

**It's O.K., Supervision Enthusiasts:  
You Can Come Home Now! .....**

*Harold B. Wooten*

**A Challenge Answered:  
Perception of the Pro**

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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**Private Enterprise in Ins  
A Call for Caution ..**

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**Impact of a Job Trainin  
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# Federal Probation

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## This Issue in Brief

**It's O.K. Supervision Enthusiasts: You Can Come Home Now!**—Author Harold B. Wooten asserts that probation systems have lost interest in supervision of offenders; instead, trendy practices which are best described as elaborate monitoring mechanisms have taken the day. But, the author contends, before we rally the supervision loyalists, we should first admit that changing self-defeating behavior of offenders has never been significantly reinforced as a value in probation. The author cites historical reasons for this failure, identifies current barriers to effective supervision of offenders, and offers recommendations to various participants in the process to address effective supervision of offenders.

**A Challenge Answered: Changes in the Perception of the Probation Task.**—Author Richard Gray responds to the point of view expressed in this issue's article by Harold B. Wooten. Do probation officers actually help probationers or are they primarily paper pushers or law enforcers? According to the author, past experience and current job orientation have caused a change in probation officers' perspective of their job. The author discusses the sociology of knowledge in addressing shifts in task-related perspectives.

**Private Enterprise and Institutional Corrections: A Call for Caution.**—The current crisis of overcrowding in American prisons and jails, coupled with reduced resources available for corrections, has led to the development of innovative responses to the problems of institutional corrections. One such innovation which has been proposed and is receiving increasing support is the idea of "privatizing" institutional corrections. Authors Lawrence F. Travis III, Edward J. Latessa, Jr., and Gennaro F. Vito examine the movement to contract with private firms for the construction and operation of prisons and jails. Focusing on legal, cost, and accountability issues in such contracting, the authors conclude with a call for caution in the movement to employ private companies for the provision of this governmental service.

**Impact of a Job Training Program on CETA-Qualified Offenders.**—In this article, author Dennis B. Anderson reports on research—conducted in an industrial

midwestern city during 1984—of a job training program for CETA-qualified probationers. Controlling for self-selection and risk factors, the study compared these pro-

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# Impact of a Job Training Program on CETA-Qualified Probationers

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## *Introduction*

The research described in this article was conducted in an industrial midwestern city during 1984. A job training program for CETA-qualified probationers was evaluated.

This program was conceived in 1975 to assist probationers in improving their employment prospects. The primary focus of the program was to encourage participants to learn the value of work and to develop responsible work habits. Participants were expected to report to work on time and put in a full day's work, to respond to instructions from work supervisors, and to get along with coworkers. Some jobs were learned, but the main purpose of the program was to serve as a secondary employer and provide opportunities for the probationer to demonstrate a work history. This process was expected to enhance the probationer's job prospects with potential primary employers.

## *Research Activity*

The general activity of the study was to conduct an indepth analysis of the impact of the program on CETA-qualified probationers and compare them to probationers released back to the community who did not enroll in this program, controlling for self-selection and risk factors. Background variables and criminal records of both sample groups were associated with favorable and unfavorable probation outcomes at 6- and 12-month follow-up periods.

"CETA-qualified" means that the probationers were 18 to 25 years old and their families were in the lower income range necessary for government assistance. If the probationer's family was above the income limit, yet he was living alone and unemployed, he would not be eligible for assistance.

This study evaluated males only, since few females were in the program. The program also began taking parolees the past few years, but only probationers were studied, since this group was much larger and offered more consistent data.

In assessing "impact" of the program, the outcome criterion was whether the probationer was still in the community meeting the stipulations of probation or whether

he had been incarcerated in jail or prison. (He may have been arrested and/or convicted but not given a jail or prison sentence.) These determinations were made for both program and control probation groups at 6 and 12 months. For the control probationers, this time was calculated from the time they were given probation. For the program probationers, this time was calculated from the time they left the training program.

## *Methodology*

When comparing probationers in the training program with probationers in the community, it is important that all subjects be considered as having similar "risk potential" in order to minimize the self-selection factor. Thus, information regarding background variables (potential for failure measures) was evaluated regarding its association with favorable/unfavorable probation outcomes.

