantly giving 90, and you can't ever get, you might be lucky to get 10%, it weighs on you, because times that by 10 to 15 other clients that aren't making much progress, it wears on you and wears on you and wears on you like you just feel like you're taking constant loss and you're always, it's always fielding emergencies. It's always fielding difficult situations. It's always fielding the next fire. You're always putting out a fire in somebody's

life, and it wears on you, until you get that one phone call from that client, or that one interaction with the client, for example, that just recharges your battery and you're like, "This is why I'm doing it! This is why I'm doing it!"

From these exemplars, we can see that the emotional demands of coaching commonly stem from clients being in constant crisis and expecting their coach to either be immediately available or figure it out for them. This difficulty is made even more complex by the fact that none of the coaches at HH view their role as a coach as one in which they solve problems for their clients, but rather one in which they are helping their clients develop the skills necessary to manage their own crises. However, the alternative of leaving clients to fend for themselves is not something coaches feel comfortable with as Ellen explained that doing so can result in "hav[ing] clients overdose and not make it and then you have their families, and it's just awful. It's so awful. It's hard." Thus, coaches are constantly negotiating the emotional demands of coaching—walking a tight rope of emotion—as they learn how to triage client emergencies, empower clients to be independent, and work to prevent the worst possible outcome.

Client feelings about receiving peer recovery coaching

For clients at HH, the feeling of receiving peer recovery coaching provided positive feelings that they had not felt in a long time or, in some cases, ever. For example, Rocky shared that "It's the first time in my life I feel good. I feel awesome. I'm actually doing something that's positive. It makes me want to get up in the morning." Michelle said that she likes receiving peer recovery coaching because:

I feel like I'm important when they call and reach out to me and see how I'm doing. It feels good to be important to them. I mean I've never really been important to anybody. I lost my mom. I lost my dad. I lost my stepdad. I lost my first husband. I have a lot of trauma that I really haven't figured out yet. So my initial instinct for problems would be I would run and so now I've been two months sober and so I'm trying to deal with things soberly and it's just like wow it's a difference from night and day you know like being high or drinking and not dealing with your problems to having a peer coach to call and

you know give you the advice you need or the support that you need and just to bring you down from whatever you're feeling.

Indeed, Michelle's feeling of importance carried over into her illustration (Figure 6) as she described receiving peer recovery coaching as:

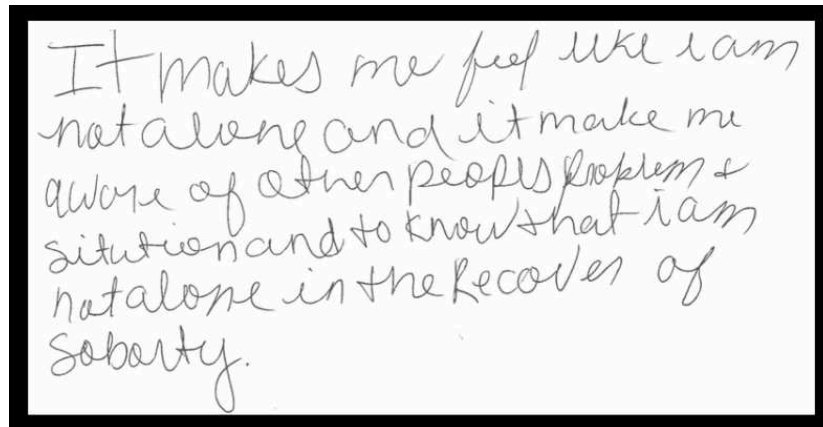


Figure 6: Handwritten quote describing peer recovery

Michelle's awareness that she is not alone in recovery or sobriety, and the feelings that come from that realization, were shared by many of HH's clients.

For many clients at HH, finding solidarity through peer recovery coaching coincided with a feeling of worthiness. For example, Cutty said being able to talk to his coach about their shared struggles with addiction is "Awesome. It's just, it's a blessing that I thought that. . . that I didn't have and now my eyes are open and I can see my brain's coming back from being an alcoholic and a drunk. So now I'm realizing what life is really about and if I can bless somebody, I'm going to bless them." Faith echoed the importance of finding solidarity in recovery, particularly through success stories shared by HH's coaches, saying:

I do want to hear what people are going through. I feel alone a lot of the time, and sometimes I wonder if my problems matter as much as other people's and I'm just curious what other people are going through mostly. It's hard to think you're going to overcome something if you don't see other people do it first and so I'm really glad to hear their stories.

From Faith's example we can see how the relationships clients build with their coaches help them feel important and worthy in their own lives while simultaneously providing an example of what success can be after being justice impacted. Most clients at HH felt the support they received from their coach was of the utmost importance, with Larry describing his coach as "Somebody that's always got my back, and there's nobody else out here that does that. I mean, I can't count on anybody for anything, except for him."

Thus, *feeling* demonstrates the primacy of emotion in the provision and reception of peer recovery coaching. Emotions are not peripheral to the experience of peer recovery coaches and clients, rather they are woven into the very fabric of it. Indeed, it is through their emotional experiences that coaches and clients learn to perform their role within their mentoring relationship. In this way, emotions are a central component to the encounter and metamorphosis stages of socialization and the experience of liminality. At the encounter stage, coaches and clients are learning how to express their emotions to their clients through the use of information seeking tactics while also developing the skills necessary to perform their role within their relationship. This information seeps into the metamorphosis stage as coaches and clients perform the emotional expressions expected by their relational partner. For example, Calvin noted that he had to learn how to notice and respond to inconsistencies in his client's commitment to peer recovery coaching and emotional state to continue performing his role as their coach. In doing so, Calvin is attending to past stated needs, current stated needs, and planning for future inconsistencies between the two based on his interpretation of his client's emotional state—an experience that exemplifies how liminality impacts a coach's organizational socialization experience.

Being

For every coach at HH, being a coach marked their transition from being part of the problem to becoming part of the solution as a “wounded healer” (LeBel et al, 2014). This process of being a wounded healer involves a coach transforming their personal suffering into empathy and using that empathy, in combination with their lived experiences, to mentor someone experiencing similar traumas. In so doing, they convert their suffering into wisdom, creating an opportunity to offer unique, authentic, empathetic care within a system that can otherwise be dehumanizing. This transformation maps onto the metamorphosis stage of organizational socialization and the experience of liminality as *being* occurs when a coach has been socialized into and is performing the norms, values, and attitudes of an organization and/or role. Through the acknowledgement and reparation of their own wounds, they practice and enact empathy in service of their clients in two ways—a) personal transformation, and b) managing client situations.

Personal Transformation

Coaches at HH marked their “transformation” in various ways, but each highlighted a moment that shifted their thinking as it related to relationships with the people they had previously harmed. For example, Adam said:

When I went through my transformation, I was actively involved in a restorative justice program, which allowed me to start like taking really long, hard looks at myself and then also through revisiting traumatic things that happened to me in my past, I was able to actually connect and have empathy for the people that I harmed and so I was very compelled to start giving back and trying to be of service instead of just taking from people.

This idea of “giving back” and “being of service” was repeated by Derrick who marked his transformation with the day he decided to get sober, saying:

August 10, 2019, four years into my prison sentence, is the day I decided to get sober. That's the shift that it was for me. But the reason I decided to shift was relationships. I realized that incarceration didn't do this to me, I did this to myself and my addiction and all the things that I went through, and I realized that I wanted relationships when I was out. Before, you know, the same level of intensity that I put into what I'm doing now I put into what I was doing then, and it was terrible, right? I destroyed all my relationships and so the catalyst behind it was I want, I don't ever want to feel this loneliness again. I don't ever want to feel this abandonment and they're things that I did to myself. So the catalyst for me was, I want my family back. I want my friends back. And then how do I start the process of doing that? First thing I knew was my addiction. The second thing was self-help, educating myself, and learning. I'll give you an example on how, like, investing in relationships and people, everything else comes together in your life. So when I first fell, I would have to lie, cheat, manipulate, whatever the case was, just for somebody to send me \$20 bucks, right? Just \$20 on my account, and life sucked. It was hard. Nobody trusted me, all these different things. And then I started to invest in people. Like, my focus was no longer. . . my focus was money at first. I need money, I need to eat, I need stuff and things and these. . . and then my focus shifted, and I was like, "Fuck that. I don't care. I don't need money. I don't need none of that. What I need is I need somebody to talk to. I need a friend. I need to know that I am adding value in somebody's life," [. . .] and so now I know I have people in my corner that I don't care what goes on, they got me because I know I'm making the right decisions and doing the right things.

More than just sobriety, Derrick marked his transformation with the knowledge that he was "adding value in somebody's life," something he felt he did not do prior to August 10, 2019.

Moreover, the recognition of his own value made him realize the importance of building, investing in, and maintaining healthy relationships that then allowed him to be of service to others; or, as he said, the ability to hit the new youngster with the things he needs to be okay.

Though he developed this mentality in prison, Derrick's realization that "life [is] about relationships and investing in other people and the things around you, that's what helps you succeed in life" is what guides his coaching and commitment to being part of the solution for the problems he once caused.

