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Exploring the Black Box of Community Supervision

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ABSTRACT Community supervision has been an integral part of corrections since the establishment of probation more than 100 years ago. It has commonly been assumed that offenders benefit from community supervision much more than if they were incarcerated. However, empirical evidence in support of the effectiveness of community supervision in reducing recidivism questions this assumption. A detailed examination of audio taped interviews between 62 probation officers and their clients found relatively poor adherence to some of the basic principles of effective intervention–the principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity. For the most part, probation officers spent too much time on the enforcement aspect of supervision (i.e., complying with the conditions of probation) and not enough time on the service delivery role of supervision. Major criminogenic needs such as antisocial attitudes and social supports for crime were largely ignored and probation officers evidenced few of the skills (e.g., prosocial modeling, differential reinforcement) that could influence behavioral change in their clients. As a snapshot of present practices, this study begins a path to a systematic and structured training agenda to help probation officers become more effective agents of change.

KEYWORDS Community supervision, offender rehabilitation, probation

PROBATION IN THE U.S. AND CANADA

Probation was introduced to the United States (Boston) by John Augustus in 1841 and in 1876, Elmira Reformatory in New York State was the first prison to release inmates on parole. More than a century later probation and parole represent the major forms of supervising offenders in the community. In 2004 in the United States there were nearly five million people either on probation or parole supervision (Glaze & Palla, 2005). During the same time period, in Canada, there were 98,805 adult offenders on probation and another 21,695 on some other forms of community supervision (e.g., parole, conditional sentences; Beattie, 2006). Despite the widespread use of community supervision, what do we really know about the effectiveness of community supervision in managing offender recidivism?

The Effectiveness of Community Supervision Pre-1967

Community sentences (i.e., probation) are generally viewed as an alternative to imprisonment suitable for many offenders. It provides a safe and inexpensive way of delivering punishments that fit less serious crimes while avoiding the detrimental effects of incarceration. Parole is not a sentence handed down by a court like probation but rather a community sanction administered by tribunal paroling authorities and parole supervision is seen as a sensible way of integrating offenders into their communities and reducing offender recidivism. Both probation and parole promise to control offender recidivism and this promise came under scrutiny with Lipton, Martinson and Wilks' (1975) review of correctional treatment programs.

In the Lipton et al. (1975) review, the criteria for inclusion of a study required that the study was conducted between 1945 and 1967, represented a "treatment method applied to criminal offenders" (p. 4) and reported measures of performance improvement for an experimental and a control/comparison group. Lipton et al.'s (1975) definition of "treatment" was extremely broad. They selected studies that are commonly considered to reflect offender rehabilitation programs (e.g.,

individual psychotherapy, drug and alcohol counselling) but they also included studies on the effects of criminal justice *settings*, namely, imprisonment, probation and parole. Their review of the "treatment effect" of probation and parole with respect to recidivism found differential effects. Probation (18 studies) appeared more effective with younger offenders (under the age of 18) especially under conditions of small case loads (less than 15 cases per officer). Adult men on parole demonstrated lower return rates to prison while under parole supervision, compared to men directly released from prison without supervision, but there were no differences in recidivism following the period of parole supervision (19 studies).

Subsequent to the 1975 review, Martinson and Wilks (1978) provided a more detailed assessment of the parole effectiveness literature. They compared the recidivism rates of parolees with inmates released from prisons without supervision. Across various measures of recidivism, parolees showed lower rates of recidivism. The highest difference was when recidivism was measured as a new arrest with parolees having a re-arrest rate of 24.5% and straight releases having a re-arrest rate of 42.9%. The differences decreased with conviction as the outcome measure (19.5% vs. 29.9%) and further still when a new prison sentence was the outcome criterion (10.6% vs. 14.8%). Moreover, in 74 of the 80 comparisons that were conducted (e.g., long follow-up or short follow-up, first offenders or repeat offenders), lower recidivism rates were found for parolees. Despite Martinson and Wilks' (1978) conclusion that "at the very least, the data...should give pause to those policy makers and legislators who have been operating under the assumption that parole supervision *makes no difference*" (p. 426, italics original) we know that, at least in the United States, few listened and parole boards were either abolished or their authority greatly weakened.

