

PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA PROBATION
AND PAROLE OFFICERS ABOUT DESIRABLE
CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDER
SUPERVISION

By

GAYLA MICHELLE FRITTS

Bachelor of Arts

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1994

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of Oklahoma State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 1998

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA PROBATION
AND PAROLE OFFICERS ABOUT DESIRABLE
CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDER
SUPERVISION

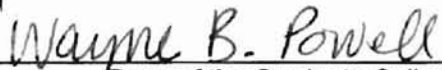
Thesis Approved:



Thesis Adviser







Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Bill Venable, Committee Chair , for challenging me to achieve excellence. His endless humor and guidance throughout this study made the changes and challenges that evolved from his "red pen" worth it all. I thank him for opening my eyes to the world of research. I also would like to express gratitude to other members on my committee, Dr. Pam Bettis and Dr. Gary Conti for the insight and richness that they brought to this research. My thanks goes to George McDuffy for the countless hours he has spent in acting as my research assistant and computer wizard.

I express my thanks to the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole for their support and assistance, and to the 32 Oklahoma probation and parole officers who gave of their time to participate in this study. I Also wish to thank Bob Dibble of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections-Employee Training and Development Center for the time and energy that he has expanded in detangling all the red tape and keeping this study progressing.

Warm thanks go to my family for always making me laugh and never allowing me to take myself too seriously, and especially to my daughter Kara for keeping the world new to me.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this study to my late mother and father, Nancy and O.B. Martin whose strength, determination, and love will see me through "a lifetime".

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem	2
Purpose	3
Objectives	3
Need for the Study	3
Assumptions	3
Limitations.....	4
Definition of Terms	4
Scope of Study	6
Overview of the Study	6
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
Distinctions Between Probation and Parole	8
Definition of Probation	8
Benefits of Probation	8
Limitations of Probation	9
Approaches in Probation	10
Definition of Parole	11
Benefits of Parole	12
Functions of Parole.....	12
Limitations of Parole	13
Views of Probation and Parole	13
Probation and Parole Officers	14
Job Duties of Probation and Parole Officers	14
Roles of Probation and Parole Officers	14
Offender Supervision.....	15
Quality of Interaction.....	17
Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole.....	18
Purpose and Function of Oklahoma Probation and Parole.....	18
Responsibility of Probation and Parole	18
Requirements of Probation and Parole Officers.....	18
Training.....	18
Job Duties of Oklahoma Probation and Parole Officers.....	19
Responsibilities of Oklahoma Probation and Parole Officers.....	19
Supervision of Offenders	20
Oklahoma Probation and Parole Performance Instrument	20
Summary	21
III. METHODOLOGY.....	22
Population and Sampling.....	22
Instrument Development	22
Procedures and Analysis.....	23
Statistics	23
Expected Results.....	24
Qualitative Instruments.....	24

Chapter	Page
Validity	25
Reliability	26
Focus Groups	26
Purpose of Focus Groups.....	27
History of Focus Groups.....	27
Focus Group Process.....	28
IV. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	30
Demographic Data About The Subjects.....	30
Responses To The Three Focus Group Questions From Each Group.....	33
Responses To The Three Focus Group Questions Across The Groups.....	45
Limitations.....	60
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	62
Summary Of Study	62
Conclusions	63
Recommendations For Practice	64
Recommendations For Further Research.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	67
APPENDICES	71
APPENDIX A--PROBATION AND PAROLE RISK CLASSIFICATION	72
APPENDIX B--PROBATION AND PAROLE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS	74
APPENDIX C--CASE PERFORMANCE REVIEW FORM	77
APPENDIX D--LETTER OF CRITERIA FOR OFFICER SELECTION	80
APPENDIX E--FOCUS GROUP AGENDA.....	83
APPENDIX F--CONSENT LETTER.....	86
APPENDIX G--ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR THE OKLAHOMA DIVISION OF PROBATION AND PAROLE.....	87
APPENDIX H--INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER.....	89