Much like Derrick, Calvin marked his transformation by both his sobriety and his desire to be more present in his relationships. Reflecting on how his sobriety feels different this time, he said:

This time, like, I, for whatever reason, like in the past I knew I was hurting people, but I don't know if I just didn't care or I didn't really realize it, but like this time, it's like, dude, I just don't want to hurt like, Ellen, my daughter, my family, my friends, like everybody was so. . . I was just tired of hurting people, like, not even just myself. I mean including myself, right? Like I just didn't want to live that life anymore, like I was no longer willing to be content living life in DOC or in and out of DOC or whatever.

Indeed, for Adam, Derrick, and Calvin, their transformation into being wounded healers resulted from their need to connect with and be of service to others and their realization that what they had been doing was not only not good for them but actively causing harm to those they loved. These transformations were marked not only in coach interviews, but drawings as both Derrick (Figure 7) and Becky (Figure 8) used the opportunity to illustrate how they see themselves as wounded healers.



Figure 7: Drawing of a path with a tree and birds



Figure 8: Drawing of a person offering a helping hand to another person

Derrick explained his drawing by saying:

I mean, this is such a fucking cliché, but yes, so it's all life, right? It's all forward progress, and it's all a journey. I drew, I did the path, because everybody's path looks different and then the tree is obviously for life, for growth, for new beginnings, all the different things, and then the birds are the freedom of walking somebody down their path and feeling degrees of freedom that they've never experienced before.

This idea of walking with someone down a new path and feeling new degrees of freedom explains not only Derrick's role as a wounded healer, but the freedom being a wounded healer has afforded him. Life, new beginnings, and growth, are all experiences he gets to have because he has chosen to invest in relationships. Becky's illustration aligns closely to Derrick's as she explained it as "somebody that just needs a hand up. Just knocked down by life and needs support and just needs somebody to pull them up." Becky went on to explain how she sees being a coach as the support somebody who has been knocked down by life needs to get back up again. Thus, being a coach is an opportunity for HH's coaches to invest in relationships and give back to their communities as wounded healers through personal transformation. Such transformations demonstrate a coach's shift from being part of the problem to being part of the solution—that is transforming into being a wounded healer.

Managing client situations

For HH's coaches, their being able to manage client situations was often a distinct moment in which they realized they were capable of being a coach. This marking was important as it signaled to them that they had effectively learned how to use their own justice-involved experiences to help support someone through theirs. For Derrick, this moment came when he ran into a client while he was doing outreach, saying:

In this specific case, the gentleman was drunk, and I stopped, and I talked to him. He's being rude as hell, and I'm just, I just went up, sat next to him, like, "What's going on, bro? I get your upset, man, but what's going down? Like, you're in a beautiful park right now, you know, life is good, it's a beautiful day," and we just start chatting it up and he

finally, like, I broke past his little, you know, macho exterior, and he kind of got emotional. He's like, "Man, I made some serious mistakes. I stopped reporting to parole, and I am, I'm sure I have a warrant out for my arrest," and all these different things. I'm like, I was like, "Listen, man, I do this. This is my job. I do this. I was like, if you trust me, I'd be happy to help you get back into compliance with parole and not go back to prison." I was like, "I can't guarantee it, but what I can guarantee is that the end result is going to be much better than the stress that you're under right now," and so he did. He took a leap of faith and he decided to trust me, and I got on the phone with his PO (parole officer), and I have a decent rapport with the parole office down there, and I just told him, "Hey, you know, I'm sitting with one of your clients, and they have been interested in starting to receive recovery services. They recognize that they made some mistakes and that they may have a warrant out for their arrest, but the client is interested in trying to figure out what they can do to get back into compliance with parole," and they said "I want him to come in the following day and we'll have a discussion and see what we can do," and that's oftentimes a recipe for disaster because they ask you to come in and they arrest you, right? But he did. I told him. I said, "Listen, man, I want you to make a promise that you'll go in." I was like, "they're understanding. If you can take accountability for what you did, and you can give them a plan as to what, how it won't happen again, I guarantee you're going to be okay," and he went in and he told him, "I made a mistake, I relapsed, I got scared, I ran. But I want to make this right, and I want to figure it out," and I saw him the next day and we were talking about getting him into sober living, and yeah, so he got, he never went back. He got back into compliance with parole and he's doing good.

This was a marked transformation into being a coach for Derrick as he had once been the person who stopped doing what he needed to do to be in compliance with parole and instead chose to go off the deep end, a decision that resulted in his being reincarcerated. To see that, as a wounded healer, he was now capable of using his experiences and professional relationships to help create a positive outcome for a client was monumental as he was actively doing the thing he had been working towards achieving since he decided to invest in his own personal transformation. For Murphy, his moment of being was marked not necessarily in the managing of billable client hours, but in his ability to hold space for the people who need peer coaching but might still be incarcerated, as he explained:

I still answer the phone for those guys, a lot of those guys, I left them contact information because my work is not done because I'm gone. If I got the time to answer the phone for you and hear your problems or like I've done, out of the kindness of my heart, I've pulled up on wives just to let them know, "Hey, your husband speaks about you all the time.

Here's some flowers for you because he can't buy them for you." I've been to court dates for guy's kids who the dad can't stand in, I stand in for them and let them know, "Hey, your dad's not here. I did time with your dad. I'm here for you." I've done a lot for these guys because I know what it was like when we was on the inside, and we didn't have nobody to call to do that. [. . .] They want to know somebody care. Somebody left, somebody cares. I take pictures for them of what I got going on. I take pictures of their family. Like, some like, "I ain't seen my mom," and I'm like, "Okay, well, I pull up on her. I'm taking pictures with her. I'm gonna send it back to you," and they like, "Man, he really went to go see my mom," or "He really was at my son's court date," or "He really went to my son's basketball game." Like, if I could do it, I'ma do it.

From Murphy's exemplar we can see that the role of a peer coach transcends profession and is instead a way of being. Murphy notes that he goes out of his way to support the wives, children, and mothers of people currently incarcerated and in so doing, he is working to repair relationships on both sides of the wall, something he was once only able to dream of doing. His statement that "if I could do it, I'ma do it," exemplifies how committed he is to being—part of the solution, of service, and a wounded healer.

The final example of being as a way to manage client situations comes from Calvin.

During our interview, Calvin's phone was ringing incessantly and he described his experience with the client who kept calling as follows:

This dude that's calling right now called me last night at nine o'clock at night. I've been trying to get him into [reentry program] I work with and this kid called me from the streets three weeks ago, talking, you know, he's just never been on the streets, having a really hard time, so I started the process of getting him into [reentry program] but they are very particular about who they will let into their program, because they want to see a certain level of engagement and he's living on the street, he's hoping to get into this house where they will let him live for free for a little while, and he's just really struggling to make it to all his commitments with [reentry program] so he got dropped off in [city] to do a class, had no ride home, called me and it's like, of course, I'm gonna come get you. Because yeah, he's really trying, and he really wants it, and he's putting himself in situations that aren't sweet, just so that he can show his level of commitment to [reentry program] in order to get in there. So if people are really willing to put in the work, I'm willing to put in the work with them, to help them get where they need to be. I can relate to them, knowing that I've been in that same situation but coming out of it, knowing that it's possible and I think sharing that with them, leading by example is super important.

When discussing this client further, Calvin alluded to the ways in which he saw his past self reflected in this client. His comment that he is “willing to put in the work with them,” is reflected by his driving over two hours round trip to help his client get where he needed to go. This level of commitment is something Calvin does for clients who are willing to put in the work because he knows it is what he needed to get where he is today, as evidenced by his saying that he “know[s] that it’s possible” and that “leading by example is super important.” For Calvin, the ability to do for others what he needed done for him is his full circle moment, his chance to be for others what he was at one time incapable of being for himself.

For HH’s coaches, *being* is the professional manifestation of their personal transformation that is exemplified by their ability to manage client situations that mirror their own pre-transformation. This section demonstrates the overlap between peer mentorship and the wounded healer, exemplifying the role of a wounded healer peer recovery coach. In the process of *being*, wounded healer peer recovery coaches are attending to the responsibilities of both a peer mentor and a wounded healer by using their lived experience with the justice system to provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support to their clients and manage client situations. In the process of community reentry, wounded healer peer recovery coaches draw upon their lived experience as a source of expertise, inspiration, and connection as they work to invest in relationships with and the success of their clients. As it relates to organizational socialization, an individual *being* a wounded healer peer recovery coach exemplifies the metamorphosis stage of socialization as their ability to effectively manage client situations is predicated upon their adequately performing the norms, values, and attitudes of a peer recovery coach. However, the experience of liminality and concert time are both necessary to fully understand this process as it is a coach’s ability to simultaneously occupy and use their past and

present that enables them to be a wounded healer peer recovery coach and not just a peer recovery coach.