Community Supervision Post Martinson and Wilks (1978)

Presently, we are conducting a meta-analytic review of the effectiveness of community supervision. Two general questions are asked. First, does parole make a difference in recidivism and second, is more community supervision, whether it be probation or parole, better than less supervision. Studies were selected if they met the following criteria:

1. parolees were compared with non-parolees;
2. probation supervision could be compared along a less-more dimension (e.g., short periods of probation with long periods; intensive probation with routine supervision);
3. recidivism outcome was reported in a manner that permitted the calculation of an effect size and;
4. the study was published after Martinson and Wilks (1978).

At this point, 15 studies published between 1980 and 2006 have been reviewed and coded yielding 26 effect size estimates. We selected the phi coefficient as our measure of effect size. The phi coefficient is used to measure the association between two dichotomous variables and can be interpreted like the Pearson product-moment coefficient. Table 1 summarizes the results.

The average follow-up in the studies summarized in Table 1 was 17 months. The average phi coefficient was .022 and although the Confidence Interval (CI) did not include zero the decrease in recidivism associated with community supervision was extremely small. The findings with violent recidivism fared worse with the CI including zero indicating no statistically significant relationship between community supervision and violent recidivism. On the whole, community supervision does not appear to work very well. Why this may be so is discussed in the next section and will also be answered, in part, by the study described in this paper.

What do We Know about Reducing Offender Recidivism?

One of the most effective ways of decreasing criminal behavior is to intervene at the human service level. Furthermore, this

□ ***Table 1: Meta-analytic Findings on the Effectiveness of Community Supervision***

Recidivism Outcome	k	Total N	Phi	CI
General	26	53,930	.022	.014–.030
Violent	8	28,523	.004	− .008–.016

Notes: k = number of effect size estimates; Total N is the sum of experimental and control subjects. CI = confidence interval.

intervention is most effective when the service is delivered in the community (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Reviews of the offender rehabilitation literature have found that providing services to offenders are associated, on average, with a reduction of ten percentage points in recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Lipsey, 1995; Lösel, 1995). Not only is there consensus on the finding that treatment can reduce recidivism but we also know under what conditions treatment effectiveness can be enhanced.

The effectiveness of treatment can be maximized through adherence to the principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity (Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990). The Risk Principle states that the level of service should be matched to the risk level of the offender with higher risk offenders receiving more treatment. The Need Principle states that the targets for intervention should be factors related to offending (often referred to as criminogenic needs) and the Responsivity Principle states that interventions should be delivered in a manner that is appropriate to the learning styles of offenders. In general, cognitive-behavioral treatments have been most effective in bringing about change in offenders. When all three principles are in operation, particularly in community settings, reductions in recidivism of up to 50% have been reported (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

One of the cornerstones of community supervision is case management. Case management requires a proper assessment of the needs of offenders, linking these needs to a service delivery plan and implementing the plan (Healey, 1999). If one considers the findings from the offender rehabilitation literature then case management should have the following features:

1. an assessment of offender risk in order to match the appropriate level of supervision to the offender's risk;
2. an assessment of criminogenic needs to define the goals of intervention; and
3. the provision of cognitive-behavioral interventions that target criminogenic needs.

Unfortunately, there is very little research that examines case management within the context of the offender rehabilitation literature even though the importance of juxtaposing case management with the "what works" literature has been recognized (Taxman, Shapardson & Bello, 2003). Do probation and parole officers use offender risk

assessments in assigning intensity of intervention and identifying criminogenic needs that should be addressed? Do probation and parole officers use cognitive-behavioral techniques during their supervision sessions? Answers to these questions are lacking and yet answers are sorely needed to improve supervision practices. Answers to these questions may explain the very modest findings of our preliminary meta-analysis (Table 1). The following study describes and evaluates the process of service delivery within a probation context. More specifically, the research examined how assessment instruments were routinely used in a Canadian probation setting, the appropriateness of the treatment targets selected for intervention and the methods of influencing offenders to change.