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Demographic Information For Focus Group One.....	31
II. Demographic Information For Focus Group Two.....	31
III. Demographic Information For Focus Group Three.....	32
IV. Demographic Information For Focus Group Four.....	32
V. Responses From Group One To Question One.....	34
VI. Responses From Group Two To Question One.....	35
VII. Responses From Group Three To Question One.....	36
VIII. Responses From Group Four To Question One.....	38
IX. Responses From Group One To Question Two.....	40
X. Responses From Group Two To Question Two.....	40
XI. Responses From Group Three To Question Two.....	41
XII. Responses From Group Four To Question Two.....	41
XIII. Responses From Group One To Question Three.....	43
XIV. Responses From Group Two To Question Three.....	43
XV. Responses From Group Three To Question Three.....	44
XVI. Responses From Group Four To Question Three.....	44
XVII. Responses From Three Groups To Question One.....	46
XVIII. Responses From Two Groups To Question One.....	48
XIX. Responses From Four Groups To Question Two.....	50
XX. Responses From Three Groups To Question Two.....	52
XXI. Responses From Two Groups To Question Two.....	54
XXII. Responses From Four Groups To Question Three.....	56

Table	Page
XXIII. Responses From Three Groups To Question Three	58
XXIV. Responses From Two Groups To Question Three	59

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to US Department of Justice (1997) statistics, three fourths of all adult criminal offenders under some form of correctional supervision were on probation or parole. The number of adult men and women on probation and parole at the end of 1996 was 3.9 million, an increase of about 128,000 during that year. In December 1996, more than 3,180,000 adults were under federal, state, or local jurisdiction on probation, and 705,000 adults were on parole.

Seventy-five percent of probationers and parolees maintained regular contact with a supervisory agency. Most of the rest of the other offenders (seven percent of probationers and ten percent of parolees) were not required to have regular contact. Those remaining (ten percent of probationers and seven percent of parolees) had failed to report and could not be located.

Statistics cited from the Bureau of Justice show that 55% of all offenders on probation in 1996 had committed a felony. Twenty-six percent were on probation for a misdemeanor, and the other 19% were on probation for driving under the influence or for other offenses. During 1996, more than 1.5 million probationers and 400,000 parolees were released from supervision. Only two thirds of those on probation and less than 50% of those on parole had successfully met the conditions of their supervision.

According to Cohen & Gobert (1983), sentences of probation and parole create several problems. First, the possibility of probation or parole may reduce the deterrent effect of criminal punishment. Second, probation and parole may also serve the retributive function of insufficient punishment if the public perceives the actual sentences served to be unseemingly permissive. This may lead to a loss in the sense of impartiality by the criminal justice system. Furthermore, probation and parole result in the release of individuals who have committed crimes in the past, with the potential danger that they may do so again in the future. In 1991, 45% of state prisoners were persons who, at the time that they committed their offense, were under either probation or parole. Based on the offense that brought them to prison, the 112,000 probationers committed at least 6,400 murders, 7,400 rapes, 10,400 assaults, and 17,000 robberies while under supervision

in the community an average of 17 months. Based on the offense that brought parolees back to prison, 156,000 offenders committed at least 6,800 murders, 7,400 rapes, 10,400 assaults, and 17,000 robberies while under supervision in the community in an average of 13 months (U. S. Department of Justice statistics, 1997).

Probation and parole administrative districts are facing a shift in the way offenders are supervised on probation and parole. Reduction in employment options, unrealistic expectations for becoming successful in a society that demands education and social skills, and the lack of probation and parole service resources to manage offenders have begun to force changes in the way offenders are supervised in the community (Allen, Eskridge, Latessa, & Vito, 1985).

Both government responses to criminals and society's attitudes toward them have shifted from the desire for rehabilitation to the desire for punishment. And, according to Evens (1994), the prison population has more than tripled since the 1970's. Plus, the lack of unavailable bed space to accommodate offenders has reached crisis proportions. Therefore, "The focus on public safety has highlighted probation and parole, and how offenders are supervised in the community" (Evens, 1994, p.100).

A shift is desired in the evaluation of the performance of probation and parole officers with respect to client supervision. The evaluation currently employed in the Oklahoma Probation and Parole Division provides quantitative data but not qualitative feedback. Assessment of the interactions between the probation and parole officer and the client is important for facilitating positive outcomes for individuals on probation and parole. A current dilemma faced by probation and parole personnel is the lack of agreement about how officers should supervise the offenders in the field. (See Appendix G for Organizational Chart of Probation and Parole.)