Risking

Undergirding each of these processes—*learning, constructing, feeling, and being*—is *risking*. For wounded healer peer recovery coaches, providing coaching services is inherently temporal, dangerous, and rooted in a tension of wanting to provide services to their clients while simultaneously needing to protect themselves. As such, *risking* occurs during the metamorphosis stage of organizational socialization as a coach is not only performing their role but seeking to individualize it. To mentor clients experiencing traumatic experiences they must draw upon their own trauma to both leverage and commodify it. In so doing, there is a temporal element to wounded healer peer recovery coaching necessitating the development of concert time. Concert time is a collective emotional process rooted in a shared experience within the relationship (Mattley, 2002). The development of concert time allows a coach and their client to co-construct a shared sense of togetherness. This togetherness relies entirely on a coach's temporal capacities—to exist simultaneously in their past (as a problem) and present (as part of the solution). There are risks to this temporal hopping/shifting/alternating as coaches are expected to simultaneously re-inhabit their most traumatic moments and selves and then shift back into being a wounded healer peer recovery coach. This shift can be dangerous as coaches revisit times when they were experiencing suicidal ideation, actively using drugs, unhoused, incarcerated, stealing from loved ones, and more. These dangerous temporal shifts underpin the process of wounded healer peer recovery coaching, and they are what makes the construction of these relationships so unique. Moreover, as coaches transition into being wounded healer peer recovery coaches, there is a tension that develops as they seek to simultaneously serve their clients while protecting

themselves. In the following section, the process of risking is examined through two subthemes—a) the temporal dangers of coaching, and b) the tension of protection.

Temporal dangers of coaching

Wounded healer peer recovery coaching is inherently dangerous as coaches are tasked with using their previous justice-involvement to support their clients through similar circumstances. Though most coaches interpreted this task as a privilege and their experience as a strength, they also shared stories that primarily surfaced danger. For example, in reflecting on his experience reentering the community after receiving clemency, Adam said:

I was reluctant to come in this field. I was. . . I actually shoveled poop at a dog kennel for a couple of months and was just kind of dragging my feet. I was, I wanted to see what Derrick did, you know, Derrick was like, “I’m doing this,” and I was kind of like, I don’t know. I don’t know if I’m built for this work. It’s a totally different situation out here than in DOC. The environment has totally changed. We’re talking about, you know, people are actually in active addiction, and I didn’t know that I was going to be able to maintain my own sobriety if I was immersed in other people’s addiction. So that’s kind of what scared me. And then also, you know, I had the fear of letting someone down. I had an experience in DOC where I was working with a guy, and he like, the day that I had worked, I had worked with him for weeks, and then the same day that I had worked with him, he legitimately tried to hang himself, and he didn’t, he wasn’t successful in it, but it just, it scared me. I was just like, “Oh my God.” Like, and I, I internalize things and so I was just kind of like, “Damn, what did I do to let this guy down?” Like I wasn’t, you know, I didn’t show up for him like I needed to. And so, you know, and that’s just part of my personality is I really internalize things so I had that fear that I was going to have to, you know, that I was going to have to, or that I could possibly let somebody down, you know, and I didn’t know how I was going to be able to navigate that for myself. So that’s kind of what scared me away from, like, just diving right into it like Derrick did.

From Adam’s exemplar we can see that his hesitancy to immediately become a peer coach upon his release from prison came from concerns “letting someone down” and the fragility of his own sobriety. Importantly, his concern over letting a client down was fueled not only by his personality and empathetic nature, but by the fact that he had previously had a client attempt suicide after receiving coaching from him. Though Adam now feels as though there was not a

correlation, it is an experience that has stuck with him, coloring his approach to coaching to this day.

This fear calls back to the inherently emotional nature of peer recovery coaching and the life-or-death consequences of the profession. Adam was worried about maintaining his sobriety while being surrounded by people in active addiction, a fear shared by Ellen who described seeing people using as “triggering,” saying:

When we go do outreach, sometimes there'll be people smoking meth on the corner or whatever, and sometimes it triggers me, and I'm like, I have to, like I, one time I had to tell my husband, this was just a couple months ago, “I have to leave, I've got to get out of here,” because sometimes it just hits you like, ugh, you know, I don't, it's just a trigger.

Such triggers would not only be harmful for her health and sobriety, they would also impede her ability to continue coaching as HH does not allow coaches to interact with clients if they relapse and, if coaches are not coaching, they are not making money. More than just relapsing, like Adam, Derrick had a client contact him during a suicide attempt. Reflecting on the experience, Derrick said:

I had one of my clients just recently, I've been working with him, he's probably my longest client that I've had. Been working with him for well over a year. Struggles with mental health, struggles with substance abuse, struggles with getting, going in and out of state hospitals, and rehabs and all these different things, and just an incredible human being, like just his heart and who he is as a person. And I want to say, like a month ago, he had never seriously attempted suicide, but about a month ago, he calls me and he's like, “I just took three bottles of pills and slit my wrist.” And this is a person that when he says it, he means it like he's not one of those, one of those dudes, and I could hear it in his voice, and I literally was in bed after a very stressful day, struggling significantly with my mental health, and then I get this phone call, which I shouldn't have answered the phone. I'm glad I did, but I should have had a boundary. So I literally ran out of the house with no shoes on and left my front door wide open, hopped in my car and shot up his direction. I'm calling everybody I can to try to get, because it was kind of far, and so, like, those types of situations, they happen regularly, and if you don't have boundaries and stuff like that, compassion fatigue is real, and you'll find yourself working, if you're guided by it, you'll find yourself working till 2am and answering calls and like, it's really hard. It's really hard because I know what it feels like to be suicidal. I know what it feels like to have those feelings. So it's like, man, you're able to connect with them more. You're able to sit there and be like, “Listen, man, I get it, but cut your fucking shit, and let's go,”

right? Like, “It's okay. You can feel these things and you can have these thoughts, but we can also walk through this. It's not the end of the world.” We've been in similar. . . you know what I'm saying?

This idea of coaching seeming boundaryless, and the subsequent need to enact boundaries to continue working, exemplifies the dangers of wounded healer peer recovery coaching. These dangers can be emotional, as they were with Adam and Derrick's suicidal clients, and physical, as they were with Adam and Ellen's sobriety. In either case, wounded healer peer recovery coaches regularly risk their own wellbeing to support their clients by using their own traumas to help guide their client down a different path.

In some cases, threats to coach wellbeing extend beyond a coach's professional life and seep into their personal and familial wellbeing. For example, Ellen shared that she once invited a client to live with her family, saying “I had brought a client that I got really close with home to live with us until we figured out housing or whatever and it just ended up bad. Like you don't do that. Don't ever do that.” In spite of her explicitly stating “you don't do that,” she later said, in reference to her clients, “I just want to bring them home and I can't. I'm always like, ‘Can we just bring them home?’ And my husband's like, ‘oh my God.’” Her repeated desire to bring clients home exemplifies the toll being a coach takes on her and the dangers she is exposed to as wounded healer peer recovery coach. She knows bringing clients home is a bad idea but she continues to consider it because of how deeply she feels for them and their struggles. Though admirable, such feelings exemplify the dangers associated with being a wounded healer peer recovery coach as the coaching decisions she makes can risk her wellbeing, employment, safety, and family.

Wounded healer peer recovery coaches seemingly act as time travelers, traversing traumatic thought terrain to build rapport with and support the success of their clients. Adam described his experience with temporality as “kind of scary,” saying:

Oftentimes it'll take me on a trip back. So when I, you know, it's actually kind of scary sometimes, you know, because I will take a trip back in my own experience, and I will feel, sometimes the emptiness and the pain and the misery that I think that they're going through now, and it really has, it's really like, shocking for me, because it's so far removed from where I'm at now, you know. But it also, like, it just helps me pour my compassion into the individual as well, and I kind of use that as an opportunity, like, I'll revisit those times in my life with the person that I'm working with and a lot of times I get emotional and they will connect with me, you know, and I'll talk to them, and I'll be like, “Look, this is where I once was. I was feeling, maybe not exactly like you are, but similar to the way you are, empty and just miserable and had nothing going on and just, you know, anytime I was sober, I was just, like, dealing with so much pain, and this is where I'm at now,” you know what I mean? So, like, I can do it, and we can do this together, and I'll walk next to you while you do it.

Adam's commitment to “walking next to you while you do it,” exemplifies the role of concert time in coaching—the co-creation of a sense of togetherness through a shared temporal experience. His acknowledgment that it is shocking to go back to how he once felt—empty, lonely, and miserable—underscores the potential dangers of this time travel as coaches are precariously placing themselves on the edge of a cliff, knowing full well what lies at the bottom. This precarious placement is supported by the earlier discussion of hesitancies related to coaching and how exposing themselves to previous illicit activities can be triggering. In much the same way, inviting old feelings of pain and isolation into present moments can be disjuncting for coaches as they must learn to differentiate these emotions in service of their own wellbeing and that of their client. Murphy further explicated upon the temporal dangers of coaching as he said:

I think the thought of how things have gotten hard for myself allows me to think about what the other person is going through because a lot of times of times, those guys, those people who walk through the door, their situation is worse than mine. So then I'll lean on that like I could be that person, or I once was that person, and it allows me to reflect on

how far I've come, the type of things that I've done to put myself in this position, to even be able to, if it's not help them do something in a physical manner or whatnot, then at least to be able to have somebody communicate with or for them to know, like, "Hey, I ran into a cool guy today." I'm good with that. [. . .] And then there's been other situations where I've seen people come with a dog and they like, "who got the dog? Like, where's the guy who owns that dog?" And like, they overdosed and died, but we didn't know that he was dead until we found the dog, and the dog took us back to the tent. We see crazy stuff up here, crazy stuff. So like, I have to be able to, like, be strong for them, because they got this community that they in. They being strong for each other, and nobody on the outskirts of this would know what's going on [. . .] We got to be strong for each other.