METHOD

Participants

Probation officers supervising both adult and young offenders participated in the project. At the time of the study (2001), approximately 6,400 adults and 2,000 youth were under a sentence of probation in the Canadian province of Manitoba. There were 108 probation officers with supervising responsibilities and 62 (57.4 % of supervising officers) agreed to participate in the project. Probation officers were asked to submit four cases sequentially chosen as they came onto their caseloads. Despite a number of efforts to minimize workload demands on probation officers, participation in the project was below our expectations. Data was submitted on only 154 offenders.

Data collection ended April 30, 2002 and recidivism information was gathered in 2004. Our measure of recidivism was a new conviction during the follow-up period that began on the date of the intake assessment. The average follow-up was 3.3 years (SD = 0.21). The information was collected from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Criminal History Records, a national database, and Manitoba Justice's Offender Management System.

Assessment Procedures

In general, data was collected from the following three information sources:

1. The intake risk-needs assessments;
2. The audio taping of officer-probationer interviews at three time periods; and
3. Offender files.

A more detailed description of the information collected for the project follows.

1. *Intake Risk-Needs Assessment*. The Primary Risk Assessment (PRA) instrument is the offender classification instrument used in Manitoba community corrections for profiling the risk and needs of probationers. For adults, the PRA is a modification of the Wisconsin Risk and Needs instrument and the instrument has been validated on probationers in Manitoba (Bonta, Parkinson, Pang, Barkwell, & Wallace-Capretta, 1994). For youth (ages 13 to 17 years), the PRA is a modification of the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (Hoge & Andrews, 2002).
   Policy requires an Intervention Plan to be completed within two months of conducting a PRA. The Intervention Plan outlines how the probation officer plans to address the problem areas identified by the PRA.
2. *Audiotape Interviews*. Audiotape recordings of the officer-offender meetings were conducted on three separate occasions. The first audio taped interview was administered within the second or third week following the Intervention Plan. The second taping occurred three months later and the final taping at the six month mark. Upon completion of an interview, the audiotape was forwarded directly to the researchers for coding. Each five-minute segment of the intake audiotape was coded as to discussions around potential criminogenic needs. For an item to be scored as present, at least two examples of statements regarding criminogenic needs had to be apparent.
   A detailed coding manual for the audiotapes was developed. The coding procedures in this study followed similar procedures

to those used in the probation studies of Andrews and Kiessling (1980; Ontario) and Trotter (1996, 1999; Australia). The same coding procedures were used for both adult and youth. Two research assistants were trained in using the manual and periodic inter-rater reliability checks were conducted.

Audiotapes were reviewed in five-minute segments and coded according to three general domains. The first domain was offender needs as defined by the PRA. The presence or absence of statements concerning the needs identified by the PRA was noted. The remaining two domains assessed were the quality of the relationship between probationer and officer and the probation officer's use of behavioral techniques to influence change.

The latter two domains (relationship and behavioral techniques) are often viewed as the core dimensions in behavioral influence processes (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Dowden & Andrews, 2004). A positive interpersonal relationship as evidenced by warmth, openness, enthusiasm, empathy and respect for the client are needed to engage and motivate the client in taking steps to change. Modeling appropriate behavior, providing opportunities for behavioral practice, reinforcing prosocial activity and discouraging antisocial behaviors provide the concrete direction for change.

3. *File Review*. A file review provided additional information not captured by the questionnaires and audiotapes. This information was also used to collaborate the results from the other sources of information. Personal demographic and criminal history information were coded as well as information relevant to the supervision of the probationers (e.g., frequency of contact with the probationer, breaches).

Non-participant Comparison Groups

Not all probation officers participated in the research. This raised the possibility that differential participation would affect the generalizability of the results. Thus, it was important to assess whether there were significant differences between the officers and the probationers who participated in the study and those who did not participate. A sample of non-participating probation officers was selected and

demographic information (e.g., ethnicity, years of experience) was collected. For each non-participating probation officer, a random sample of two cases was drawn from his/her files. These files were coded following the same file coding procedures that were used with the participating probationers.

