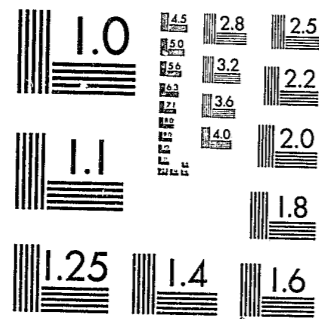


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# Federal Probation

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JUNE 1982

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES COURTS

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# Federal Probation

A JOURNAL OF CORRECTIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

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## This Issue in Brief

**Can Corrections Be Rehabilitated?**—During the last 30 years much progress has been made toward dissolving the barriers of hostility that generated violence and distrust between correctional staffs and prisoners. Because of forthcoming budgetary stringencies, rapidly increasing populations, and a vast increase in the level and frequency of violence, much of that progress is in danger of reversal. Author John Conrad feels it is urgently necessary to reduce prison intake by making maximum use of community-based corrections. He proposes a new model of sanctions that will be more severe than the present community corrections without resort to incarceration.

**"It Only Gets Worse When It's Better."**—This article by W. Clifford of the Australian Institute of Criminology, and the following article by Professor López-Rey of Cambridge, England, present two differing perspectives on world corrections. Mr. Clifford states that in the past 10 years regimes have changed or been overthrown, ideologies have been transformed, but corrections throughout the world has not changed all that much. Some of the older and outdated systems are yet 10 years more behind the times. In fact, he adds, corrections in its old form has a remarkable facility for surviving all kinds of revolutions and looking much the same afterwards.

**Crime, Criminal Justice, and Criminology: An Inventory.**—This article by Professor Manuel López-Rey attempts to demonstrate that crime is not an ensemble of behavioral problems but a sociopolitical phenomenon, that criminology should overcome excessive professional aims, and that criminal justice is increasingly unable everywhere to cope with the problem of crime, even within the limits of common crime.

**Adopting National Standards for Correctional Reform.**—The concept of correctional accreditation, according to Dale Sechrest and Ernest Reimer, is built on the foundation of humanitarian

reform of prison conditions through the application of standards of performance. A Commission on Accreditation for Corrections was formed in 1974. The Commission, using trained professionals, has accredited over 250 correctional agencies including 80 prisons, having a total involvement of over 500 correctional facilities and programs of all types.

**Volunteers in Criminal Justice: How Effective?**—The acceptance or rejection of the use of volunteers in justice settings has been based primarily on personal belief rather than on sound empirical evidence, assert authors Sigler and

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Leenhouts. While many volunteer programs have been evaluated, the results are questionable because of methodological errors. Two methodologically correct professional evaluations have indicated that volunteers are successful in working with justice system clients.

**Volunteers in Corrections: Do They Make a Meaningful Contribution?**—This article by Peter C. Kratoski examines the roles of volunteers in corrections in the past, the advantages and problems associated with using volunteers in a correctional setting, correctional agency administrators' and staff members' attitudes toward them, and the motivations and satisfactions of the volunteers. The findings of a study of the characteristics and motivations of a national sample of volunteers in probation are reported.

**A Delphi Assessment of the Effects of a Declining Economy on Crime and the Criminal Justice System.**—The research discussed in Professor Kevin Wright's article utilized the Delphi method of forecasting in order to obtain an initial and expedient answer to the question of what effect economic adversity will have on the incidence of crime and on the criminal justice system. Certain types of crime are expected to increase; however, an uncontrolled outbreak of crime is not predicted. Specific economic factors are identified as the primary producers of fluctuations in the incidence of crime. Some elements of the criminal justice system are expected to be burdened by economic decline.

**Presumptive Parole Dates: The Federal Approach.**—The procedure adopted by the United States Parole Commission to avoid unnecessary indeterminacy in making its determinations relative to prison confinement, while at the same time allowing for consideration of significant

changes in circumstances, is the focus of this article by Drs. Barbara Stone-Meierhoefer and Peter Hoffman. The presumptive parole date procedure implemented by the Parole Commission is described, and its relationship to the Commission's system of explicit guidelines for parole decision-making is discussed.