Murphy's statement exemplifies the emotional dangers of wounded healer peer recovery coaching and how his temporal process allows him to think about how he once was or could be the person on the receiving end of coaching. In so doing, he intentionally approaches coaching with kindness, care, and empathy for his clients as he feels it is his responsibility to "be strong for them." Elsewhere in his interview, Murphy explained that he regularly stays at HH later than he needs to because he feels bad for the clients that are there with nowhere else to go, saying:

I'll be here till 6, 7 at night sometimes, and there will be five clients here, and they're here because they don't have nowhere else to go and sometimes I'll just lounge and Google stuff or whatever to pass time, because I know they don't have nowhere to go. But then there comes a time where I gotta go home too, I'm tired now. So I have to wake these guys up or go grab them and tell them, "hey, it's time to go." It's hard for me to get in that car and drive off knowing I just left four, five people in front of this facility. I can't leave them in here and they have nowhere to go. That's hard.

Murphy's comments about staying at work late to give clients respite were supported by my observations as our interview took place later in the day and I was unintentionally able to observe six clients milling about the office, charging their phones, using the kitchen, washing up in the bathrooms, and enjoying a break from the heat outside. However, once Murphy and I left, I saw them scatter in various directions; one went north with a shopping cart full of belongings, another two to the south—stopping every few feet to gather change, gum, bottles, and socks—as they traveled to their home for the evening, the other three seemingly aimless as they took off into the night. Indeed, as coaches seek to be wounded healers for their clients, they are exposed

to various physical, emotional, and financial dangers that directly impact their wellbeing and ability to provide coaching services.

Tension of protection

More than just the temporal dangers of coaching, providing wounded healer peer recovery coaching requires coaches to balance their investment in their clients with their reputation in the community. This tension means that most coaches at HH have developed mechanisms to “test” how serious their clients are about recovery before offering them services or placements that they deem to be superior. This idea of getting “burned” by clients was previously mentioned as part of the informal training processes coaches experience, but here the idea of a client “burning” a coach is expanded to consider the ways in which coaches must simultaneously provide services for clients while protecting their reputations and resources. Ellen explained this tension with frustration as she recalled an experience with a client who seemingly did not want any of the things he was asking for, saying:

I have one guy that I've placed in, I put him in a sober living. He left there. I put him in a transitional housing. He left there. I put him in a, in a program like [program name]. He left there, and he's like, “I want to be off the streets,” and I'm like, “Dude, like, I don't, I don't know what else, I don't know what else to do. You leave everywhere I put you.” I don't know. I don't know. You know what I mean? He's like, “I want housing.” I'm like, “That's fine. But it's going to be like, you know, months and months.” There's not an easy, it's not easy. So it's frustrating because it's like, you want to be off the streets so bad. Well, I had you somewhere three times. Like, you must not want it that bad.

From Ellen's exemplar we can see how her frustration with her client demonstrates the tension coaches experience as they attempt to simultaneously balance empathy for their client with limited resources and the need to protect their professional credibility. Additionally, her concerns about repeatedly placing a client who continues to leave programs further emphasize this tension as she was also tasked with balancing client instability with the preservation of her community relationships.

This idea of wanting something but being unwilling to put in the work to achieve it was something that repeatedly came up for coaches at HH. Much like Ellen, coaches had to learn how to protect their most prized resources to ensure that “serious” clients would be able to access them. Murphy explained this sincerity as it relates to effort, as he said:

I learned quickly that even amongst trying to recruit clients, I can't do everything that they want me to do and I would tell them like “I'm only going to put in the effort that you do. I'm gonna match your energy. I'm not going to put in more energy than you, and you putting in less, because ultimately, we got to work together. So the minute you start slacking, I'm gonna start slacking too, because I can give that energy to somebody else who is serious. I'll try and let them know that from the jump and I want them to take me serious when we come here, because when we you know, we do extracurricular activities too, like bowling and baseball games and recovery bingo and stuff like that so there's a time when we can let our hair down, you know, and we can enjoy our company and our time, but when we have stuff like that, I need you to come as prepared as I'm coming. You know what I mean?

More than just “com[ing] prepared,” Murphy expects his clients to follow through with the plans they create and, when they do not:

I let them know, like, I'll try and be as honest with them as possible, not really considering they feelings, because the truth hurts sometimes and I want to let them know like, “I did my job for you, man, and you left, and I'm not mad at you. It's not nothing personal, but I took your word for everything that you told me. I believed you, and I did what I was supposed to do, what you asked me to do. I did that for you, and then here you are again, and you kind of let me down, and I didn't let you down, and I'm not gonna let you down again, but I want you to know that I'm aware of it, that you let me down that way. If it was a trick or it was a game just to get off the streets for a couple days, that's not gonna work. It's not gonna keep working with me.” Now they have to come at me correctly. Say like, “ah, he not going for that.”

Murphy enacts the tension of protection by matching his client's energy and holding them accountable to the recovery plans they develop. Doing so allows him to invest his time, energy, and resources into clients he perceives as being serious about their recovery. As Becky explained, “a lot of people, they're on the street, they want to get off the street, they want to get clean, but when it comes down to it, it's not time.”

This idea of it “not [being] time” for everyone who says they want coaching services/resources regularly surfaced among coaches at HH, and it impacted their approach to coaching as they sought to minimize the tension. Calvin shared that he had so many clients for whom the timing was not quite right that it completely shifted his approach to coaching, saying:

I think just taking my time and just kind of feeling them out and seeing how they act on, just like what [reentry program] they do, I'm starting to implement that more, you know, seeing their engagement, seeing their follow through, seeing how bad they really want it, or if they're really just here trying to get a free phone and for us to put them up, you know, to get them free whatever. I mean, there's a lot of people that come through here that just want us to get them into a free place and a free phone and a free whatever, you know what I mean, and that's all they're in it for. They're in it for, they're not going to stay clean. They're not even trying to stay clean. They're just trying to find a place to get high that's not outside. So I think for me, it's important that I want to see some follow through. I want to see some commitment, some dedication. I think that's one of my strategies is just kind of seeing if they have consistency with me.

For Calvin, client consistency offered the protection he sought in providing coaching services/resources and it was important to him that the people he invested his time into wanted to be clean and off the streets. Indeed, as coaches at HH better learned the reputational and personal risks of being a peer recovery coach, they sought to protect themselves and future clients while simultaneously continuing to perform their job duties. In so doing, they implemented new coaching strategies to test client commitment to minimize the tension they felt between meeting the needs of their clients and protecting their reputation and community relationships. By using these new strategies, wounded healer peer recovery coaches at HH were better able to preserve their energy, allowing them to invest their time and effort into clients they perceived as being serious about their recovery.

In conclusion, the experiences of wounded healer peer recovery coaches and their clients are complex and, much like the process of organizational socialization, the relationship between the two is rarely linear. Rather than progressing through clearly defined stages, wounded healer

peer recovery coach and client relationships exist in relation to liminality as they are constantly negotiating expectations, boundaries, trust, accountability, emotions, and their identities. The relationship between a coach and client is never fixed as goals, individuals, and resources change. From a relational socialization perspective, it is the relationship between a wounded healer peer recovery coach and client that facilitates a coach's ability to shift between socialization stages. This section identified five key themes—*learning*, *constructing*, *feeling*, *becoming*, and *risking*—to understand the experience of a justice-impacted peer recovery coach and explore how justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients communicatively build a mentoring relationship. The following section considers these findings in relation to previous literature on community reentry, peer mentorship, organizational socialization, and organizational emotion, while also discussing the theoretical and practical implications, limitations and directions for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The goal of this dissertation was to better understand the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches (RQ1), with particular attention to their socialization (RQ1a) and emotional (RQ1b) experiences, as well as how coaches and clients communicatively build their mentoring relationship (RQ2). As increased scholarly interest in the role and efficacy of peer recovery coaching coincides with additional community needs for peer support services, it is important to understand how peer recovery coaches experience and learn about their role, how they build relationships with their clients, and the role of communication in each of these processes. Through analyzing 31 participant interviews, 30 hours of ethnography, and 15 creative arts-based drawings using the phronetic iterative approach (Tracy, 2020) five key themes were identified—a) *learning*, b) *constructing*, c) *feeling*, d) *being* and e) *risking*. Overall, these results reveal the role of socialization, emotion in organizations, and peer mentorship in the process of providing and receiving wounded healer peer recovery coaching. The following section provides the theoretical and practical implications of this project, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

Theoretical Contributions

This project makes four significant contributions to existing theory. First, this study contributes a relational approach to the study of organizational socialization. Existing organizational communication literature has investigated socialization from an individual (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010; Ferguson, 2018; Howe & Meeks, 2019; Madlock & Chory, 2014), and organizational (Ault, 2025; Fonner & Timmerman, 2009; Greer & Wyant, 2024; Hart et al., 2003) perspective, but thus far, there has not been an exploration into the relational components

influencing the process. A relational approach to the process of organizational socialization attends to the ongoing, co-constructed, and communicative nature of socialization. This study found that the relationships coaches built with their clients shaped how they experienced organizational socialization, meaning their relationships impacted their ability to perform their role as a coach. More specifically, each individual client relationship was itself a process of socialization as coaches and clients were continuously creating expectations for one another. This continuous relational process highlights the ways in which peer recovery coaches experience socialization non-linearly. A relational approach to socialization emphasizes the liminality of socialization (i.e., the simultaneous experience of more than one stage in the process of socialization) as coaches and clients perform and co-construct their roles.