RESULTS

Sixty-two probation officers participated in the study submitting data on as many as 154 offenders. The information submitted, however, varied for a number of reasons. For example, offenders changed their minds about participation part way through the project, failed to report, or were transferred to another probation officer. In order to assess the representativeness of the sample of participating probationers, a file review of 77 randomly selected cases from 42 non-participating probation officers was conducted (seven cases had to be rejected because they were not currently being supervised). No statistically reliable differences were found between the participating and non-participating probation officers in age, years as a probation officer, ethnicity and education level.

Personal-demographic information on the participating and non-participating offender samples is presented in Table 2. The majority of the participants were adult offenders and the average age of all participants was 27.7 years (33.1 years for adults and 15.9 years for youth). No statistically significant differences were found between the participating probationers and the non-participating probationers on personal-demographic, criminal histories and assessed risk variables.

Case Management and the Risk Principle

The Risk Principle of effective rehabilitation states that the intensity of intervention should be matched to the risk level of the offender, that is, minimal services for low risk offenders and intensive services for high risk offenders. One of the purposes of risk/need assessments in probation is to guide the amount of supervision that is assigned to a probationer. Thus, we would expect that the

Table 2: Characteristics of the Probationers (n)

Characteristic	Participants	Non-Participants
Gender (%):		
Male	75.0 (84)	83.1 (64)
Female	25.0 (28)	16.9 (13)
Education (%):		
less than grade 9	21.0 (22)	28.0 (21)
Grade 9 or higher	79.0 (83)	72.0 (54)
Employed/Student (%):		
Yes	71.6 (78)	69.7 (53)
No	28.4 (31)	30.3 (23)
Marital Status (%):		
Single	68.2 (75)	68.9 (51)
Married/Common-Law	31.8 (35)	31.1 (23)
Prior Incarceration (%):		
Yes	37.6 (35)	51.4 (37)
No	62.4 (58)	48.6 (35)
Prior Probation (%):		
Yes	55.8 (53)	66.7 (46)
No	44.2 (42)	33.3 (23)
Number of Prior Crimes	5.8 (87)	6.2 (71)
Mean PRA Score (Adults)	8.3 (SD = 3.5)	8.7 (SD = 4.2)
Mean PRA Score (Youth)	23.1 (SD = 11.8)	27.3 (SD = 8.5)

Note: Numbers vary due to missing data (Participants from 93–112; Non-participants from 69–77).
SD = Standard deviation.
All comparisons statistically nonsignificant.

frequency of reporting would be proportional to the risk level of the offender.

From the file reviews of the participants and non-participants, we were able to count the number of contacts between the probation officers and the probationers during the first three months of supervision. On average, during the first three months of probation, clients were seen on 4.3 occasions. Approximately half of the probationers were seen three or four times (47.2%). The number of contacts was positively related to the risk score as measured by the PRA for adults

($r = .22$, $p < .01$, $n = 133$) but not for youth ($r = .09$, ns, $n = 47$). However, the significant correlation for adults was accounted for by the fact that high-risk offenders in particular were seen more often than low and medium risk offenders ($F = 7.43$, $df = 2, 130$, $p < .001$). There were no statistically significant differences between the number of contacts for low risk offenders (seen an average of 4.3 times; $SD = 2.2$) versus medium risk offenders (seen an average of 3.7 times; $SD = 1.5$). High-risk offenders were seen an average of 5.7 times over the first three months of supervision ($SD = 3.6$). Finally, the number of contacts was unrelated to caseloads ($r = -.01$, ns).

Formulating a Case Management Plan

The Need Principle makes a distinction between two types of offender needs: criminogenic and noncriminogenic needs. Almost all correctional systems in Canada use structured risk-needs assessment to assist staff in identifying the criminogenic needs of offenders that should be addressed in order to manage their risk of re-offending. In Manitoba, the PRA is used for this purpose. Upon completion of the PRA, the probation officer is in a position to integrate this

☐ ***Table 3: Percentage Participating and Non-Participating Probationers with Needs Identified by the PRA***

Need	Adult (n = 147)	Youth (n = 66)
Accommodation	25.2 (37)	59.1 (39)
Employment	40.8 (60)	NA
Substance Abuse	36.7 (54)	62.1 (41)
Attitude	55.8 (82)	NA
Family/Marital	52.4 (77)	95.5 (63)
Financial	28.6 (42)	NA
Emotional	22.4 (33)	57.6 (38)
Peer Problems	47.4 (70)	89.4 (59)
Academic/Vocational	7.5 (11)	84.8 (56)

Note: NA = Not assessed by the Youth PRA.

information into his/her supervision of offenders by completing an Intervention Plan. A summary of needs identified by the PRA is presented in Table 3 (for youth, the PRA does not measure the same needs as for adults).