**Court—Prosecutor—Probation Officer: When Is Discretion Disparity in the Criminal Justice System?**—There is not yet in America any clear, consistent, rational policy regarding whether to pursue a correctional philosophy of rehabilitation or one of retribution. Former emphasis on treatment is being replaced by emphasis on punishment and uniformity of sentence. Supervising Probation Officer Robert L. Thomas believes traditional definitions of discretion and disparity are being prostituted to cover up the belated realization that after-the-fact solutions to crime do not work. What is really needed, he insists, is more realistic alternatives to traditional dispositions and a clearer understanding of who should or should not go to prison.

**Rekindling the Flame.**—The syndrome of burn-out is a symptom of the crisis presently affecting the social service professions, asserts James O. Smith of the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole. As such, the phenomenon presents both the danger of poorer quality services and, paradoxically, the opportunity for enhancement of services. Using as a general framework Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, this article maintains that through the medium of a comprehensive, in-service training program an organization can positively affect the "esteem needs" of its staff. The outcome of this relationship, as it is suggested, is higher quality service with less staff burnout.

All the articles appearing in this magazine are regarded as appropriate expressions of ideas worthy of thought but their publication is not to be taken as an endorsement by the editors or the Federal probation office of the views set forth. The editors may or may not agree with the articles appearing in the magazine, but believe them in any case to be deserving of consideration.

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## Volunteers in Criminal Justice: How Effective?\*

84119

BY ROBERT T. SIGLER, PH.D., AND JUDGE KEITH J. LEENHOUTS\*\*

**F**EW MOVEMENTS have grown as rapidly as the use of volunteers in criminal justice. While volunteerism per se has an extensive history rooted in the sense of "community" which characterized early American colonial life, the use of volunteers to supplement efforts of justice system personnel is a relatively new phenomenon.

Since traditional approaches dealing with criminal offenders have been ineffective and inefficient, courts, jails, prisons, and juvenile institutions have turned to new and innovative approaches for changing criminal offenders into law-abiding, productive citizens. Unfortunately, many of these new and innovative programs have been no more effective or efficient than the old.

\*Support for this effort was provided by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and by a grant (#849) from the Research and Grants Committee, the University of Alabama.

\*\*Dr. Sigler is associate professor, Department of Criminal Justice University of Alabama, and Judge Leenhouts is director, Volunteers in Probation Division of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Today many argue that rehabilitation is ineffective, that attempts to "treat" offenders do not work. Rather than seek effective means to interrupt criminal careers, the trend is toward punitive and restrictive programs for processing adjudicated offenders. We have failed to perceive the problem as including a concerted effort to interrupt the individual criminal career, turning instead to general treatment programs targeted for general classes of offenders.

Of the many approaches to treating the offender, two appear to have been consistently successful: work release and the use of volunteers. The use of volunteers in criminal justice has a long history of success. In fact, probation can be traced to the efforts of John Augustus, a volunteer. The use of volunteers to directly assist offenders fell into disuse in the United States with the professionalization of the probation officer. When society began paying salaries, the pressure for production increased. In an effort to get the most for our money, caseloads were increased to the point

where probation officers became supervisors with little time for individual attention to offender needs. As this process developed, probation as an effective means of interrupting criminal careers lost much of its impact.

In 1959, Judge Keith J. Leenhouts, struck by the plight of the misdemeanor offender, reinstated the use of volunteers in the misdemeanor court. The success of his program encouraged him to persuade others to develop volunteer programs. Through his efforts and the efforts of others who saw the value of volunteer programs, the use of volunteers in criminal justice increased rapidly.

The use of volunteers in criminal justice settings has grown in the recent past. Even with this growth, the use of volunteers to treat the criminal justice client has not begun to approach its potential. The use of volunteers in criminal justice programs is still the exception rather than the rule.

As the volunteer movement grew, problems were encountered. Knowledge in how best to proceed was not readily available and volunteers found themselves unsure of their role and how best to proceed. The means to share experiences and knowledge were lacking, thus many well intentioned people repeated the errors of many who preceded them. While efforts are presently underway to rectify this condition, the state of the art has not been fully delineated nor are adequate resources readily available.