To better understand how this approach to socialization functions, Figure 9 provides a visual model of a relational approach to organizational socialization.

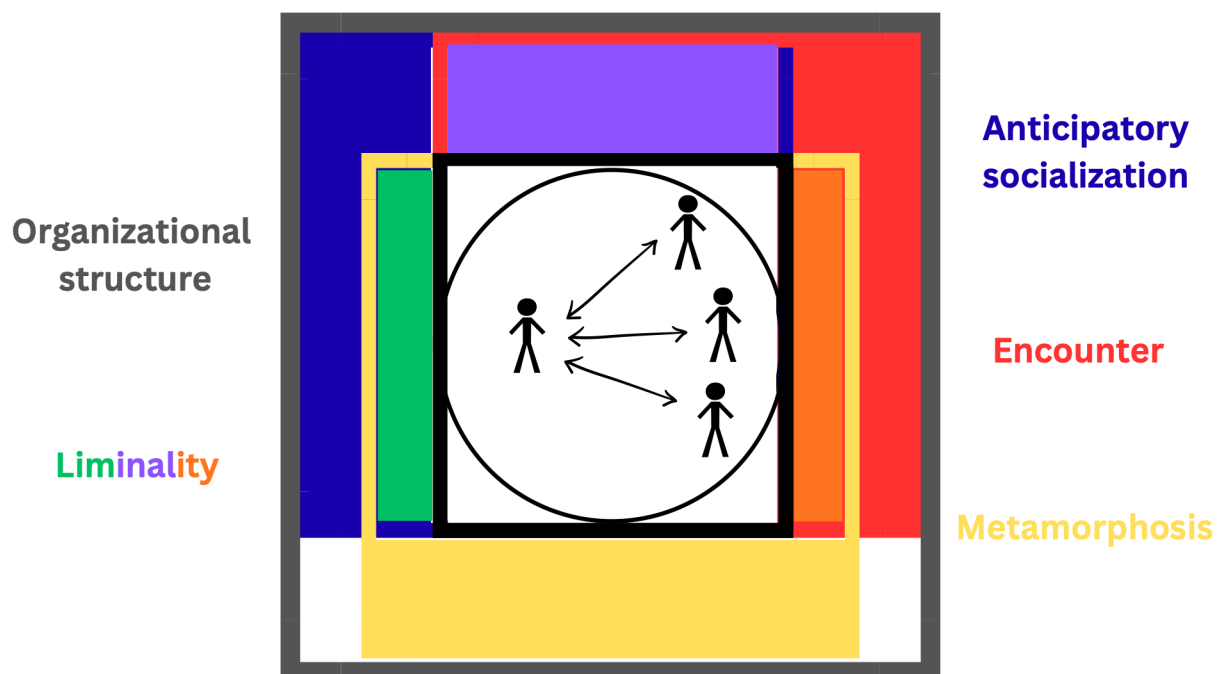


Figure 9: Model of a relational approach to organizational socialization

At the center of this figure is a coach and three clients, depicted by stick figures, with double sided arrows illustrating both the coach's individual relationship with each client and the two-way flow of communication between them that is necessary to develop and maintain their mentoring relationship. The black circle marks the relationship between the coach and their client as the center of the process as it is their relationship that is foundational to the relational approach to socialization. Moving outside the peer mentoring relationship circle, each stage of socialization is depicted by a distinct but overlapping box (anticipatory socialization as blue, encounter as red, and metamorphosis as yellow) to illustrate how each stage functions independently and collectively. The overlap between each box, marked by the color created by the overlapping boxes (i.e., purple is the combination of anticipatory socialization's blue and encounter's red), is a visual representation of the liminality that exists between socialization stages. As such, the green, purple, and orange boxes represent the permeability of socialization stages and the ways in which an organizational member might simultaneously experience different socialization stages. The black box at the center of the figure represents the culminating experience of these liminal overlaps as it depicts the idea that, within a relational approach to socialization, constructing individual relationships with clients requires coaches to attend to each stage of socialization to perform their role as peer recovery coach. Finally, the gray outlining box depicts the organizational structure in which a peer recovery coach and client exist, providing a way to visualize how the relationship between a coach and their client is shaped by the organization in which it occurs. This organizational structuring is representative of spaced time. Spaced time is a framework that organizes how individuals experience time (Mattley, 2002). This is relevant to the role of an organization in relational socialization because spaced time structures organizational life by anchoring emotional expectations to specific temporal moments, meaning

spaced time is responsible for regulating emotional expressions and creating expectations of how emotions in organizations can be performed. In the context of this study, the gray box represents HH and the socialized organizational expectations of emotional performances of peer recovery coaching, demonstrating HH's influence on the ongoing socialization experiences of coaches and clients.

A relational approach to organizational socialization is an important theoretical contribution because it expands our understanding of organizational socialization beyond individual or organizational experiences. Instead, a relational approach demonstrates how the process of socialization is fundamentally communicative and co-constructed through interaction with others, especially in the context of wounded healer peer recovery coaching. Rather than learning how to perform a role solely through formal and/or informal organizational structures or individual sensemaking, the findings of this study exemplify how coaches learn to perform their role as a coach through the ongoing construction of relationships with clients. For example, the role of the coach is dependent on the client and the expectations of the client are dependent on the coach—one cannot exist without the other. This means that coaches are constantly engaging in information seeking tactics as they seek to develop and maintain client relationships, even after achieving metamorphosis. A relational approach to organizational socialization emphasizes the notion that the communicative construction of organizational relationships (with other organizational members or clients of an organization) directly informs how individuals permeate stage boundaries to learn (and relearn) how to perform their role.

Second, as an interdisciplinary study, this project bridged the gap between the conceptualization of the wounded healer (LeBel et al., 2015) and peer mentorship (Buzzanell et al., 2015; Long et al., 2014; Long et al., 2018) to propose wounded healer peer recovery

coaching as a distinct form of peer mentorship rooted in lived experience, emotional connection, earned redemption, and relational support. Existing scholarship explains the role of the wounded healer as someone who has transitioned from “being ‘part of the problem’ into part of ‘the solution’” (Lebel et al., 2014, p. 108). In doing so, they seek to redeem themselves within their community by leveraging their past harms into strengths to support others going through similar situations. Literature related to the role of a wounded healer emphasizes their primary function as preventing other people from following in their footsteps (Liem & Richardson, 2014), a function that is distinctly different from peer mentorship. Moreover, as wounded healer peer recovery coaches use their previous justice involvement to help other people make different choices, they are actively reworking their justice-impacted identities into strengths through the process of retroflexive reformation (Sutherland & Cressey, 1955). This identity reformation occurs when a justice-impacted individual can closely identify with the person they are trying to help and they use their previous experiences to help them in their own journey of reformation. Bazemore (1999) refers to this process as earned redemption—a strengths-based approach that allows justice-impacted people to be used by their community rather than seen as a liability requiring supervision. This notion of earned redemption repeatedly surfaced in the findings of this study as peer recovery coaches worked to use their knowledge (lived experience) to facilitate successful outcomes for their clients. The introduction of wounded healer peer recovery coaching extends our existing understanding of peer mentorship by demonstrating how wounded healer peer recovery coaches use lived experience and emotional, informational, and instrumental support to help clients navigate the process of community reentry while simultaneously transforming their past harms into sources of relational connection and credibility.

This mentoring role differs from the types of mentoring examined in existing organizational communication scholarship which has primarily explored mentoring in a white-collar context (Buck, 2004; Farmer, 2005; Long et al., 2018; Manoucheka & Ralina, 2021). Within these contexts, mentorship is constructed as being primarily instrumental, meaning the role of a mentor is to provide practical knowledge related to role performance (i.e., doing work a particular way). Though scholarship related to peer mentorship has surfaced the role of a peer mentor in attending to the psycho-social wellbeing of their mentee (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014), it has not accounted for the culminating role of a peer recovery coach as providing informational, instrumental, and emotional support to achieve personal success, not just role performance. In this way, peer recovery mentors are enacting a different logic to mentorship. The success of their client is more than completing tasks in organizationally sanctioned ways, it is helping them achieve stability, sobriety, and individually designed success. This study not only investigated peer mentorship in a new context, it examined a different function of peer mentorship by bridging what we know about the instrumental purpose of mentoring with the emotional responsibility felt by wounded healers to expand our conceptualization of the role, function, and purpose of a peer mentor.