The Intervention Plan is a one-page form that records the criminogenic needs of the offender (''problems/issues'') and outlines the actions or steps to address each of the offender's problem areas. Intervention Plans and matching risk-needs assessments were available for up to 105 participating probationers. For many of the variables, some information was missing.

A total of 175 instances of needs were identified for the probationers and there were 69 plans. That is, 39.4% of the needs identified had a corresponding intervention plan. For young offenders, it was more difficult to categorize action plans due to their uniqueness (e.g., ''assist in leaving gang'', ''maintain contact with mom'') but efforts were made to group them into broader categories. The results are shown in Table 4.

In order to facilitate reading Table 4, we take substance abuse as an example. Substance abuse problems were identified by the PRA for 40.2% of adult probationers and an action plan to address this area was evident in 79.5% of the cases. In contrast to the relatively high agreement between certain identified needs (e.g., substance abuse and emotional problems) and a corresponding action plan,

□ ***Table 4: Intervention Plans for PRA Identified Needs: Adults and Youth***

Criminogenic Need (N)	% with Need	% Any Plan
Substance Abuse: Adults (97)	40.2	79.5
Youth (31)	45.2	64.3
Employment: Adults (97)	41.2	10.0
Emotional: Adults (91)	23.1	71.4
Family/Marital: Adults (97)	52.6	29.4
Youth (30)	40.0	83.3
Accommodation: Adults (101)	23.8	16.6
Youth (33)	12.1	50.0

Note: Data based upon participating and non-participating probationers.

other needs were not being addressed in the Intervention Plan. For example, over 40% of the adult offenders had identified difficulties with employment yet only 10% of these cases described an action plan to deal with these difficulties. Attitudes and companions were only mentioned in a few cases and therefore, not shown in the table.

Addressing Criminogenic Needs During Supervision

After the administration of the Primary Risk Assessment and formulation of the Intervention Plan, participating probation officers tape-recorded their first "supervision" meeting with the offender. Inter-rater reliability was conducted with two research assistants who coded 108 variables from 25 audiotapes independently of each other. The median kappa was .94 and ranged from .48 to 1.0.

The intake interviews ranged from five minutes and 50 seconds to 47 minutes and 40 seconds in length. The average first supervision interview lasted 22 minutes and 34 seconds. Although the interviews were not lengthy, one must be reminded that probation officers are involved in other activities related to the client (e.g., meeting family members, calling employers, etc.).

Table 5: Discussions of Needs Identified in the Primary Risk Assessment at First Supervision Session

Need	Adult (n = 72)		Youth (n = 31)	
	#Identified	Discussed (%)	#Identified	Discussed (%)
Accommodation	21	12 (57.1)	15	11 (73.3)
Employment	28	16 (57.1)	NA	NA
Substance Abuse	32	25 (78.1)	29	19 (65.5)
Attitude	34	3 (8.8)	NA	NA
Family/Marital	40	36 (90.0)	30	23 (76.7)
Financial	26	9 (34.6)	NA	NA
Emotional	17	11 (64.7)	14	2 (14.3)
Peer Problems	38	8 (21.1)	30	13 (43.3)
Academic/Vocational	7	0.0 (0.0)	31	22 (71.0)

Note: NA = Not applicable (not assessed in Youth PRA).

Table 5 summarizes the findings for the first audio taped interviews with a focus on the criminogenic needs *identified by the PRA*. That is, the results shown in Table 5 are based on offenders having a need identified by the PRA and discussions around it. For youth, a need was identified if the subcomponent score was greater than or equal to one. Choosing a subcomponent score of 1 or more is a low threshold for defining a criminogenic need. For example, scoring positively on only one of nine items on the Substance Abuse subcomponent would define a criminogenic need. However, this liberal assessment of a criminogenic need maximized the number of cases for our small group of young offenders.

