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# Supervision Styles in Probation and Parole: An Analysis of Activities

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## Supervision Styles in Probation and Parole: An Analysis of Activities

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RICHARD P. SEITER

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**ABSTRACT** Supervision of offenders in the community remains a critical component of the correctional processes in the United States. With almost six million offenders under correctional supervision in the community, there has been relatively little attention and few resources devoted to the style and quality of supervision received by these offenders. As a result of the lack of research regarding the style of probation and parole supervision, there is a need to identify and quantify styles of casework and surveillance supervision. This article describes a research project that identifies the key functions of parole and probation officers, reports self and peer-rating on a casework to surveillance continuum, and establishes an instrument that can be used to create base line information regarding how probation and parole officers spend their time, and whether the functions officers perform are casework, surveillance, or a balance of the two.

There is little doubt that probation and parole officers have a tremendous impact on the correctional systems within the United States, even though prisons and issues focusing on incarceration receive most of the attention and most of the resources. In 1997, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported a total of 5,726,200 adults under correctional supervision. Of those, 3,296,513 were on probation, 694,787 were on parole, 557,974 were in jail, and 1,176,922 were in prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998, p. 1). The number on probation has remained relatively steady for the past several years. The number of offenders under parole supervision has been declining, as the use of parole has declined. During the mid-1900s, all states used indeterminate sentences with release by parole boards (Clear and Cole, 1997). By 1977, release on parole reached its peak, as 72 percent of all prisoners were released on parole (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1977). However, by 1997, this had reduced to 28 percent (Bureau of Justice Statistics-a, 1997).

The manner in which a parolee or probationer is supervised receives relatively little attention, even though its importance was recognized almost forty years ago. In the classic review of prisons and parole, Glaser notes, "The principal functions of parole supervision have been procurement of information on the parolee . . . and facilitating and graduating the transition between imprisonment and complete freedom . . . these functions presumably are oriented to the goals of protecting the public and rehabilitating the offender"(Glaser, 1964, p. 423). Soon after, Albery analyzed the comparison between styles of parole supervision and violation rates, and defines supervision as "the means used to accomplish the goals of protecting society and rehabilitating the offender (Albery, 1969, p. 3).

With over 4 million offenders under supervision in the community, it would be expected that the functions and activities of parole and probation officers would be thoroughly researched. However, there are a limited number of studies describing what parole and probation officers actually do, and what forces influence their activities. It has been suggested that supervision styles of parole and probation officers fall into either a "casework" or a "surveillance" approach. In this regard, a casework style of supervision places emphasis on assisting the offender with problems, counseling, and working to make sure the offender successfully completes supervision. Until the late 1960s, probation and parole supervision was focused on restoring offenders to the community (Rothman, 1980). However, over the past twenty years, there has been an increasing reliance of closely monitoring offenders to catch them when they fail to meet all required conditions. This surveillance style of

supervision is said to place an emphasis on monitoring and enforcing compliance with the rules or supervision and the detection of violations leading to revocation and return to custody. Rhine (1997) describes this change in supervision style.

Despite their importance to public safety, the past 20 years have witnessed a marked devaluation of traditional probation and parole supervision. Acknowledging this trend, many administrators in the field have adopted a set of practices and a discourse that represent a discernible shift toward risk management and surveillance. This shift in the mission and conduct of supervision reflects a new narrative, the plausibility of which has yet to be established. (p. 72)

The transition from casework to surveillance style of supervision could be less of a philosophical than a pragmatic change. Petersilia reports that in the 1970s, parole officers were usually assigned 45 parolees, yet today parole caseloads of 70 offenders are common (Petersilia, 2000). In fact, as probation caseloads in California increased dramatically, in the early 1990s, caseloads reached 500 per officer, and “some 60 percent of Los Angeles probationers were tracked solely by computer and had no face-to-face contact with a probation officer (Beto, Corbett, and DiIulio, 2000, p. 3). With such large caseloads, there is limited time to focus on offenders as individuals, and attempt to provide counseling or referral to community agencies. As a result, officers have little choice but to concentrate on surveillance, and impersonally monitor offenders. Burton (1992) asserts few responsibilities have been defined for the roles of probation and parole officers. However, two goals are central (or should be central) to the mission and objectives of the officer: (1) to rehabilitate treatable offenders, and (2) to protect society from at-risk individuals. Burton further contends that problems arise between these conflicting objectives, and that probation and parole organizations are lacking a clear definition of responsibilities for the officers. It has also been suggested that the courts play a larger role in monitoring and sanctioning the parole population. It has been suggested by Burke (2001) that the courts play a larger role in monitoring and sanctioning the parole population.