Third, extreme mentoring is introduced as the type of mentorship resulting from wounded healer peer recovery coaching. The term extreme mentorship comes from participant discourse related to how they experience their job as a peer recovery coach, as exemplified by Ellen who said providing coaching is “a lot of extremes.” Extreme mentoring through wounded healer peer recovery coaching differs from the individual work of the wounded healer or the role of a traditional white-collar peer mentor because the daily consequences of the mentoring relationship can directly impact client survival and safety. Calvin and Derrick both shared that

one of the hardest parts of providing peer recovery coaching is the fact that the majority of clients only seek coaching when they are in crisis. Because of this, their daily work requires “fielding emergencies” with people who are “in crisis mode.” One of the most common examples of crisis coaches had to learn to manage was suicidal clients—both Adam and Derrick shared experiences they had with clients who had attempted suicide and noted the toll it took on them. In both cases, their clients were unsuccessful in their attempts, but each coach mentioned having had at least one client who had died, most often from an overdose. Murphy’s story about a client who died and was not found until his dog led them back to his tent horrifically demonstrates the extreme nature of peer recovery coaching and emphasizes just how different it is from what existing scholarship has explored. Though existing scholarship has investigated the role of lived experience in recovery settings (Eddie et al., 2019; Eddie et al., 2025) these studies have primarily explored the efficacy of peer recovery coaching, not its communicative function or extreme nature. Thus, conceptualizing wounded healer peer recovery coaching as extreme mentoring extends mentoring scholarship by demonstrating how peer mentoring relationships function within crisis conditions, emotional and physical instability, trauma exposure, and life-threatening circumstances, all while centering the communicative function of mentorship. In doing so, this study theorizes extreme mentorship as a communicative, relational, and emotionally intensive form of care work rooted in lived experience.

One way to think about extreme mentorship, and its communicative function, is to borrow concepts from high reliability organizations (HROs). Ishak and Williams (2018) define HROs as “organizations which have successfully learned to operate in difficult environments in which errors could be catastrophic” (p. 181). Examples of HROS include fire crews, military organizations, law enforcement, and emergency medical units. A defining characteristic of these

organizations is their ability to remain resilient and “bounce back” when something goes wrong (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). The concept of resilience is well studied within organizational communication and includes investigation into resilience processes at the individual (Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015; Linabary et al., 2025), family (Afifi et al., 2020; Haverfield & Theiss, 2019), organizational (Kim et al., 2021; Okamoto, 2020), community (Barbour et al., 2020; Rice & Jahn, 2019), and national (Bean, 2018) level. The central component of resilience is its function as a communicative process through which individuals, families, organizations, and communities use communication to recover from disruptions in life (Buzzaell, 2010; Richardson, 2002).

Though extreme mentoring employs resilience communication, what differentiates it from more traditional forms of mentorship and resilience work—and aligns it with HROs—is that disrupting events occur daily in the form of client crises (i.e., suicidal or relapsing clients). In responding to crisis, both wounded healer peer recovery coaches and HRO members must rely on their training and experience to solve the problem, though there is always the possibility that a coach might not have direct experience with their client’s crisis. HH attempted to address potential experience gaps by encouraging coaches to invest in continuing education and share personal and client experiences with one another, as discussed in the findings. In this way, extreme mentorship draws upon HRO scholarship related to the borrowing of experiences. In an HRO, members without direct experience are encouraged to expand their knowledge base by learning from the experiences of others (Ishak & Williams, 2017). Ishak and Williams (2017) describe this process as incorporating the stories and experiences of others into one’s personal repertoire so they can be drawn upon when similar situations arise. They explain this borrowing of experiences in the context of wildland firefighting as “slides in the tray,” and argue that “putting a slide in their tray meant that they had committed the details of a scenario to their memory and could call upon that

knowledge when making decisions in the future” (Ishak & Willaims, 2017, p. 348). The concept of “slides in the tray,” is a useful framework for understanding how wounded healer peer recovery coaches at HH learn from their peers to supplement their own lived experiences and better respond to their client’s needs, as was exemplified by *learning* in the findings.

Extreme mentorship expects wounded healer peer recovery coaches be ready to respond to emotionally charged crises at a moment’s notice, a job requirement that surfaced in the findings as *risking*. Responding to these crises is an example of the emotionally intensive care work performed by wounded healer peer recovery coaches. To sustain their efforts in providing extreme mentoring, wounded healer peer recovery coaches need to be able to rely upon organizational infrastructure to prevent catastrophe. Within the findings, coaches at HH repeatedly mentioned their need to enact boundaries within their work. They explained that without boundaries, potentially harmful events were more likely to happen to both coaches and clients. Furthermore, while most clients felt like a member of the team at HH, they did not necessarily feel as though they received the structural support required to prevent such harm, noting their constant fielding of fires was a significant source of stress and a contributing factor to their difficulty setting boundaries. These challenges highlight another HRO framework useful for theorizing extreme mentorship—the need for organizational infrastructure that sustains individuals performing high-risk, emotionally intensive, and crisis-oriented care work. In the case of HROs, organizations are intentionally designed to provide the infrastructure required to ensure the continuity of operation through mindfulness and operational awareness (Ishak & Williams, 2017). Though there are limitations to an HROs infrastructure, especially related to post-crisis trauma (Scott & Ford, 2025), it is still important to consider the structural designs of HROs that enable members to endure tragedy and maintain operational continuity. In the case of

HH, coaches did not feel their organization had the necessary infrastructure to support them through disruptive events which contributed to feelings of failure. To prevent such feelings and ensure coaches have the organizational support they need to prevent catastrophe and maintain continuity, extreme mentoring requires attention to the infrastructure necessary to perform care work.

The fourth contribution of this study attends to the temporal nature of emotions in extreme mentoring through the theorization of concert time as a central communicative and relational component of wounded healer peer recovery coaching. Concert time refers to a feeling of emotional togetherness that emerges from shared experiences (Mattley, 2002), and it has not yet been theorized as an element of peer mentorship. While peer mentorship scholarship has acknowledged the importance of psychosocial support within a peer mentoring relationship (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Hill et al., 1989), this project extends this literature by demonstrating how emotion in extreme mentorship is not only experienced in the present but temporally constructed through interactions between past and present experiences and emotions. More specifically, this study theorizes concert time as a core organizing principle of extreme mentorship as wounded healer peer recovery coaches must communicatively align their own inner time with that of their client to produce concert time, establish trust, and construct their mentoring relationship. In practice, this means a central responsibility of a wounded healer peer recovery coach is to temporally shift between their past and present to live in moments of trauma with their clients and attend to their present needs. The experiences of extreme mentorship are inherently emotional and temporal as a coach's role necessitates that they simultaneously occupy multiple emotional time periods, collapsing distinctions between past suffering and present care work to create concert time. This is an important theoretical contribution because it extends our

understanding of the role of emotions in organizations and peer mentorship by foregrounding temporality as a central feature of emotional work and emotional labor in mentoring relationships. Rather than conceptualizing emotion as a static or individually managed experience, this study demonstrates how emotions in extreme mentorship are communicatively constituted across time through the creation of concert time.

Though useful for constructing mentoring relationships, concert time also surfaces one of the many dangers of extreme mentorship—that a wounded healer peer recovery coach must simultaneously live in and identify with their past and present self. This danger was addressed in the findings and includes coaches having to revisit times in their life when they were suicidal or experiencing extreme feelings of isolation and depression. These experiences were described by coaches as being some of the most difficult times of their lives and, though they found purpose in using them to help others as wounded healer peer recovery coaches, they also noted that it created a cognitive dissonance that was sometimes difficult for them to resolve. The role of temporality and concert time in extreme mentorship provides a deeper understanding of the inherent relational and emotional foundations of mentorship and highlights the need and opportunity for organizations performing this type of work to develop and implement the infrastructure necessary to support and sustain their workforce.

Practical Implications

The findings of this project have two important practical implications for peer recovery organizations. First, to ensure the sustainability of wounded healer peer recovery coaching, it is imperative that organizations develop the infrastructure to support coaches performing the dangerous work of extreme mentoring. Wounded healer peer recovery coaches put themselves at great personal risk to provide coaching services to their clients, including engaging with people

in active addiction and revisiting times in their life when they were suicidal. As Adam noted, he was initially hesitant to join the field of peer recovery coaching because he did not know if he would be able to maintain his sobriety if he were to be constantly surrounded by people in active use. Though HH has policies in place related to coach relapse that are meant to be supportive, they are inadvertently punitive. As care work, peer recovery organizations should be held responsible for creating institutional infrastructure and policies that seek to proactively prevent relapses from occurring rather than relying on post-relapse punishment. HH does have initial supports in place, including access to an LPC, but this are not sufficient given the extreme nature of wounded healer peer recovery coaching. In the same ways that peer recovery coaches are asked to provide support to their clients, their organizations should be responsible for providing them with the same supports to ensure they are able to continue performing their role. This is especially important when we consider the fact that peer recovery coaches are most often providing coaching services to underserved, at-risk, and/or marginalized communities (Kleinman, et al., 2021). Ultimately, if peer recovery organizations expect wounded healer peer recovery coaches to continually engage in the dangers associated with extreme mentoring, they must also accept responsibility for providing their organizational members with the infrastructure necessary to protect, sustain, and care for them.