Once again, to facilitate reading Table 5, accommodation is used as an illustration. Twenty-one adult offenders (out of 72 possible cases) had accommodation identified as problematic by the PRA. In 12 or 57.1 percent of these cases the probation officer and probationer discussed the difficulties surrounding inadequate living conditions. Likewise, 15 (of 31) young offenders had accommodation problems as measured by the youth PRA. Eleven cases (73.3%) evidenced audio taped discussions around this topic. For both adults and young offenders, family/marital issues were the most frequently discussed criminogenic need. This was followed by substance abuse for adults (78.1%) and accommodation for youth (73.3%).

Some criminogenic need areas received relatively little attention. For example, employment difficulties, a problem area for 28 of 72 (38.9%) of adult probationers, were discussed in 57.1% of cases. Two of the major risk factors in criminal behavior, antisocial attitudes and criminal peers, were evident for approximately half of adult probationers. However, these need areas were infrequently discussed (8.8% and 21.1% respectively). Similarly for youth, almost all (30 of 31) had peer problems but discussions around negative peer influence accounted for less than half of the cases (43.3%).

Influencing Offenders in Interpersonal Relationships

The most direct ways of influencing the behavior of individuals is to reward desirable behavior and punish or ignore undesirable behavior. However, the impact of interpersonal rewards and punishment is moderated by the relationship between the person who is trying

□ ***Table 6: Relationship Factors over Time (Audiotape) (%)***

Relationship Factor	Audiotape		
	1st	2nd	3rd
Empathy	48.5	35.2	22.2
Openness	54.4	66.7	59.3
Warmth	45.6	40.7	48.1
Firmness	45.6	53.7	24.1
Enthusiastic	27.2	27.8	44.4
Prompting and encouragement	97.1	94.4	96.3
Humour	30.1	27.8	42.6

Note: For the first audiotape, n = 103. For the second and third audiotape, n = 54.

to effect change and the individual whose behavior is a target for change. Within the case management context, it is important for the probation officer to establish a positive, warm and respectful relationship with the client in order for the probationer to be willing to listen to what the probation officer has to say and to follow his or her advice. The audiotapes were coded for seven indicators of positive interpersonal skills. The seven indicators were: 1) empathy, 2) openness, 3) warmth, 4) firmness, 5) prompting and encouragement, 6) enthusiasm, and 7) humor.

The assessment of relationship factors from the audiotapes is presented in Table 6. The most common indicator of a positive relationship was evident in the high frequency of prompting and encouraging behavior from the probation officer. Expressions of openness and warmth, occurring in approximately half of the interviews, were the next most frequent behaviors that were observed. It appeared that these behaviors were part of an individual's interpersonal style and that they changed little with time. All other indicators of relationship skills occurred less frequently and some changed with time. Empathic statements (e.g., paraphrasing, reflection of feelings, etc.) decreased over the six-month period as did firm but fair statements (i.e., setting appropriate limits for the probationer). On the other hand, enthusiasm and humor increased over time. None of these factors were related to recidivism.

Also noteworthy was the lack of evidence of behaviors that could "turn off" the probationer. Coders were attentive to indicators of unfriendly, hostile behavior from the probation officer (e.g., "Don't interrupt me, can't you see I'm talking") or evidence of boredom (e.g., "I don't find this very interesting"). From our review of 211 audiotapes over the three time frames, only seven instances of such behavior were noted.

Behavioral interventions are one of the major characteristics of effective treatment with offenders. Behavioral interventions include the modeling of desired behavior, opportunities to practice the behavior, providing appropriate feedback (i.e., the systematic reinforcement of prosocial behaviors and discouragement of antisocial behaviors), teaching relapse prevention and the assignment of behavioral homework. The degree to which probation officers engaged in these practices was assessed from the audiotapes.