The model in this study was adapted from that used by Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1980, pp. 214-218; 229-238). Background variables were introduced into a stepwise multiple regression procedure to determine which ones were significant. This subset of variables was weighted to compute base expectancy scores which reflected *expected* group outcomes on probation adjustment (favorable/unfavorable). The expected outcomes were compared to actual outcomes at both 6- and 12-month followup periods. Background variables were used as covariates to determine "treatment impact" after adjusting for initial group differences.

## *Selection of Subjects*

Program participants were 18-25 years of age, CETA-qualified, male and female (few females), probationer or parolee, and from a major city county and surrounding counties. To create a tighter and more homogeneous design, the research population was limited to male probationers, ages 18-25, who were from the major city county. They were compared to probationers who were released back to the community but did not participate in the training program. The community probation population was judged to be CETA-qualified, and were male, ages 18-25, and also from the major city county.

A random sample of 108 program participants, 36 in each of 3 years (1979, 1980, and 1981), was compared to a random sample of 108 probationers released back to their homes in the city county, 36 in each of 3 years (1979, 1980, and 1981). Each of the six groups was randomly selected by year. Program participants were evaluated according to the date they left the training program; community probationers were evaluated according to the date they were granted probation. These 3 years were selected because an appropriate followup period was needed, and the best and most consistent file data were available during those years.

### *Data Questionnaire*

While previous studies regarding probation and parole have varied in their orientation (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1980, pp. 214-218; 235-238), the focus has generally been directed toward the following kinds of data elements: Age, Type of Offense, Drug Use, Alcohol Use, and Criminal History. Race, Marital Status, and Employment Status have also been included as variables for study.

Background variables (covariates) used in this study were age, race, education level, employment status, marital status, prior police record, prior probation, drug use, alcohol use, and type of offense. These variables were compared against available data in the probation files of the 216 research subjects. The basic data were taken from the "face sheet," which was the only complete and consistent data present in all subject files.

Data from program participants were combined with probation file data to gather required descriptive variables. To determine outcome, each criminal record of the 216 subjects was evaluated at 6 and 12 months after the subjects left the training program or were granted probation in the community. Therefore, the impact of the training program could be compared on outcome to a similar group of community probationers, in terms of criminal activity, at both 6- and 12-month intervals.

Outcome was defined as: "No Difficulty"—no arrests; a misdemeanor with or without a fine; or arrest (with or without conviction) with probation continued. "Difficulty" was defined as having probation revoked or being convicted of an offense which resulted in a jail or prison sentence.

### *Data Analysis*

How does the "post probation" success rate or probation violation of participants in the training program compare to that of persons released into the general community? Is this training program effective?

The complexity of any such comparisons dictates that program effectiveness take into account differences in the

kinds of offenders who are granted probation. That is, if different types of offenders are released on probation—some better "risks" go into the program—this must be taken into account in any comparisons. Thus, differences in "risks" are operationally defined and then controlled by using base expectancy measures to provide a statistical control for differences in "risk" of probationers in the training program versus the community comparison group.

A comparison of results between program and community probationers for both 6- and 12-month follow-up periods indicates that no significant differences existed between the two groups at either followup period after controlling for "risk classification," i.e. type of offender or offender attributes. However, a drop in the overall percent success rate was found (86 percent to 81 percent). Further research is needed to identify sources or influences that contribute to success on probation separate from differences related to program participation.

### *Descriptive Analysis*

Education, race, marital status, prior record, prior probation, drug use, and drinking were not significantly different between program and community probationers. The variable, age in years, also evaluated by an independent t-test, did indicate a statistically significant difference between program and community probationers. The mean age of the community group was 20.5 years; that of the training program group was 21.1 years.

Significant differences were also indicated for employment status, type of offense, and offense class. A chi-square analysis of program and community probationers with employed status indicates that, at the time probation was granted, a greater percentage of program probationers was employed (84 percent employed, 16 percent unemployed) than community probationers (32 percent employed, 68 percent unemployed).

A chi-square analysis of program and community probationers with type of offense indicates that a greater percentage of program probationers committed crimes against property (theft, burglary, and damage to property) than against persons (resisting arrest, aggravated battery, sex offenses, robbery, reckless conduct, and drug possession) (31 percent against person, 69 percent against property). Community probationers were approximately equal regarding percent of clients committing one or the other type of offense (51 percent against person, 49 percent against property).