Aside from the issue of how probation and parole officers currently supervise offenders, there is also little known regarding what factors impact supervision style. Do officers acquire their style from agency policy, from supervisors, from political rhetoric they hear, from stated

agency mission, from judicial oversight they receive, or does style vary by geographic location?

A serious concern over the past decade is the increase in the number of probation and parole revocations. In 1974, the percent of the United States prison population admitted for probation or parole violations was 17 percent, but by 1991 that figure had increased to 45 percent (Cohen, 1995). Prison admissions resulting from parole violations alone comprised only 16 percent in 1980 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1980). However, prison admissions representing parole violators were 34.8 percent by 1996 (Bureau of Justice Statistics-b, 1997). The change from casework to surveillance has certainly contributed to the increase in revocation rates.

Increasing revocation rates would not be a concern, in fact would be evidence of success, if a surveillance style of supervision were shown to reduce recidivism. However, there is no such evidence. Fulton (1997) suggests that the current surveillance method has not been effective in reducing recidivism, and believes a balanced role of both social worker and law enforcer provides the best results for the offender, the officer and society.

As a result of the lack of research regarding the style of probation and parole supervision, there is a need to identify and quantify styles of casework and surveillance supervision. This article describes an attempt to identify the key functions of parole and probation officers, to report self- and peer-rating on a casework to surveillance continuum, and to establish an instrument that can be used to create baseline information regarding how probation and parole officers spend their time, and whether the functions officers perform are casework, surveillance, or a balance of the two.

## ***RESEARCH DESIGN***

To date, there has been no way to identify the style of supervision performed by probation and parole officers. The objective of this study was to create an instrument to quantify the style of supervision provided by probation and parole officers. This is critical, as it provides an opportunity to examine correlations of supervision style with a variety of other data, functions, activities, and determine how style influences success on parole or probation, or how it impacts revocation or recidivism rates. Research questions in this study included the following:

1. Can supervision activities be identified and categorized into a casework to surveillance continuum?
2. Are these activities and categorizations indicative of the self-perceptions of officers' supervision style?
3. What relationship do officers believe exists between supervision style and recidivism or successful completion of probation or parole?
4. What factors influence an officer's style of supervision?

The study was focused on officers within the Eastern Probation and Parole Region (St. Louis) of the Missouri Department of Corrections. Within the Region, officers supervise both probationers sentenced from St. Louis County courts, and parolees returning to the St. Louis area from Missouri prisons. The research design includes seven steps.

*Step 1: Identify the tasks performed by probation and parole officers, create survey and interview data collection instruments, and pretest these instruments.* Draft survey and interview instruments were shared with Missouri probation and parole district administrators, who suggested revisions to clarify questions and make them more representative of the functions of probation and parole officers. In addition, it was necessary to create a list of tasks probation and parole officers perform as a part of their supervision of offenders. The district administrators within the Eastern Region were provided a draft list, and asked to add, subtract, or clarify items in the list. The Appendix illustrates the list of supervision activities and functions.

*Step 2: Validate the list of tasks and activities, and classify them into either "casework" or "surveillance" activities.* The list of supervision activities was then provided to approximately thirty probation and parole experts. This group of experts includes probation and parole administrators in Missouri, Ohio, and Kentucky, as well as other individuals with national scope and expertise regarding probation and parole. These individuals were provided the following definition of casework and surveillance styles of supervision:

*Casework* supervision means an emphasis on assisting the offender with problems, counseling, and working to make sure the offender successfully completes supervision.

*Surveillance* supervision means an emphasis on monitoring and enforcing compliance with the rules of supervision and the detection of violations leading to revocation and return to custody.