Problem

The problem which led to this study was the lack of agreement among probation and parole personnel about the desirable characteristics of the supervision of offenders.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe probation and parole officer perceptions about the desirable characteristics of offender supervision.

Research Objectives

To accomplish the purpose of the study, the following research objectives were developed:

- (1) to review literature related to the assessment of probation and parole officer supervision of offenders;
- (2) to gather opinions from probation and parole managers about offender supervision expectations, about focus group participant selection, and about the questions for participants; and
- (3) to gather perceptions from probation and parole officers about offender supervision.

Need for the Study

This study is needed because little research has been conducted about how experienced probation and parole officers believe that they should supervise their clients. The study has value in providing feedback to management for the improvement of probation and parole officer supervision of offenders. The study can also provide information to human resource management, which is useful for the development of training to support the improvement of probation and parole officer supervision of offenders.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for the purpose of this study.

1. Probation and parole officers were truthful in giving their responses to focus group questions.
2. Probation and parole officers could identify desirable characteristics of the supervision of probationers and parolees.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to senior probation and parole officers within the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole. The junior probation and parole officers were not included in the study because of the lack of experiences with probation and parole policy and the supervision of offenders.
2. The study did not result in a specific appraisal instrument of probation and parole officer supervision.
3. The study was requested by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections and the researcher was provided a contract by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections.
4. Inconsistent communication with participants about their involvement in the study may have compromised their level of open participation.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined for their used in this study:

Alternative Sentencing - the assignment of punishment for crime to something other than an traditional term in jail or prison. The purposes are the same as for traditional sentencing, including retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation, in addition to rehabilitation (Oklahoma Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual, 1997).

Content Analysis - the qualitative examination of information for the purpose of establishing constructs, themes, and patterns that can describe and explain the phenomenon studied.

Deputy Director for Probation and Parole - a policy and procedure maker who directly reports to the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections concerning issues in probation and parole.

District Supervisor - the highest-ranking authority within a district responsible for implementation of policies and procedures for all probation and parole offices in his region.

Felony - one of several crimes, such as murder, rape, or burglary, which is punishable by a more stringent sentence than is given for a misdemeanor. (American Heritage College

Dictionary, 1993).

Focus Group - a group interview data collection method which identifies a set of responses from a group of six to ten people familiar with the topic, service, experience, or product being discussed. Also, a group to be interviewed about a subject of common interest to all members.

Incarceration - the placement of an offender in physical confinement, such as jail or prison (Oklahoma Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual, 1997).

In-Service Training - employee professional development programs which respond to (1) statutory or departmentally determined annual training requirements and (2) advanced or specialized training needs for developing and enhancing existing skills as determined from an assessment of the training participant prison (Oklahoma Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual, 1997).

Misdemeanor - one of several crimes which violate state laws and which carry a maximum prison sentence up to one year (Oklahoma Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual, 1997).

Parole - the release of an offender from a penal or correctional institution under the continued custody of the state through the supervision of a parole officer after having served a portion of the sentence (Oklahoma Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual, 1997).

Parolee - an offender who has been incarcerated but has been released under supervision prior to serving the full sentence (Champion, 1990).

Policies and Procedures - a system of coordinated manuals of administrative rules established by the Oklahoma Board of Corrections which governs the department and its programs and facilities.

Pre-Service Training - formal introductory training provided at an academy site for new employees. The training is oriented toward specific learning objectives designed to familiarize new employees with the history, philosophy, structure, and values of the organization (Oklahoma Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual, 1997).

Probation - a non-incarcerate conditional sentence in the community imposed by a court as punishment for a criminal offenses (Champion, 1990).

Probationer - a convicted or adjudicated offender who is ordered to serve a non-incarcerate conditional sentence in the community in lieu of incarceration (Champion, 1990).

Reliability - the characteristic of an instrument producing the same results when applied to the same and similar subjects at different times or by different researchers.

Team Supervisor - a person who supervises a team of probation and parole officers, implements operations, and conducts offender supervision audits.