Chi-square analysis of program versus community probationers with offense class indicates that more program probationers had felony convictions (55 percent felony, 79 percent misdemeanor). Felony convictions are perceived as more serious in nature than misdemeanor convictions.

In summary, program probationers had a history of a greater percentage employed with more crimes against property and a history of more felony convictions. The community probationers, on the other hand, had a greater percentage unemployed with approximately equal percentages of individuals with a record of crimes against property versus persons. The community group had a pattern of having been convicted more often for misdemeanor offenses.

Caution should be observed in interpreting this univariate analysis, given that these variables were controlled for in the previous analysis. Results do indicate that even though program probationers appear to have been employed in greater percentages with more severe "risk classification" (more felony convictions, for example), there was no significant difference between the mean probation outcome ("post probation" success) of probationers in the training program and probationers in the community.

*Conclusions and Discussion*

Differences between groups, at both 6- and 12-month intervals, varied little after adjusting for "risk classification." The conclusion is that the training program had no significant impact on its participants in terms of probation outcome criteria as defined in this study.

The "post probation" success rate of both groups ("No Difficulty") at both 6- and 12-month followup intervals was relatively high, when compared to national data, and may be due to two factors. First, the operational definition of "No Difficulty" means that the subjects may have been arrested (and possibly convicted) for crimes that did not merit incarceration in jail or prison. (Obviously, probationers might also have committed a variety of crimes for which they avoided apprehension.) Secondly, a review of research on probation outcome prediction indicates that a 6- or 12-month followup period may not be sufficient time to make accurate or stable conclusions about "post probation" success. A more appropriate time interval would be 3 to 5 years.

According to data collected, there were 614 people enrolled in the training program during the years 1975 through 1982; 604 were males, 10 were females. Four hundred and ninety were probationers, and 124 were parolees. Four hundred (70 percent) were from the major city county. One hundred thirty (22 percent) were in the program less than 30 days; 125 (21 percent) were in the program less than 60 days. Only 51 (8.6 percent) were there 6 months or more (defined as "completers").

In the sample selected for analysis, 16 (15 percent) were in the program less than 30 days; 40 (37 percent) were in the program less than 60 days. Only 10 (9 percent) stayed 6 months or more. The average length of stay in

the training program for all 108 subjects was approximately 3 months.

More program subjects left for negative reasons (54 percent) than positive ones (46 percent) (see table 1). Negative reasons included "fired" or "quit," compared to positive ones of "completed the program," "became employed," "transferred to another program," or "exceeded eligibility." [When analyzing the total population of 614 subjects between 1975 and 1982, 295 (48 percent) left the program early for negative reasons, and 319 (52 percent) left for positive reasons.]

TABLE I  
*Reason for Leaving*  
(Research Subjects Only)

	Number	Percent
Negative		
Quit	11	10
Fired	33	31
Other Negative	14	13
Positive		
Exceeded Eligibility	13	12
Transferred	6	5
Employed	28	26
Completed	3	3

According to probation files, 84 percent of the program study participants were employed when given probation (compared to 32 percent employment by the community probation group). Yet, after later enrolling in the training program, only 26 percent were described as "employed" when they left the program.

Why the decrease from 84 percent to 26 percent employment by program participants? Many of the "employed" were part-time or in menial positions. Since they were "CETA-qualified" they were referred to this training program, removing them from present jobs in an attempt to improve their employability. Unfortunately, since so many were only in the program a short time and/or left under negative conditions, they left without having employment.

Given the research data, questions arise as to how efficacious the training program was, both in goal attainment and cost effectiveness. Can skills regarding work or employment be taught in an average of 3 months? Could state, county, or local employment agencies equally fulfill the employment needs of probation offenders? How do costs and effectiveness compare with other programs? After leaving the training program, how long do the participants stay employed? How many of the subjects could be described as "unemployable"? Unfortunately, these data were not available from file material.

The important issue may well be the characteristics of probationers rather than specific program designs. Many individuals are trained through supportive programs, but it is not clear whether their employment success is more

probable. Others, including those with no special skills, manage to secure and maintain gainful employment. The primary variable is likely the individual personality of the probationer and his determination to find a job and do whatever necessary to keep it.

## REFERENCES

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