While acknowledging that many of the listed activities can represent both a casework and surveillance function, these experts were asked to make a forced choice, and categorize each activity into one of the two definitions. The responses of these experts were combined, and each task categorized as either casework or surveillance.

*Step 3: Survey officers and identify the time spent on each activity.* State probation and parole officers in the Eastern Region were surveyed. The surveys were voluntary, but approximately 46 percent of all officers (114 out of 250) completed the surveys. Surveys were administered in each district office by a Saint Louis University researcher, at a time when most officers were expected to be available. However, seldom were all officers in the office, and the response rate of officers completing the survey was therefore much higher than 46 percent.

On the survey, respondents were asked to proportion the time (by percentages) that they regularly spend on each activity. Officers were told to disregard any time they spend on administrative activities such as training, travel, or personnel matters. They were only to consider the time they spent on activities that related to the supervision of offenders, and that their proportion of time on the supervision activities should total 100 percent. The surveys included the above definition of casework and surveillance, but did not identify activities as either casework or surveillance in order to avoid prejudice in its completion. In addition to proportioning their time among the listed activities, officers were also asked to rate their own supervision style on a Likert scale of casework to surveillance.

*Step 4: Conduct more detailed interviews with a sample of officers.* Interviews were conducted with eleven (approximately 10% of those surveyed) probation and parole officers to elaborate on the survey questions, and seek personal opinions of the most important functions of their jobs. These interviews included asking about the role of probation and parole officers, the importance of casework or surveillance activities, the conflicts between helping offenders and protecting society, and other qualitative aspects of probation and parole officers duties.

*Step 5: Analysis of the data.* The survey and interview responses were analyzed to determine the percent of time officers spend on casework and surveillance activities, the officers' ratings of the supervision styles of both themselves and their peers, and other officer opinions of their supervision activities.

*Step 6: Report writing.* A final report was written and provided to the Missouri Department of Corrections. The report describes the functions of probation and parole officers, and relates some of their opinions or

the importance and impact of the casework and surveillance perspectives. It also delineates groups of officers into relevant proportions of how they spend their time, and therefore how much their functions emphasize the casework/surveillance perspective. Finally, from the data collected and analyzed, there are suggestions for further research to examine the correlation of supervision style to other factors such as measures of outcome, individual officer work issues such as stress or job satisfaction, and training or other approaches that can influence officers' styles of supervision.

### ***DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF SURVEYS***

*Survey administration.* All probation and parole officers who managed caseloads in the Eastern Region of Missouri were candidates to complete surveys. Completing the survey was completely voluntary. The written survey, as well as the verbal instructions from the researcher, contained verbiage that indicated that a random sample of officers who completed the written survey would be asked to participate in an in-depth interview on the same subject matter. Eleven officers participated in the interviewing process. At least one employee at each district office is represented in the interview data.

*Description of the sample.* There were 114 completed surveys and eleven completed interviews. Sixty percent of respondents were women, and 40 percent were men, while 76.4 percent described their ethnicity as "White/Non-Hispanic," and just over 19 percent described themselves as "Black/Non-Hispanic." Almost all respondents have college degrees, a requirement for the job of probation or parole officer in the state of Missouri. Of this group, 22.3 percent had some graduate school, and another 16 percent have earned a graduate degree. Table 1 illustrates the major of degree holders.

The great majority (95.6 percent) of respondents supervised both probationers and parolees. Missouri is a "combined" state, whereby the Department of Corrections oversees the administration of both probation and parole for all adult felons. Caseload types were fairly evenly split, with 55.3 percent of respondents managing a specialized caseload and 43.9 percent managing a regular caseload, and one officer responding as supervising a mix of regular and specialized caseloads. The specialized caseloads included intensive supervision, sex offender, violent offender, mental health offender, or substance abuse offender caseloads. Mean caseload size was 60 offenders for each officer, with a



range of 8 offenders as the smallest and 127 offenders as the largest caseload indicated. Table 2 illustrates other demographic characteristics of the sample.