Validity - the characteristic of an instrument which measures the phenomenon it claims to be measuring.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study includes participation by:

- (1) probation and parole managers from all eight probation and parole districts in the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, and
- (2) selected senior probation and parole officers who directly supervise probationers and parolees.

Overview of the Study

Chapter One introduced the study by giving background about the increase of probationers and parolees in the nation, followed by statements of the problem, purpose, and the research objectives. The need for the study was briefly stated, followed by the assumptions of the study, its limitations, the definitions of terms, and the scope.

Chapter Two presents a literature review and begins with the distinctions between probation and parole. Following are topics about probation and parole officers. Within the discussion of probation and parole officers, the subtopics of officer duties, offender supervision, and the roles of officers are examined. The topic of the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole is discussed. The review of literature concludes with a summary.

Chapter Three is a description of the methodology and the instrument development. The chapter also describes the population of the study. In addition, a description of the sample selection is provided. It also provides a description of the analysis used in the study. Qualitative instrumentation is discussed, with subtopics about instruments used in evaluating probation and parole officer performance, and a discussion of validation and reliability for qualitative instruments. Chapter Three concludes with a discussion on focus groups and the expected outcome of the study.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study after completion of the instrument. Chapter Five presents a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research and for professional practice.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of literature related to this study. The review focuses on the probation and parole officer role in supervising offenders. The chapter addresses probation and parole, probation and parole officers, and the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole.

Distinctions Between Probation and Parole

Sentences of probation and parole permit offenders to remain in or return to society after being found guilty of a crime. Programs and services provided by probation and parole may appear to be similar. However, there are major differences between the two in terms of the legal status of the offender as well as the types of rehabilitation offered (Cohn, 1994).

Definition of Probation

Probation was an outgrowth of the rise of the rehabilitation model in the United States. One of its aims was to minimize the number of offenders in the correctional system. Probation consists of a sentence not involving confinement that demands special conditions. It retains authority in the sentencing court to modify the conditions of the sentence or to re-sentence the offender if conditions are violated (Allen et al., 1985). Probation consists of correctional objectives of rehabilitation and reintegration within the society. These are benefits for the offender and for society as well. Champion (1990) saw the primary aim of probation to be the chance for offenders to make amends to society for past criminal behaviors by refraining from future criminal activities. Debates pertaining to incarceration asserts that incarceration is not an effective deterrent to crime. On the other hand, Champion argued that the incentive for not committing future crimes is the avoidance of prison or jail.

Benefits of Probation

Numerous authorities espouse the values of probation (Champion, 1990; Clear &

Latessa, 1993; Allen, Latessa, & Vito, 1985). Carter (1976) identifies the following benefits:

- (1) Probation keeps offenders from being in a criminal environment.
- (2) Probation prevents offenders from being hindered by "criminal" labels.
- (3) Probation allows offenders to integrate into society better.
- (4) Probation is a practical way to deal with overcrowding (p.213).

He further noted that reintegration into society is a key benefit of probation. This can be seen as a strategy that allows the offender to deal with problems in a social context.

Evens (1994) listed five reasons for which probation should be the desirable route in appropriate cases.

1. It maximizes the liberty of the individual while at the same time vindicating the authority of the law and effectively protecting the public from further violations of the law;
2. It affirmatively promotes the rehabilitation of the offender by continuing normal community contacts;
3. It avoids the negative and frequently stultifying effects of confinement that often severely and unnecessarily complicate the reintegration of the offender into the community;
4. It greatly reduces the financial cost to the public treasury of an effective correctional system; and
5. It minimizes the impact of the conviction upon innocent dependents of the offender (p.3).

Limitations of Probation

Probation has been viewed as a negative service in corrections. According to Klein (1988), publicized research in the 1970's showed that community based corrections did not work. The lack of faith in the rehabilitation of offenders through probation was further shown when the Rand Corporation in 1985 released information from research pertaining to probation. The research stated that, of the serious offenders placed on probation, 51% were re-convicted of

crimes. However, the corporation stated that those re-convicted had received almost no supervision while on probation due to the increase of caseloads and to budget cutbacks within the probation services.

Approaches in Probation

The Medical Model

Champion pointed out two distinct models that have been used in dealing with offenders of crime: (1) the medical model and (2) the justice model. The medical model has been identified as the treatment model because it considers the behavior of criminal offenders to be an illness that can be cured. The implementation of this with probationers includes the following phases.