The effectiveness of using volunteers has been challenged frequently. There has been little response to this challenge. Those who offer volunteer services and those who receive them are satisfied with the services provided and feel that the benefit should be obvious. Nonparticipants are skeptical. They state that the volunteer movement must stand ready to prove the validity of their enthusiastic endorsement of the success of volunteers.

There is great variety in the volunteer movement. The absence of indepth evaluation prevents comparison of various program elements which could have led to improved effectiveness.

Like many movements in criminal justice, volunteer programs are accepted on faith. A number of programs have been evaluated but the data and findings from these evaluations have not been made readily available. The evaluations range from relatively simplistic assessments of recidivism or participant satisfaction to relatively sophisticated assessments of attitude change and community impact.

The most complete set of information available today concerning the effectiveness of volunteer programs can be found in the files of the National

Information Center on Volunteerism in Boulder, Colorado. In the publication *Frontier 8*, Dr. Ernest L. V. Shelley summarizes the evaluations which were available in their files in 1971 (Shelley, 1971). Both studies and informal reports of research in progress are included. It is interesting to note that of the 32 studies reviewed only 11 attempt to measure the impact of volunteers on offenders. One-half include the impact on or impressions of the volunteer, three consider staff and two consider parents. In addition, three studies are surveys of volunteer program adoption nationwide. One study focuses on the offender from a perceived need for assistance perspective. Dr. Shelley noted that certain aspects of the volunteer relationship had not been evaluated properly in any of the studies.

Scioli and Cook (1976) evaluated the quality of criminal justice research focusing on rehabilitation with an emphasis on the evaluation of volunteer programs. They summarized the findings to date regarding the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. They sum up by presenting Martinson's conclusion that there is no pattern of findings which indicates that attempts to rehabilitate offenders are successful. Martinson suggests that those studies which indicate success reference isolated programs rather than a trend of effectiveness in correctional rehabilitation programs. Scioli and Cook then present their impressions gained from reviewing 250 reports, monographs, memos, and supporting statements which attempt to present findings from evaluations of volunteer programs. After screening out those materials which did not attempt to evaluate program goal attainment, 43 reports remained. Of these, 35 focused on an evaluation of the impact of the program on the client. Of these, the majority focused on the impact of the one-to-one relationship with little attention paid to other components of the program evaluated. Only three reports were found to be free of technical defects which seriously limited the quality of the evaluation. In addition, they indicated that measurement points were so varied that no two reports could be compared. The only common variable measured was recidivism. However, recidivism was measured in a number of different ways. They conclude that the first step in the effective evaluation of the impact of volunteerism on criminal justice clients is the development and application of a uniform set of effectiveness criteria. Volunteer program effectiveness criteria must be applied to a national sample of volunteer programs, thus generating a data base.

In this effort, we will review those studies which

attempt to evaluate the impact of volunteers on offenders in Shelley's report with the addition of several studies which have recently become available. In studies which deal with several aspects of the volunteer process we will limit our review to those segments relevant to our present interest in summarizing what is known about the impact of volunteer involvement on offenders.

There is a tendency to identify volunteer programs as being big brother type programs working with delinquents. In fact, many volunteer programs take this form. An attempt was made to evaluate the involvement of Junior League volunteers in the Hennepin County Home School (Shelley, 1974, p. 34). One variable measured was inmate perception of the program. Data were collected through the use of an interview schedule. The subjective impressionistic evaluation indicated that offenders held a positive view of the volunteers.

One of the most comprehensively evaluated programs has been the Boulder County Juvenile Delinquency Project (Shelley, 1971, p. 28). In essence, a number of separate evaluations of the entire program have been made over time. While these data tend to indicate that there is little difference in formal disposition of cases, there is an indication that youth assigned to Deputy Probation Officer Volunteers tended to become more emotionally stable than youth not assigned. Staff evaluated 89 percent of those assigned to this program as improved. The findings of these evaluations are of course being simplified. The study is complex and assesses a number of program and individual variables.

Brian Lonergan (Shelley, 1971, p. 25) evaluated 20 probationers of the Lackawanna (Pennsylvania) County, Common Pleas Court focusing on hostility and related traits and on educational and vocational levels. He found improvement in the probationers for all measured variables.