*How officers spend their time.* Respondents were administered a survey with a list of 15 officer supervisory activities (those listed in the Appendix) and asked to divide their time between those activities to total 100 percent. Respondents could also include their time allocations to an “other” category. Table 3 illustrates how respondents spend their time. The three most often cited activities, indicated by mean percentage of time indicated, in which respondents spent their time supervising offenders were:

1. “Counseling offenders on areas of need (not including general failure to follow conditions of supervision)” 16.4% of time
2. “Writing violation reports” 13.6% of time
3. “Conducting assessments of offenders (such as risk, need, the interview/assessment worksheet, etc.) 11.4% of time

**Table 1: College Majors of Officers Holding Degrees**

<i>Criminal Justice</i>	54.1%
<i>Psychology</i>	17.1%
<i>Sociology</i>	9.0%
<i>Social Work</i>	4.5%
<i>Education</i>	3.6%
<i>Business</i>	1.8%
<i>Other (Art, History, Unspecified)</i>	9.9%

**Table 2: Description of Sample of Officers Responding to Survey**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Range</i>
<i>Age</i>	33.5 years	21-56
<i>Time on Job</i>	5.5 years	1-23

**Table 3: How Officers Spend Supervision Time**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean (%)</i>
<i>Making Home Visits</i>	114	7.95
<i>Making Work Visits</i>	114	1.14
<i>Conducting Offender Assessments</i>	114	11.43
<i>Counseling Offenders</i>	114	16.39
<i>Conducting Drug Tests</i>	114	6.46
<i>Explaining/Reinforcing Rules</i>	114	8.26
<i>Writing Violation Reports</i>	114	13.60
<i>Appearing in Court</i>	114	6.46
<i>Placing/Finding Offender Programs</i>	114	9.21
<i>Recommend Early Discharge Reports</i>	114	1.04
<i>Conducting Detention Interviews</i>	114	3.84
<i>Running Offender Groups</i>	114	0.84
<i>Conducting Follow-Up Activities</i>	114	5.16
<i>Contacting Significant Others</i>	114	3.55
<i>Contacting Offenders' Victims</i>	112	1.64
<i>Other Activities</i>	37	3.04
<i>TOTAL</i>		100.00

These three activities represented approximately 41 percent of the time officers spent on offender supervision activities.

*Casework and surveillance activities.* Using the distinctions noted above between casework and surveillance activities, officers' percentage of time were identified as either casework or surveillance functions. These scores were derived from aggregating the percentages of time that each surveyed officer listed for each of the 15 supervisory functions in the Appendix. Results indicated that for all the officers completing the survey, they spend an average of 55.9 percent of their time on casework and 41.4 percent of their time on surveillance activities. This does not total 100 percent, as many officers listed "other" categories. These "other" listings by officers were numerous and individually represented a small percentage. Therefore, the "other" categories were not rated as casework or surveillance and included in the analysis.

In addition to the overall rating of time spent on casework and surveillance types of activities by all officers, there was also a comparison

of time spent on both supervision styles by type of caseload supervised by the officer. Table 4 represents the caseload and surveillance score based on regular and specialized caseloads. The “score” represents the average percent of time spent on casework or surveillance activities.

An analysis of variance was completed to test if there was any significant difference between the casework and surveillance scores by type of caseload. Results were that there is no significant difference between how officers spend their time based on whether they supervised a regular or specialized caseload. It is expected that officers who have specialized caseloads take on a style dictated by the requirements of the offenders they supervise. In this study, the specialized caseloads represented a mix of offender types. Some of the specialized caseloads (mental health or substance abuse) are very “treatment” oriented, and possibly take on a caseload style of supervision. There are many specialized caseloads (violent offender or sex offender) that likely result in a surveillance style of supervision due to the nature of the offenses committed by the offenders supervised. Future research should separate these data by type of specialized caseload to identify if there is a significant difference between caseloads types.

*Supervisory style.* The survey included a definition of casework and surveillance supervision styles (noted above). Officers were asked to rate their own supervision style from total casework (a rating of 1) to total surveillance (a rating of 10). On these Likert ratings, a score of 5.5 is exactly in the middle of the rating, indicating a perfect balance between casework and surveillance activities.