1. The offender is investigated by the probation officer.
2. The social history of the offender is examined, and the reasons for committing the crime may be determined.
3. Conditions for probation are specified.
4. The offender is placed on probation.
5. The offender meets with the probation officer periodically and reviews progress.
6. The offender completes the term of probation successfully (p.18).

The medical model allows the probationer to receive various types of clinical treatments not offered through incarceration. Since rehabilitation is a strong correctional objective, the treatment model is an appropriate vehicle. Evens (1994) stated, "A widely held orientation to the genesis of illegal behavior tends to view much of it as related to mental, emotional, and behavioral maladjustment. These problems, like physical maladies, can be diagnosed, treated, and cured" (p.51).

The Justice Model

The justice model is a complete contrast to the medical model. As stated by Klein (1988), this model as used in probation emphasizes fairness for all offenders as well as punishments that coincide with the crime. He claimed that the justice model is designed to

provide a sentence to offenders on probation and places less emphasis on the rehabilitative aspect of probation. The emphasis of this model is on restitution and community work sentence. The specific terms are determined by the seriousness of the offense. Clear and O'Leary (1983) asserted that probation has the potential to serve sentencing if the probation forces compliance and legal restrictions upon freedom.

McAnny, Thompson, and Fogel, as cited by Champion (1990), proposed the following about the justice model as applied to probation.

1. Probation is a penal sanction whose main characteristic is punitive.
2. Probation should be a sentence, not a substitute for a real sentence threatened after future offenses.
3. Probation should be a part of a single graduated range of penal sanctions available for all levels of crime except for the most serious felonies.
4. The severity of the probation sentence should be determined by the quality and quantity of conditions (e.g., restitution or community sentence).
5. Neither the length of term nor any condition should be subject to change during the sentence, unless the conditions are violated.
6. Conditions should be justified in terms of the seriousness of offense.
7. When conditions are violated, courts should assess additional penalties through "show cause" hearings (p.19).

Both models offer ways in which to correct certain problems that are recurring within the probation process. Depending on the probation office, correctional facility, and judge, one model can be chosen over the other. They can also be blended, which makes for more difficult supervision of offenders by probation officers. Probation has been defined to be a sanction imposed by the courts as punishment for a crime. Parole, although associated with probation, is distinct in many ways.

Definition of Parole

Kay & Vedder (1973) defined parole as the release of an individual before the term of

imprisonment to which he has been sentenced is carried out. Under parole, the offender must comply with one or more conditions imposed by the parole board, depending on the severity of the offense. Allen et.al (1985) listed the four traditional functions of parole. They are:

- (1) the selection and placement of offenders on parole;
- (2) the supervision, help, and control of offenders within the confines of society;
- (3) the revocation of parole if offenders do not meet the conditions set forth in the parole agreement; and
- (4) the release of parolees from supervision once it is no longer necessary or when the term has been served (p. 26).

Benefits of Parole

Like probation, parole was established for the purpose of rehabilitating criminal offenders as well as placing them back into society to become productive citizens. The offender who is placed on parole is considered capable by the parole board of succeeding (Dillingham, Montgomery, & Tabor, 1990). Literature in the field of corrections has asserted that the primary justification of parole is that it allows for rehabilitation (Cohen & Gobert, 1983; Clear & O'Leary, 1983; Klein, 1988). This is achieved by allowing a supervised and structured return to total freedom. It is seen as a positive transitional change. However, Champion (1990) stated that the main function of parole was to be a continuation of the offender's sentence under different levels of supervision by the parole officer. The supervision ends either when the sentence has been fully served or when the offender has violated the terms and conditions of parole and is re-incarcerated. Probation and parole literature contends that the greatest distinction between probation and parole is that parole is earned while probation is awarded (Cohen & Gobert 1983; Clear & O'Leary 1983; Klein 1988).

Functions of Parole

Two functions of parole include (1) manifest functions and (2) latent functions. Manifest functions, according to Champion (1990), are recognized or apparent to all. He further stated,

"Two important manifest functions of parole are (1) to reintegrate parolees into society, and (2) to control and/or deter crime" (p. 129). Latent functions are as important as manifest but less visible. Three purposes of latent functions are:

- (1) to reduce overcrowding;
- (2) to correct sentencing dissimilarities; and
- (3) to protect society (Champion, 1990).