Second, peer recovery organizations should intentionally provide training and professional development opportunities designed to assist coaches in their identity transformation, including strategies for narrative reframing. Such identity work is integral to legitimizing the role of a peer recovery coach, particularly as it relates to resource and/or service coordination with partnering agencies. The stigma attached to being justice-impacted permeates an individual's personal and professional life (LeBel et al., 2015) and, outside of learning how to

leverage this identity as a strength as a peer recovery coach, justice-impacted people are often interpreted by the general public as being dirty or stained (Wells, 2020). Organizations should play an essential role in normalizing and legitimizing the role and work of wounded healer peer recovery coaches through the formal recognition of lived experience as a credentialed form of expertise. Doing so would help reduce barriers to collaboration, improve trust between wounded healer peer recovery coaches and traditional service providers, empower wounded healer peer recovery coaches to embrace their dual identities, and contribute to broader Discursive shifts challenging deficit-based understandings of justice-impacted people.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Though this study provided important theoretical and practical implications, it is not without its limitations. As a qualitative case study focused on the experiences of wounded healer peer recovery coaches and clients at HH, the findings of this project should be understood as contextually situated and reflective of participant experiences during data collection. This does not diminish the value of the findings, but it does highlight important opportunities for future research. The following is an explanation of three limitations of this study and opportunities for future research designs to address them.

First, this study achieved data saturation in interview data collection but in the analysis phase, the data related to the experience and process of organizational socialization was richer from the coach's perspective. Future research design could incorporate additional questions about client socialization processes into the interview protocol to expand our understanding of the anticipatory, encounter, and metamorphosis experiences of clients. For example, to learn more about how clients engage in the encounter stage of socialization, questions related to the information seeking tactics clients use to learn what their coaches expect of them could be asked.

This future direction for research would provide valuable insight into how HH can better support their clients through each phase of the client socialization process.

Second, this study relied on interviews, ethnography, and an arts-based creative drawing approach to data collection. While these methods provided thick, rich insight into the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients, further research could incorporate organizational documents to gather insight into the formal onboarding processes of both coaches and clients and the annual review process for coaches. A critical rhetorical analysis of these guiding documents coupled with participant experiences of socialization (as outlined in the first limitation and future directions) would shed light on the codified organizational processes designed to introduce coaches and clients to the provision and reception of peer recovery coaching services.

Finally, this study purposefully used a case study approach to understand the experiences of wounded healer peer recovery coaches and clients in a particular context and organization. In doing so, it focused on the micro/discourses constituting wounded healer peer recovery coaching at HH. Future studies could extend this scholarship by examining the macro/Discourses surrounding peer recovery coaching with attention to the collaborations required for clients to be successful in peer recovery coaching. Such a study design would attend to the interorganizational collaborations necessary for both community reentry success and a wounded healer peer recovery coach's ability to function as a communication link within the community. Additionally, an interorganizational lens to wounded healer peer recovery coaching would be well positioned to further examine the stigma associated with peer recovery coaching and how justice-impacted people construct favorable identities in formal institutional collaborations, like those coaches at HH had with parole officers and family courts.

Conclusion

My grandpa passed away on April 1, 2022, and when my family and I were going through his things, I found a research paper he had handwritten in the 1950's. His conclusion read as follows:

Conclusion

No word ever looked so good to me (or you probably) as the one written above. Writing this paper has been a very interesting experience for me. Not only do I know more about unions than I ever did, I also know how to use a library, which I did not before. With this serving as a conclusion, I will stop.

While completing this project taught me nothing about unions, I could not echo my grandpa's sentiment about his conclusion more—no word has ever looked so good.

The goal of this project was to better understand the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches (RQ1) with specific attention to their socialization (RQ1a) and emotional (RQ1b) experiences, and the ways in which justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients communicatively build their relationship (RQ2). This goal was achieved by using a collaborative qualitative approach to research. Although there are opportunities for improvement, the findings of this study have been useful to HH, pointing to exciting opportunities for further collaboration and ways to involve justice-impacted people in the design and implementation of research directly related to their wellbeing. This study highlighted important ways in which peer recovery coaches can be of service to their community and noted the complexities and dangers of doing so. As people with justice-impacted identities seek to meaningfully reenter and participate in their communities, it is important that we, as community members, identify and support the people and services working to facilitate safe transitions. Moreover, it is imperative that we invest in the people performing these roles to ensure the sustainability and efficacy of such programming. If the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center for Mental Health Services

Research and Policy estimate stays true, we need an additional 900,000 peer recovery coaches to meet the demands of people in need of their services. It is my hope that this project emphasized, as Murphy said, how “when you help so many people, and those people help other people, you start to get a different kind of fruit.”

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER

Breaking the Cycle: The Experiences of Justice-Impacted Peer Recovery Coaches and Clients

Interview Participants Needed!

Study Purpose:

This study wants to learn more about how peer mentorship helps people who are reentering the community by looking at the experiences of peer recovery coaches and clients who have been impacted by the justice system.

Participation Criteria:

To participate in this study you must

- be at least 18 years old.
- have personal experience with the justice system or relate to it.
- be giving or getting peer recovery help at Hoist Healing.

What do you have to do?

- Answer a series of questions about your experience as a coach/client at Hoist Healing.
- Participate in an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes on-site at Hoist Healing.
- Participation in this research is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

Will you be compensated?

Yes! Interview participants will receive a \$25 Walmart gift card.



How do you schedule an interview?

You can send an email to recoveryresearch2025@gmail.com, scan the QR code below, or email the co-investigator, Meghan Cosgrove at meghan.cosgrove@colostate.edu



Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Williams, elizabeth.a.williams@colostate.edu

This study is being conducted as part of a dissertation. Any identifying information recorded during conversation will be removed. When research findings are reported and shared, information will be combined with all demographic data from all participants.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC TABLE

Peer Recovery Coaches

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Job Title	Time as Peer Recovery Coach	Time as Peer Recovery Coach at Hoist Healing
Adam	Male	47	White	Director of Peer Services	8 years	9 months
Becky	Female	44	White	Peer Recovery Coach	9 months	6 weeks
Calvin	Male	40	White	Peer Recovery Coach	7 months	7 months
Derrick	Male	33	White	Peer Specialist and Owner	6 years	9 months
Ellen	Female	45	White	Peer Supervisor and Coach	5 years	6 months
Murphy	Male	40	Black	Peer Recovery Coach	6 months	7 months

Peer Recovery Leadership

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Job Title	Time in Peer Recovery Services	Time at Hoist Healing
Adam	Male	47	White	Director of Peer Services	8 years	9 months
Cindy	Female	33	White	Clinical Director	10 years	6 months
Derrick	Male	33	White	Peer Specialist and Owner	6 years	9 months
Ellen	Female	45	White	Peer Supervisor and Coach	5 years	1 month

Peer Recovery Clients

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Time receiving peer coaching services	Time receiving peer coaching services from Hoist Healing
Albert	Male	38	Caucasian	6 weeks	6 weeks
Andrew	Male	45	Latino	5 years	2 months
Art	Male	49	White	6 weeks	6 weeks
Bob	Male	57	White	6 weeks	6 weeks
Catwoman	Female	33	Middle Eastern	1 month	1 month
Cody	Male	28	Hispanic	11 months	2 months
Cutty	Male	57	Latino	1 month	1 month
Davy	Male	48	African American	1 year	1 year
Dino	Male	58	Caucasian	8 months	3 weeks
Elio	Male	26	Mexican Native	3 weeks	3 weeks
Faith	Female	30	African American	3 weeks	3 weeks
Janet	Female	34	Black	1 month	2 weeks
Lane	Male	28	Black Asian	3 ½ months	2 months
Larry	Male	59	White	8 months	8 months

Leland	Male	54	White	4 ½ months	2 months
Lovely	Female	33	Hispanic	3 weeks	3 weeks
Malik	Male	28	Black Caribbean	2 months	2 months
Mary	Female	58	White	5 months	5 months
Matt	Male	59	Black	3 weeks	3 weeks
Michelle	Female	46	Hispanic	2 months	2 months
Nevaeh	Female	25	Hispanic	3 weeks	3 weeks
Ralph	Male	49	White	1 month	1 month
Rocky	Male	46	Hispanic	6 years	6 weeks
Yeshua	Male	37	Mixed	3 months	2 months

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT

VERBAL CONSENT

Protocol #: 6889

Version Date: 6/6/2025

Title of Research Study: “Breaking the cycle: The experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery coaches and clients”

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Williams, PhD, Professor, Colorado State University, Department of Communication Studies, College of Liberal Arts

Sponsor/Funding Source: Colorado State University Department of Communication Studies Graduate Student Research Support Grant

Introduction

I am Meghan Cosgrove a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication Studies at Colorado State University.

Subjects Rights

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time. Choosing not to be in this study or to stop being in this study will not result in any penalty to you or loss of benefit to which you are entitled.

Description of the study and study procedures

I am conducting a research study to learn more about the experiences of justice-impacted peer recovery mentors (coaches) and mentees (clients). I hope to learn more about how peer mentorship can help justice-impacted people successfully reenter their communities. The study focuses on how peer mentors learn how to provide peer mentorship and how mentors and mentees deal with their emotions and remain resilient. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete one interview lasting approximately sixty minutes. I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for additional clarification. If so, and pending your consent, I would contact you within 6 months of your initial interview through your preferred contact method to request this. If I follow-up it will be to clarify your response and/or to check to make sure my interpretation of your response is correct. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If at any time during our conversation you change your mind and decide you would no longer like to be recorded, I can turn off the recorder at your request. I will not collect your name or personal identifiers. Any identifying information recorded in our transcript will be removed. When I report and share the data it will be combined with all demographic data from all participants. With your permission, I may use quotes or illustrations from you when sharing the data, but I would use a pseudonym rather than your name. The audio recording of our conversation will be used to verify the transcript and deleted after verification is complete.