<i>Caseload Type</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>Casework Score*</i>	<i>Surveillance Score*</i>
<i>Regular</i>	50	55.7	42.9
<i>Special</i>	63	56.0	40.1
<i>Mixed</i>	1	55.0	45.0

*\* These are mean scores in percentages of time spent on each category of activity. They do not total 100%, because some officers listed a variety of “Other” functions that were not included in the list.*

The mean rating for respondents' own style description was 5.72, indicating a balanced supervisory style. Respondents were also asked to assess their peers' (those who supervise similar types of offenders) styles, and these ratings provided a mean of 5.56. Thus, respondents did not perceive any significant difference between their own supervisory style and that of their peers. The mode for the respondents' own style was 7 (21.9 percent of respondents), while for their peers it was 5 (30.7 percent of respondents), indicating that respondents most frequently believed their own style was closer to the "surveillance" end of the continuum than their peers.

*Tests using the Self/Peer Style continuum and the composite style scores.* A linear regression model was run using the respondents' description of their own supervisory style as the dependent variable. Predictor variables tested in the model included age, peer style, number of offenders in caseload, and time on the job. No variable was significantly correlated with another, and collinearity diagnostics were within acceptable ranges.

Overall statistics indicated an insignificant model with these variables, meaning that as a whole, these independent variables are not predictive of the officers' style when supervising offenders. Individual variable analysis, however, indicated that peer style alone was a significant predictor of respondent self-style at the  $p < .05$  level. Thus, the supervisory styles exhibited by other officers appear to significantly influence how respondents themselves supervised their clients.

An analysis of variance test was used to examine if the time spent in the seventeen (including the two "other" categories) different supervisory activities indicated on the survey had an impact on respondents' self-reported supervisory style. As indicated in Table 5, there were three variables that indicated a significant relationship with respon-

**Table 5: Activities Significantly Related to Self-Reported Supervision Style**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Level of Significance</i>
<i>Counseling Offenders on Areas of Need</i>	<i>p &lt; .001</i>
<i>Writing Reports to Recommend Early Discharge from Supervision</i>	<i>p &lt; .001</i>
<i>Having Contact with Offenders' Significant Others</i>	<i>p &lt; .05</i>

dents' self-reported style. These analysis of variance tests search for differences in means of groups to see if they "behave" differently, given some treatment or factor. In this case, the time officers spent doing the three activities named above impacted their self-reported supervisory style. The three activities that are significant are important enough to have an effect on the way officers perceive their overall supervisory style.

Using the activity rating (the percent of time officers spend on casework and surveillance functions), two new "composite" variables were created for each respondent. For the composite variable, a 50/50 split by percentage in time would indicate a perfect balance between time spent on casework and time spent on surveillance activities. Percentage of time was divided by ten and recomputed into data on a 1-10 scale to mirror the self-reported style continua for both respondents and their peers.

T-tests were used to test differences between variables. T-tests are used to see if a test variable, in this case the actual time spent in casework and surveillance activities, differs significantly from some hypothesized value, in this case the respondents' self-reported style continuum. Relationships (correlations) between variables were significant at least at the .05 level, and all in the directions hypothesized. Time spent in both casework and surveillance activities were significantly correlated with the respondents' self-reported supervisory style. Officers who rated themselves on the Likert scale as having more of a casework than a surveillance style, actually do spend a majority of their time doing casework-categorized activities than surveillance-categorized activities.

The correlation matrix reveals significant relationships between variables themselves. The Casework composite variable is slightly negatively correlated with the self-reported style. As theorized, the Casework and Surveillance variables are significantly (at a .01 level) and negatively correlated to each other (correlation coefficient =  $-.696$ ). There is a strong difference, in other words, between Casework activities and Surveillance activities and how they impact supervisory style.

### ***IMPRESSIONS FROM INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS***

The final question on the survey informed respondents that more extensive individual interviews were going to be held, that they would be voluntary, and asked if they would agree to be interviewed. No respondents indicated an unwillingness to be interviewed. Therefore, from the list of all officers employed in the Eastern Region of Missouri, every

tenth one was selected to be interviewed. In addition, if any officers specifically told one of the researchers they would like to be interviewed, they were accommodated. Interviews with eleven officers were conducted by two different researchers. These interviews are enlightening in that the information expands on that collected in the surveys. However, the authors did not do a test of reliability or validity on the interview instruments, and do not purport the answers to necessarily represent the overall survey sample.