Carney, as cited by Dillingham et.al, listed four key elements of parole: (1) conditional release; (2) under supervision; (3) social reintegration; and (4) revocation. Parole is earned through preconditions that must be attained by the offender before the parole board allows release. One such condition is in serving the minimal time in confinement. Other factors used in determining whether parole is earned include looking at the offender's criminal record, and physical, emotional, and moral rehabilitation (Cohen & Gobert, 1983).

Limitations of Parole

It has been argued that parole may de-emphasize the seriousness of the crime committed by an offender as well as make a mockery out of the justice system. The American Correctional Association's Field Manual (1981) asserted, "Probation and parole exist in a fragile balance with sentencing practices and institutional systems and any restatement of purpose in scope of responsibility must consider the simultaneous compensating adjustments for the others to maintain the balance" (p.15).

Views of Probation and Parole

Carter (1976) contended that a majority of authorities have responded negatively to probation and parole. Critics have asserted that probation and parole neither rehabilitates offenders nor meets the needs of society to deter criminal behavior. Others, as noted by Klein (1988), believe that the probation and parole selection process is not consistent across all offenders. He further noted that it is inconsistent based on the different criteria used by the determining committees. A difference of criteria may be based on the offender's age, gender,

physical health, character, or personality. According to Cohen & Gobert (1983), "Inconsistency results because the science of human behavior does not provide sufficiently definite answers to the question of how to identify which offenders will prove successful candidates for rehabilitation" (p.23). The processes, conditions, and projected outcomes of probation and parole are issues which probation and parole officers must contend with in order for these programs to become effective.

Probation and Parole Officers

Job Duties of Probation and Parole Officers

The probation and parole officer is trained to deal with both types of offenders. Bright (1981), as cited by Champion, stated that in the long list of reasons for job dissatisfaction by probation and parole officers one of the most important was the lack of clear guidelines for job performance. There are specific duties required to being a probation and parole officer. The officers assess the treatment plans which have been ordered by the courts. The review of pre-sentence reports and interviews of the probationer are also required in order to identify the needs of the offender. Probation officers must determine which cases receive the highest priority (American Correctional Association, 1994). Probation officers must implement a supervision plan that consists of one of three functions of probation: monitoring, enforcement, or service provision. The monitoring of offenders consists of unannounced home visits, verifying employment or enrollment in school. The enforcement consists of holding offenders accountable when the rules or conditions of probation or parole are not kept. In such case, sanctions may be imposed or probation and parole revoked. Service provided for offenders can range from drug treatment to family counseling depending on the needs of the offenders being supervised. The main duties of parole officers consist of controlling and assisting the offender. The parole officer mediates between the parolee and community institutions.

Roles of Probation and Parole Officers

In reviewing the quality of interaction between an officer and offender, it is helpful to look

at the role typologies of officers. Cohen & Gobert (1983) discussed three types of probation and parole officers. A fourth type was later added. They are: (1) the punitive officer; (2) the protective officer; (3) the welfare officer; and (4) the passive officer.

The punitive officer is seen as an officer of morality, whose job is to reform the offender into a law-abiding citizen through means of threats and coercion. This type of officer is suspicious of individuals placed on probation and parole and emphasizes control. The protective officer takes care of both offender and the community, shifting between them. The main goal of the welfare officer is to improve the welfare of the offender. The passive officer pretends to have concern but only puts forth the minimal effort required. Individuals may choose to supervise using one or a combination of types. However, the district in which the officer resides will have a strong influence upon how an officer supervises offenders.

Offender Supervision

Offender supervision is left to the discretion of the probation and parole officer. However, the way in which an officer supervises may affect the amount and quality of change in the offender. Officers should maintain contact with social service agencies as well as with clinics for information about substance abuse and mental health.

Offender supervision also includes involvement in the probationer's or parolee's life.