Alexander Zaphirin (Shelley, 1971, p. 36) evaluated the opinions of 45 misdemeanor probationers and their volunteers involved in the volunteer probation counseling program of the Jefferson County Court (Colorado). Data were drawn from case records and interviews which included fixed choice items and open-ended questions. The probationers held high positive attitudes toward the program and had low recidivism rates.

The Denver city and county court evaluated 54 misdemeanants (Shelley, 1971, p. 11). Data were gathered from police records, interviews, ratings of adjustments by staff, the California Personality Inventory, and a sociometric battery. Com-

parisons were made with a control group from the same court. Program subjects performed significantly higher than the control group on all variables including recidivism. The only measure which failed to show a change was the California Personality Inventory.

The best single evaluation of a volunteer program was conducted in Royal Oak, Michigan, by the National Institute of Mental Health (Shelley, 1971, p. 22; Koschtial, 1969; Morris, 1970). This study evaluated 119 misdemeanants from the Royal Oak program, 162 misdemeanants from a similar court, and 87 high school students from Royal Oak. Included were recidivism figures for 9 years. Data collected during the evaluation included the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory, the Wonderlic Personnel Test, the Burse-Durkee Hostility Inventory, and the Marlowe-Crown Social Desirability Scale. The premeasure indicated that the Royal Oak sample showed significantly greater initial pathology than either of the two control groups. The results indicated that in addition to lower recidivism rates than the control group subjects, the Royal Oak subjects showed a significantly greater decline in hostility and antisocial trends. Eighty percent of the Royal Oak subjects maintained their full-time employment while 78 percent had not received any further arrests. The control group figures were respectively 62 percent and 56 percent.

Alfred Lawyer evaluated the impact of volunteers on paroled felons (Shelley, 1971, p. 24). Ninety felons released to the Job Therapy Incorporated Program, with a matched control group, were the subjects. Data collected included recidivism and degree of outside contact prior to release. Parole success was related to degree of outside contact, however, the program subjects were more successful than control subjects when controlled for outside contact.

An evaluation of the National Volunteer Parole Aids Program was constructed for several state programs with data collected from a national sample (American Bar Association, 1975). Volunteers in this program were predominately attorneys. While program subjects recidivated less than non-program subjects, the difference was not significant. The only significantly higher adjustment for program subjects was found with parolees with an alcohol abuse history. There is some indication that program subjects were more closely supervised thus violations were more likely to be discovered than was the case with the control group. Comparisons were made with national statistics for all parolees thus the "control group" was not an independent sample.

The Friends Outside Program also serves sentenced felons (Office of Criminal Justice Planning, 1976). They are presently evaluating their program. Data available at this point were collected by unstructured interview designed to assess subject orientation toward the Friends Outside Program. Subjects were found to have a high positive orientation toward the program and toward the volunteers. This program focuses on reintegration and maintenance of family ties by providing assistance to families of inmates.

The state Friends Outside State Prison Representative project has also been evaluated (Birkowitz, 1976). This evaluation focuses on the range of services provided to inmates and their families. While no assessment is made of the impact of the services provided, Ms. Birkowitz establishes a high cost benefit ratio of services to cost for the program.

We have presented these findings with little comment on the quality of design and data analysis. Virtually all of the designs contain fatal defects with the predominant weaknesses being the lack of an effective control group and the choice of variables to be measured. There is a proportionally large reliance on subjective impressionistic data with little or no evidence of control for bias. Many of these evaluations were conducted by people relatively untrained in basic research techniques. Thus, while they were sincere in their efforts, the quality of their efforts produced results which can be challenged methodologically. We do note that there are no studies which indicated that offenders with volunteers do more poorly than clients without volunteers. While statistical significance is not established in several studies and the positive change is minimal in a few, in each of the evaluations of which we have knowledge the change has been positive.