The interview group was similar to the overall surveyed group. Table 6 illustrates characteristics of the eleven officers interviewed.

The officers responded that the primary role of probation and parole officers is to ensure public safety, to supervise and offer resources to help the client readjust to society, to prevent recidivism, to steer the offenders in the right direction, to be a court reporter, to monitor the offender, and to hold the offender highly accountable for his or her actions and responsibilities. Within each of these categories, three officers perceived the most important aspect of their job to be agents of change, while helping offenders rehabilitate and reenter the community. Five of the respondents suggested the insurance of public safety to be their primary goal, while keeping offenders in check with their responsibilities. The job of monitoring individuals and assisting in reentry was a primary goal supported by two respondents. These responses are particularly interesting, as they point out the wide range of responsibilities of officers, and the varying importance that officers put on these different roles.

Officers found their offenders and caseloads to be unique. Therefore they handle them differently. Officers were asked if they thought it important for a probation and parole officer to develop more of “casework” or a “surveillance” style of supervision. They were also asked what

**Table 6: Description of Eleven Interviewed Officers**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Range</i>
<i>Time on the Job</i>	11	5.9	2-22
<i>Hours Worked Per Week</i>	11	41.9	40-45
<i>Caseload Size By Type</i>	11		
<i>Regular</i>	5	84.4	66-108
<i>Specialized</i>	6	53.3	45-103

casework functions they thought are most important or most effective in assisting offenders, and what surveillance functions are most important or most effective in “catching” offenders who violate conditions of supervision or offenders likely to violate conditions. Overall, the distribution of responses regarding the importance of either casework or surveillance resulted in the following:

Officers indicating support for casework: 2% or 18%

Officers indicating support for surveillance: 3% or 27%

Officers indicating each style equally important: 6% or 54%

Three officers who rated themselves as having more of a surveillance style felt that using this style was extremely important, especially in regard to supervising sex offenders. In support of casework methods, one officer stated that there is a need to help offenders stay out of prison, partly because of the high level of prison overcrowding. While this officer noted that the focus should be on keeping offenders out of prison instead of catching them in violations, the respondent also suggested that holding them accountable for digressions is important. The casework functions considered most important by respondents are making sure of program attendance and follow-up, checking with treatment providers and family members, verifying with employers that the offender is present and doing good work, interviewing, drug testing, referrals to community treatment facilities, employment and drug treatment.

Respondents were asked how they determine which style of supervision to use, and whether it is dictated by upper management (through policies and procedures), results from the type of offenders supervised, results from the size of caseloads, or if officers develop a style to match their personal approach. Each respondent commented that the nature of offenders and their offense generally dictate their style of supervision. Respondents further stated that officers develop their own style, primarily as a result of the approach they feel is most comfortable and productive. Two of the respondents commented that they are given guidelines by upper management, but they still create their supervision styles in relation to specific situations. One reply was that style is the result of the officer’s personal preference and overall attitude.

Interview data indicate that officers have tremendous flexibility and autonomy when it comes to choosing style and activities that they feel best suit each offender. Interview data also indicate that officers believe a casework orientation to be most effective in the long term, but that caseload size and paperwork requirements sometimes “force” them to

adopt more surveillance-type activities to move offenders through the system.

Officers were asked if they think that supervision style has anything to do with offender recidivism or the violation of probation or parole. Four (36.4 percent) of the eleven respondents felt that the style of supervision does affect the recidivism rate, while the remaining seven (63.6 percent) officers stated that style has nothing to do with recidivism. The majority felt that offenders are going to act as they want, unconnected to a certain supervision style. Officers were also asked about factors related to officers themselves (such as stress and burnout) that could influence supervision style. Respondents noted personal factors that influence style are the level of patience with particular offenders, ability to remain detached from clients, bringing personal issues to the job, overall personality, chances for an officer to be in a burn-out stage (usually because of age), officers becoming “lackadaisical” with clients, and inexperience of younger officers and caseload size.

To conclude the interviews, respondents were asked a variety of questions regarding the future of probation and parole supervision. They were first asked to identify problems and possible solutions regarding the future of their agency in recruiting, hiring, and retaining talented and dedicated officers. Three respondents suggested that the pay of officers is unsatisfactory. Two responded that a reduction of requirements in the profession is problematic. And one respondent pointed out that the absence of a career ladder for officers is a concern.