In Table 7 the prevalence of the major indicators of behavioral intervention is presented. Prosocial reinforcement by the probation officers was the most frequently used method of influencing change in their clients. That is, when an offender reported engaging in a prosocial activity (e.g., spent the day searching for work), the officer recognized this as desirable and expressed approval. Interestingly, probation officers were not very responsive to antisocial expressions from their clients (antisocial discouragement was noted in 18.5% to 25.9% of the audiotapes). When the probationer reported an

□ ***Table 7: Directive Factors over Time (Audiotape) (%)***

Factor	Audiotape		
	1st	2nd	3rd
Prosocial Modeling	16.5	14.8	14.8
Practice	22.3	24.1	24.1
Prosocial Reinforcement	68.0	55.6	72.2
Antisocial Discouragement	20.4	25.9	18.5
Relapse Prevention	16.5	25.9	29.6
Homework Assignment	28.2	27.8	24.1

Note: For the first audiotape, n = 103. For the second and third audiotape, n = 54.

antisocial activity or expressed an antisocial attitude, the probation officer did not note this nor challenge the behavior or attitude.

Other aspects of behavioral intervention (i.e., prosocial modeling, practice, relapse prevention and the assignment of tasks or "homework") occurred in a minority of the audiotapes. Once again, this behavior did not change over time–if probation officers were not using behavioral techniques to bring about change near the beginning of supervision then they were not doing it six months later. Only discussions around relapse prevention showed an increase but only from the first to the third and six-month audiotapes.

As with our analysis of the relationship factors, probation officers were found not to engage in behaviors that were counterproductive to prosocial change in the offender. Only six instances of the probation officer modeling antisocial behavior (e.g., rationalizes crime) and three examples of reinforcing antisocial behavior were found among the audiotapes. Again, the specific directive factors did not predict recidivism.

As already alluded to, some of the analyses with respect to recidivism found no significant results. However, there were a few important exceptions. First, the amount of time devoted to dealing with a criminogenic need predicted recidivism (Table 8). The more time spent dealing with a criminogenic need, the lower the recidivism. Although the results shown in Table 8 appear impressive, we also found that only one-third of probation officers spent a significant amount of time focused on a few criminogenic needs in their supervision sessions. In fact, 67% of the probation officers dealt with an average 5.2 different criminogenic needs during a supervision session. Considering that the average session was 22 minutes, to spend a few minutes covering a range of criminogenic needs was not productive.

□ ***Table 8: Time Devoted to Discussions of a Criminogenic Need and Recidivism***

Time Spent discussing Criminogenic Need	Percent Recidivated
0 to 19 minutes	49
20 to 39 minutes	36
More than 40 minutes	3

We found that the more topics covered during a session, the higher the recidivism rate ($r = .19$, $p < .05$).

The other additional finding of note was that the more time that the probation officer spent discussing the conditions of probation, the *higher* the recidivism rate. In sessions where less than 15 minutes was spent discussing the probation conditions, the recidivism rate, after adjusting for risk, was 18.9% but the rate was 42.3% when more that 15 minutes was devoted to this topic.

DISCUSSION

The overall purpose of this study was to better understand how probation officers use risk-needs assessments to formulate their case plans and how they manage their cases. This study provided a snapshot of present practices. That having been said, the study was not without methodological limitations and difficulties. We did not have the participation that we were hoping for, leaving us with relatively few cases on which to base our findings. The small sample of youth cases prevented some analyses and the lack of participation by 42 probation officers raised the possibility that the results would not generalize. However, a comparison of participating and non-participating probation officers and probationer files revealed few differences leading us to cautiously conclude that the findings are representative of case management practice in Manitoba community corrections during the period of study.

Over the course of the first three months, probation officers met with their offenders an average of 4.3 times. There are few reports in the literature of how often probation officers have face-to-face contacts with their clients. Latessa (1987) found an average of 1.6 contacts per month in Ohio probation, approximately the same number that we found in Manitoba probation. This number of contacts may be appropriate for low risk offenders but the average of 5.7 contacts over three months may be inadequate for high risk offenders. From a treatment perspective, the recommendation has been that high risk offenders require at least 100 hours (Lipsey, 1995) and some have called for 300 hours of treatment (Bourgon & Armstrong, 2005).