Recently there has been another comprehensive evaluation of the use of volunteers with criminal offenders which is professionally done and methodologically correct. The Royal Oak Study (Morris, 1970) is separated from the M-2 study (M-2 Sponsors, Inc., of California, 1970) by more than 10 years and two thousand miles. One evaluated a misdemeanor program and the other a program for incarcerated felons. Both found that clients with volunteers are more successful than clients without volunteers. The results are reported in the summary evaluation of the California M-2 Sponsors Program (M-2 Sponsors, Inc. of California, 1978). This study focuses on 1975 parolees in the California system. Three groups were constructed for the purpose of evaluating the M-2 Sponsors program. The study group consisted of inmates

who were matched with M-2 Sponsors. The first control group was composed of inmates who applied for an M-2 sponsor but who were not matched. The second control group was composed of inmates who did not apply for an M-2 sponsor. The three groups had similar prior criminal records and personal background. Recidivism was measured by favorable parole outcome status as defined by the California Department of Corrections over a 12-month period. The study group performed significantly better than the two control groups. This study is important in that it is the most recent of a series of similar studies focusing on the M-2 Sponsor program.

The M-2 Sponsor studies measure a wide range of variables and are developing a historical data base. This program is evaluated over time. Thus, data will be available to document the changes which occur as the program develops. In addition, this data base will permit continuous monitoring of relative program impact as the environment changes and as various program components are changed.

Two methodologically correct professional evaluations have indicated that volunteers do make a difference when assigned to criminal clients. All evaluations to date, that we know about, indicate the positive impact of volunteers on criminal justice clients. These studies have been methodologically weak, but they consistently show participant satisfaction and lower recidivism of one type or another.

While we realize that this evidence does not establish universal effectiveness of volunteer programs, our personal experiences indicate that volunteers do divert criminal offenders from unacceptable patterns of behavior. We realize, of course, that our experience does not provide solid basis for evaluating the effectiveness of all volunteers. There is clearly a need for expanded in-depth quality evaluation of the use of volunteers with criminal justice clients.

In essence, like many movements in criminal justice, volunteer programs are accepted on faith. While a few scattered evaluations of model programs have been made, there has been no consistent evaluation of volunteer program effectiveness. There is a need today to effectively evaluate all criminal justice programs.

We endorse the recommendation for the development of a uniform set of effectiveness criteria made by Scioli and Cook (1976). This set of effectiveness criteria should be relatively broad permitting volunteer programs (which vary considerably) to measure the goal attainment of each program. This set of criteria should not be limited to tradi-

tional recidivism measures but should be sufficiently broad to include changes in attitudes and behavior not directly related to crime rates. In addition, a set of criteria should be developed to measure secondary impact such as changes in volunteer attitude and impact on the total program from which volunteers are drawn.

The need is not for a broad based yes or no on volunteerism. The need is for full range evaluation of each program. We need to be able to compare program components so that we can assess relative effectiveness. We need to begin understanding why and how volunteers are effective.

There is a need to develop a data base for volunteer involvement in the justice system. As is the case with the M-2 Sponsors, Inc., of California study, studied programs need to be evaluated on a continuous basis. In addition, a broad range of programs in different settings should be evaluated. Only where a substantial body of data is developed will we be in a position to evaluate the level of effectiveness inherent in the use of volunteers.

#### Summary

The use of volunteers with criminal justice clients is one of the fastest growing movements in criminal justice today. The evaluation of this innovative approach to criminal offenders has been inadequate. While all evaluations which have been conducted have shown positive results, there has been a tendency to focus on variables other than client adjustment and a general lack of adequacy in design. The studies which have demonstrated

methodological competency indicate that volunteers are indeed effective with criminal justice clients.

We are not aware of any studies which indicate that clients with volunteers are less successful than clients without volunteers.

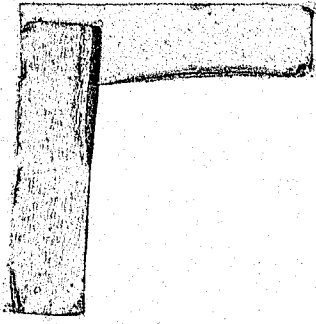
We must encourage and support in-depth evaluation of all criminal justice programs. The approach to evaluation of the M-2 program in California must be shared. There is a need to develop an effective set of measurement criteria for volunteer programs and to develop a broad data base involving a variety of programs so that we can evaluate the effectiveness inherent in volunteer programs.

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IT IS EASY to get the impression that volunteer programs are unwanted and unwelcome in the institution. This should never be the case. There is no place where willing people from society are needed more.

— JACK B. PARKER AND JOHN A. LACOUR



**END**