Officers were also asked how they see the future of supervising offenders changing over the next ten years, and how these changes could affect their jobs. Two officers replied that the future is unforeseeable because of the ever-changing society. One officer commented that it depends on what happens in society, and what happens as a result of the State now focusing more on casework and social work than surveillance and law enforcement. This officer noted that the Department of Corrections was encouraging officers to behave in more of a casework orientation.

## *SUMMARY*

As a result of this study, there are several findings and recommendations. The first research question in this study asked if supervision activities could be identified and categorized as casework or surveillance. Within the study, an instrument was developed to quantify style of su-



pervision, based on the percent of time officers spend on various activities. Using this instrument, it was determined that for all the officers completing the survey, they spend an average of 55.9 percent of their time on casework, and 41.4 percent of their time on surveillance.

The second research question was if there are any correlations between officers' self-reported and actual supervision style. Officers who rated themselves on the Likert scale as having more of casework than a surveillance style, actually do spend a majority of their time doing casework-categorized activities than surveillance-categorized activities. The mean rating for respondents' own style description was 5.72 on the 10-point Likert scale, indicating a balanced supervisory style. Relationships (correlations) between actual and self-perceived style were significant, as time spent in both casework and surveillance activities were significantly correlated with the respondents' self-reported supervisory style.

Respondents were also asked to assess the style of their peers. In this regard, respondents did not perceive any significant difference between their own supervisory style and that of their peers. Interestingly, it was discovered that respondents' perception of their peers' style was a significant predictor of their self-reported style. There was no significant difference identified between how officers spend their time based on whether they supervise a regular or specialized caseload. Variables such as officer's age, number of offenders in caseload, and time on the job are also not predictive of the officers' style when supervising offenders.

When asked if officers believe a relationship exists between supervision style and recidivism or successful completion of probation or parole, the majority of officers interviewed did not feel there was a direct relationship. Finally, officers were asked what factors influence an officer's style of supervision. Respondents commented that the nature of offenders and their offense generally dictate their style of supervision.

The above findings provide many suggestions for further research. This research effort was designed as a preliminary study, to lay the groundwork for future research. As noted previously, there was no way to quantify and define supervision style of parole and probation officers. This study developed an instrument that can be used to quantify supervision styles between casework and surveillance. The next logical step is to expand the identification of style of supervision for parole officers to additional states, and collect data on the successful outcome of offenders. The outcome data can then be statistically correlated to style

of officer supervision, to determine whether style significantly impacts offender outcome.

In conclusion, the supervision of probationers and parolees is a seldom examined, yet critically important part of the correctional system in the United States. Little is known about what probation and parole officers actually do, yet the revocation rates for these groups continue to rise, resulting in an increasing number of prison admissions coming from failure during supervision in the community. The often-cited transition from casework to surveillance styles of supervision deserves examination, and needs to be quantified and related to measures of outcome. This study was the first step in that process.

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#### AUTHORS' NOTES

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**Appendix A: The following list are the activities or functions of probation and parole officers that was developed by interviewing probation and parole supervisors. This list was then given to officers to allocate percentages of time they spent on each function.**

- Making a home visit to check on offenders.
- Making a visit to the offenders' place of employment to check on them.
- Seeing offenders in your office for the following activities:
  - Conducting assessments of offenders (such as risk, need, the interview/assessment worksheet, etc.)
  - Counseling offenders on areas of need (not including general failure to follow conditions of supervision)
  - Conducting drug testing (taking a urine sample, checking on results, etc.)
  - Explaining or reinforcing the rules of supervision to offenders.
- Writing violation reports.
- Appearing in court.
- Finding or directing offenders to programs (such as educational or vocational training, substance abuse, employment assistance, etc.)
- Writing reports to recommend early discharge from supervision.
- Conducting detention interviews/preliminary hearing.
- Running offender groups.
- Conducting follow-up activities with community treatment resources to assess offender participation.
- Having contact with offenders' significant others.
- Having contact with offenders' victims.
- Other activities (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other activities (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_