The average length of a session between the probation officer and the probationer was slightly more than 22 minutes. These two

findings (number of contacts and length of session) raise the question as to whether or not probation supervision can be effective with this amount of time spent with probationers. However, we need to keep in mind that probation officers are involved in other activities (e.g., making referrals, meeting with collaterals) and not all of their time is spent in direct contact with their clients. Jester (1990) estimated that only 30 to 40 percent of a probation/parole officer's time is spent in direct contact with offenders. However, Trotter (1996) contends that a short period of time may be sufficient *if that time is properly used*. In his study, probation officers were trained in prosocial modeling and problem-solving and the probationers receiving supervision from the trained probation officers demonstrated a recidivism rate of 46% while offenders under supervision by untrained probation officers had a recidivism rate of 64% (recidivism was measured at four years). The average length of session was less than 25 minutes.

The issue that arises from these findings is the need to identify the reasons why probation officers are not spending more time with their clients. The most obvious reason may be caseload. However, caseload size was not associated with either the number of contacts in the first three months or the length of the audio taped session. Another reason may be that probation officers are engaged in other activities related to supervision of the client such as meeting with family members and dealing with welfare agencies that place limits on the time they can spend directly with the probationer. Further research in this area is suggested.

The findings of the present study suggest a lack of follow through between the assessment and case management. Assessments are completed according to policy but much of the information from the assessment fails to make it into the Intervention Plan and even less is dealt with in the sessions. Harris and her colleagues (Harris, Gingerich & Whittaker, 2004) also found poor compliance between the assessment and the action plan in a sample of probation officers in the United States. One problem may be the physical separation of the assessment instrument from the Intervention Plan (they are two separate forms). A possible solution is to integrate the assessment with the case plan. The Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI; Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2004) does just this and Manitoba Corrections has adopted this instrument to address the

shortcoming posed by the PRA and the lack of integration with the Intervention Plan.

Analyses of the audiotapes showed that identified criminogenic needs were not discussed in the majority of cases. These results may not be all that surprising given that actions to address offender needs were loosely formulated in the Intervention Plan. After all, if the Intervention Plan does not build on the PRA assessment of needs, then how can we expect probation officers to discuss the problems of probationers in their sessions? Based on the offender rehabilitation literature, the first step in behavioral change is to identify and address criminogenic needs. In cases where criminogenic needs were the focus of supervision, decreases in offender recidivism were found. It appears that educating and training probation officers to target their discussions on the criminogenic needs of those they supervise would be an important step in improving probation effectiveness.

Establishing a good relationship with the offender and then providing the offender with structured direction are key factors to reducing recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Upon examining the audio taped interviews we found instances of probation officers demonstrating warmth, openness, encouragement and other indicators of a positive relationship but in only half of the audiotapes. The relationship factors did not predict recidivism but this is not surprising. Relationship oriented therapies alone do not reduce recidivism; structuring skills are also needed.

Along the structuring and directive dimensions of interpersonal influence we found, as with relationship skills, that probation officers could do more. They were quite good in praising and rewarding offenders when they said something prosocial but missed opportunities to alter antisocial expressions through appropriate discouragement. Other skills (e.g., prosocial modeling, practice) that could be very effective in changing offender behavior were evident in a minority of audio taped interviews. The low base rate may explain why these factors were unrelated to recidivism.

CONCLUSION

Our meta-analytic findings presented earlier on the effectiveness of community supervision showed that supervision was unrelated

to recidivism. This is a disturbing finding in a public climate where the mood is to be tough on offenders. If community supervision does not "work" in reducing recidivism then is cost-savings the only reason to maintain forms of community supervision? We think not. We suspect that our findings regarding the low levels of adherence to the Risk and Need principles and the sparse use of behavioral techniques of influence is not limited to just the jurisdiction that we studied but may be common to many probation and parole agencies. Problems with the integrity of service delivery within corrections have been noted by others (e.g., Harris et al., 2004) and it has been especially problematic when trying to apply the principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity (Andrews, 2006; Lowenkamp, Latessa & Holsinger, 2006; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006). From our findings, it is clear that probation officers can learn to do more and to do it better. Trotter (1996;1999) has demonstrated that training in prosocial modeling and other structuring techniques can make a difference and the beneficiaries of such training efforts will be the staff, the offenders and the community.

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AUTHORS' NOTES

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