Risks

The risks from participating in this study may include reliving traumatic experiences as you are asked about your emotional wellbeing and/or how your experience with being justice-impacted informs your experience as a peer recovery coach/client. In addition to this consent form, I will be providing you with a list of resources you can access in case this occurs. For justice-impacted peer recovery coaches, there is an economic wellbeing risk, as the research is taking place at your place of employment. To mitigate this risk, all identifiable data will be made private, leadership at Hoist Healing will not know if you chose to participate in the research or, if you choose to participate, what you said, and you have the choice of completing your interview on-site at Hoist Healing or at Pondtree Library.

Benefits

We do not know if you will benefit from being in this study. However, there may be an indirect benefit in discussing your experience with peer recovery coaching in the process of community reentry. Taking part in this study may help researchers to better understand the communicative role of peer-recovery coaching in the process of community reentry.

Financial Information

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you.

Confidentiality

Information that is collected in the study records that can identify you will be kept confidential by removing all identifying information. All files will be kept in a password protected OneDrive folder that only the principal and co-investigator will have access to. In any manuscripts produced from the data, participants will be identified by pseudonyms and any demographic information will be reported in aggregate. Audio recordings will be stored in the password protected OneDrive folder until our interview transcript has been verified and then audio files will be deleted. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used.

Compensation

You will be compensated a \$25.00 Walmart gift card for your participation in this study and receive this gift card at the end of your interview.

Future research

Identifiers will be removed from the identifiable private information and the information could then be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you.

Whom to contact with questions

If you have any questions or problems during this study, please contact Elizabeth Williams in the Department of Communication Studies at Colorado State University by email at elizabeth.a.williams@colostate.edu or phone at (970) 491-7181. If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: CSU_IRB@colostate.edu; (970) 491-1553.

Consent Section

Do you wish to participate in the research?

Record Subject's response: Yes No

Do you agree to be audio-taped?

Record Subject's response: Yes No

Name of Subject (printed)

Date

APPENDIX D: LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- What is your role?
- How long have you been in this position?
- What responsibilities do you have at Hoist Healing?
- What are your expectations for your organization's participation in this research?
- What are your personal expectations of this partnership? What are you hoping to gain?
- What are you most interested in learning about your coaches?
 - Do you have any questions you would like me to ask?
- What are you most interested in learning about your clients?
 - Do you have any questions you would like me to ask?
- Tell me about peer recovery coaching.
- What training is provided to coaches by Hoist Healing?
 - I can imagine this is heavy work for coaches to do, what kind of training do you provide to help them manage their emotions and what resources for support can they access?
 - Do you have any messaging or training artifacts you use that you would be willing to share with me?
- How does certification for coaches work?
- What is the average case load for a coach?
- If a coach is no longer able to provide services to their clients, what do you do?
- How do you find and onboard clients?
- What do you think is important for me to know going into this project?

APPENDIX E: LICENSED PRACTICING CLINICIAN (LPC) INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Organizational Role

- How would you describe your role at Hoist Healing?
 - What does your day-to-day look like?
- How did you get into this work?
- What's most important about what you do?
 - Has your role changed over time?
- How do you see your position fitting into the bigger picture of the organization?
 - How do you work with coaches here at Hoist Healing?
 - How do you work with clients here at Hoist Healing?
- What's the relationship like between clinical and peer recovery staff?

Socialization

- When a new peer recovery coach joins, what is your role in helping them join the team?
 - How does your role change as they become part of the organization?
 - What is your role in coaching/guiding them throughout their time at Hoist Healing?
- When a coach is onboarding a new client, what is your role in that process?
- How do you introduce clients to the role of their coach during their intake with you?
 - How do you help them feel comfortable working with a coach?
 - Without providing confidential details, how do you create treatment plans with clients?
 - How do you share that information with their coach?
- What is the best part of onboarding coaches/clients?
- What is the most difficult part of onboarding coaches/clients?

Emotional Labor

- What emotions do you experience most frequently as a clinician for Hoist Healing?
- How are you expected to express your emotions as a clinician in this organization?
- How do you manage yourself when coaches or clients are struggling?
- What strategies do you use to manage your emotions?

Resilience

- How do you remain resilient in times of adversity as a peer-recovery clinician?
 - Alternative to resilience: How do you persevere through difficult times as a peer-recovery clinician?/When this job becomes really hard, how do you deal with that?
- How do you define coach success?
 - What is your favorite story of coach success?
- How do you define client success?
 - What is your favorite story of client success?

Miscellaneous

- If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make at Hoist Healing to better support your clients?
 - Your coaches?

- Yourself?
- What did I not ask you that you think would be important for me to know?
- May I reach out to you if any other questions come up?
- To wrap up our conversation I have a few demographic questions I'd like to ask.
 - How long have you been working at Hoist Healing?
 - In total, how long have you been a peer-recovery coach?
 - What gender do you identify with?
 - What is your age?
 - How would you describe your race?
 - What is your job?
 - Are there any additional pieces of your identity you would like to share?

APPENDIX F: COACH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Peer Mentoring

- Please start by sharing your story of peer-recovery coaching.
 - How long have you been a peer-recovery coach?
- How does your personal experience with the justice system influence your approach to coaching?
- Using the materials provided, can you please illustrate how it feels to be a peer-recovery coach?
 - Please explain your illustration to me.

Socialization

- How have you learned to be a peer-recovery coach at Hoist Healing?
- What sort of training have you received related to peer-recovery coaching?
 - Have you received any sort of informal training? Like from a fellow coach or a client?
- What kind of training have you received related to handling your emotions as a peer-recovery coach?
 - Where/how have you received that training?
- Do you feel like you are a member of the team here at Hoist Healing?
 - How did you know you were a member?/What would you need to feel like a member?

Emotional Labor

- What is the most difficult part of providing peer-recovery coaching?
- How are you expected to express your emotions as a peer-recovery coach?
- How do you manage yourself when your clients are struggling?
 - Are there situations where you find this more or less difficult?
 - Have you experienced a time when a client's experience mirrored your own?
 - How did you navigate that situation?/How did it make you feel?
- What strategies do you use to manage your emotions with clients?
 - What emotions do you experience most frequently as a peer-recovery coach?

Resilience

- How do you remain resilient in times of adversity as a peer-recovery coach?
 - Alternative to resilience: How do you persevere through difficult times as a peer-recovery coach?/When this job becomes really hard, how do you deal with that?
- Have you been treated differently or looked down on because of your job? (stigma)
 - If so, how do you navigate that?
- How do you define client success?
 - What is your favorite story of client success?

Miscellaneous

- If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make at Hoist Healing to better support your clients?
 - Your peers?
 - Yourself?
- What did I not ask you that you think would be important for me to know?
- May I reach out to you if any other questions come up?
- To wrap up our conversation I have a few demographic questions I'd like to ask.
 - How long have you been working at Hoist Healing?
 - In total, how long have you been a peer-recovery coach?
 - What gender do you identify with?
 - What is your age?
 - How would you describe your race?
 - What is your job?
 - Are there any additional pieces of your identity you would like to share?

Questions from leadership

- What can we do to make it easier for you to do what you do
- Do you feel appreciated?
- Is the reward greater than the sacrifice?

APPENDIX G: CLIENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Peer-Recovery

- Please start by telling me about your experience receiving peer-recovery coaching so far.
- How did you decide to seek peer-recovery coaching?
- Please tell me about your experience with your peer-recovery coach so far.
 - How does it feel to know your peer-recovery coach also has experience with the justice system?
- What role does your peer-recovery coach play in your life?
- What have been the most important services/resources your peer-recovery coach has connected you with?
 - If you did not have your peer-recovery coach, where would you go for these services/resources?
- Using the materials provided, can you please illustrate how it feels to receive peer-recovery coaching?
 - Please explain your illustration to me.

Emotional Work

- How do you talk to your peer-recovery coach about how you are feeling?
- How do you let your peer-recovery coach know you are struggling?
 - How does your peer-recovery coach help you with those struggles?
 - How is your peer-recovery coach limited in helping you with those struggles?
- Do you talk about your involvement with Hoist Healing with others?
 - Do you feel looked down on or judged by others for receiving peer-recovery coaching? (stigma)

Resilience

- What have you learned from your peer-recovery coach?
- How do you remain resilient in difficult times as someone receiving peer-recovery coaching?
 - Alternative to resilience: How do you persevere through difficult times as someone receiving peer-recovery coaching?
- What strategies has your peer-recovery coach helped you develop to achieve your goals?
- How would you define success in this program?
 - Do you have any examples of personal success you are comfortable sharing/celebrating?

Miscellaneous

- If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make at Hoist Healing?
- What did I not ask you that you think would be important for me to know?
- May I reach out to you if any other questions come up?
- To wrap up our conversation I have a few demographic questions I'd like to ask.
 - How long have you been receiving peer-recovery coaching services here at Hoist Healing?
 - In total, how long have you been receiving peer-recovery services?
 - What gender do you identify with?

- What is your age?
- How would you describe your race?
- What is your job?
- How would you describe your being justice-impacted?
- Are there any additional pieces of your identity you would like to share?