Clear, Clear and Burrell (1988) stated,

One task that falls to the probation officer is how to determine what to do with the probationers under supervision. Some direction is provided by the court order placing the offender on probation. Still more guidance is provided by the goals of the probation agency and by its policies and procedures. Even so, a substantial amount of discretion is left in deciding how to supervise the probationer (p. 185).

The probation and parole officer monitors the offender at work or school. Unannounced home visits occur on a regular basis. The American Correctional Association (1981) found that the monitoring of offender progress in the community is essential for the probation and parole officer. This takes the form of contacting employees, family, and friends. The probation and parole officers function as both helpers and supervisors. According to Allen et al. (1985), probation and parole officers are faced with the difficulty of getting their clients to share their

problems and needs. They further stated that the probation and parole officer had a dual role of maintaining supervision as well as treating (counseling) the offender. What is important to note is that the officer is left to decide which role to undertake with each offender.

According to Byrd, Decomo, and Lake (1988), the Operations Manual for the Maryland Division of Probation and Parole states,

the basic purpose for offender supervision is to assist clients in successfully reintegrating into the community through counseling, casework, special programs, and community resources, and to place appropriate controls on each client's conduct through effective and efficient supervision practices, in order to reduce further criminal activity (p. 6).

This philosophy emerged from a case management system developed by the Wisconsin Division of Corrections in 1975.

This system provides a standardized framework for probation and parole officers to identify their client needs for services and to plan supervisory activities for offenders most likely to pose a threat to the community.

Byrd, DeComo, and Lake (1988) identified the primary elements of Case Management Systems.

1. Initial intake and case assignments: Basic information is obtained on the offender and the case is opened, assigned, and forwarded to the supervising probation and parole officer.
2. Case classification: A risk/need assessment scale is used to determine the offenders' risk of continued criminal activity and the need for stabilizing services (See Appendix A and B).
3. Client management classification: A structured interview generated information about the offender's attitude, background, behavior during the interview, and the probation and parole officer's impression. Based on the score the person is placed in a specific group.
4. Case supervision plan: The probation and parole officer develops a written supervision plan outlining special conditions if any; identified problems/needs; objectives in each problem and need area; and a plan of action (p. 113).

According to the Oklahoma Department of Correction Employee Training and Development Center 1997 Pre-Service Course Catalog, probation and parole officers use the Case Management Systems in order to supervise offenders. They are trained in such areas as suicide prevention, investigations, communications, client management classification, and substance abuse.

Quality of Interaction

Fulton, Stichman, Travis, & Latessa (1997) found that some officers were comfortable using one type of role over the others in dealing with offenders. Yet, other officers were able to adapt to whichever role benefited the offender in the long run. Clear & Latessa (1993) showed that the philosophies of the organization are important to the type of role a probation and parole officer exhibits toward the offender being supervised. They suggested that the organizational statement emphasizing rehabilitation might be the only assurance that officers perform quality interaction tasks. Kay & Vender (1971) contended,

The value of probationary supervision and frequently, therefore, the success or failure of probation depends primarily on the nature and quality of the personal relationship established between the probation officer and the probationer. The type of personal relationship varies considerably according to the basic motivation and attitudes of the probation officer, and according to the skill and insight with which the relationship is used for specific purposes (p. 75).

However, the successful completion of probation or parole is ultimately the responsibility of the offender through a willingness to meet the terms and conditions set forth.

Travis (1985) argued that the evaluation of the effectiveness of supervision must consider both, assistance and control. Assistance is identified as helping activities or services offered. Statutes do not stipulate the frequency of reports or contacts with the offender and, as such, are left to the discretion of the officer (Cohen & Gobert, 1983). However, Oklahoma assessments require a minimal number of contacts with offenders based on offender risk classification. An offender who has been determined as having a high risk of recidivism will have more contact with an officer on a monthly basis than an offender who is determined to be a low risk. According to Champion, some officers felt that the offender being assisted perceived the interaction as antagonistic and controlling. The quality of interaction with offenders is one of many aspects of

offender supervision by probation and parole officers.

Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole

Purpose and Function of Oklahoma Probation and Parole

According to the Oklahoma Department of Correction's Policy and Operations Manual (1997),

It is the policy of the Oklahoma Board of Corrections that the purpose and function of probation and parole is to facilitate the continual social adjustment of persons to prevent further criminal acts and to insure the successful compliance with the terms and conditions of probation and parole as determined by the Oklahoma Probation and Parole Board and the Governor or community supervision as determined by the Department of Corrections (p.1).

Responsibility of Probation and Parole

The Oklahoma division of Probation and Parole is responsible to protect the public, employees, and offenders placed in their supervision through effective utilization of supervision, intervention and law enforcement strategies (Oklahoma Department of Correction's Policy and Operations Manual).

Requirements of Probation and Parole Officers

According to Oklahoma policy, probation and parole officers must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited university. In addition, the officer must have at least 24 hours in any combination of psychology, sociology, social work, criminology, education, criminal justice administration, penology, or police science.

Training

Probation and parole officers in the Oklahoma Department of Corrections undergo pre-service training. Pre-service training is available to all staff within the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, from correctional officers to secretaries. Individuals are trained in operating procedures as well as ethics, communication, and orientation to corrections. Specialized in-

service training is required for probation and parole officers within the Oklahoma Department of Corrections because they encounter violent and non-violent offenders. They must be able to respond with more than one problem solving approach. While some states separate probation and parole, Oklahoma combines the two functions. This combination came about from the Oklahoma Correctional Act established in 1967. The purpose was to enable statewide uniformity and consistency between the two functions within the Oklahoma Correctional System.

Job Duties Of Oklahoma Probation and Parole Officers

According to the Oklahoma Department of Correction's Probation and Parole Officer Manual (1973), parole officer duties include but are not limited to:

- (1) interviewing inmates requesting parole and conditional release information;
- (2) placing individuals before the Correctional Review Committee who are eligible by service, conduct, and accomplishments or referred by the director or deputy directors;
- (3) preparing and forwarding lists of eligible parolees to members of the Correctional Review Committee;
- (4) sitting with members of the Correctional Review Committee;
- (5) providing assistance to inmates seeking employment; and
- (6) maintaining recall files for inmates who through the Board's action are to be recalled at a later date (p.11).

Responsibilities of Oklahoma Probation and Parole Officers

According to Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual, 1997), clear guidelines of officer responsibilities are listed:

- (1) providing guidance and assistance that assist offenders in complying with the rules and conditions of supervision;
- (2) assisting offenders in obtaining resources or providing services that may enhance their social skills and behavior;

- (3) notifying appropriate authorities of offender's violations of rules and conditions.
- (4) conducting investigations as ordered by the courts, the Probation and Parole Board, or the Department of Corrections;
- (5) regaining custody and/or arresting of offenders under the supervision of the Department of Corrections or others as authorized by law; and
- (6) ensuring that information provided by the public or other law enforcement entities regarding violations of rules of supervision of offenders is effectively addressed.

Supervision of Offenders

Oklahoma probation and parole officers provide the type and amount of supervision to offenders in accordance with four different levels of supervision in which an offender can be placed. The four levels are: (1) low; (2) medium; (3) high; and (4) intensive.

A low-level offender means that the offender has scored low risk and low needs or has progressed in supervision to the point of eliminating the needs.

Low level requires one face to face contact with offender every 60 days.

A moderate level offender means that the offender has scored a moderate risk and needs. Moderate level requires one face to face contact with offender every month.

A high-level offender means that the offender scores high risk or has a need area that scores high. High level requires three face to face contacts per month. Of those three, one must be at the offender's residence.

An offender who has a pending criminal charge or arrest will have a case conference with a team supervisor for possible placement on intensive level. Intensive level requires one face to face contact per week. Two contacts per month must be made in the offender's residence.

Oklahoma Probation and Parole Performance Instrument

The district supervisor ensures that the caseloads of probation and parole officers show paper work completed and submitted about offender supervision to monitor compliance of operations and the programs of community supervision. Audits address case performances from

probation and parole officers (Oklahoma Department of Correction Policy & Operations Manual, 1997). The results are used in the following ways:

- (1) to assist with the development of management skills;
- (2) to conduct employee service evaluations;
- (3) to carry out promotional reviews;
- (4) to administer progressive discipline; and
- (5) to provide a database for statistical information.

The case performance review form is arranged in a yes/no format. (See Appendix C). This format restricts feedback to the sum of responses to closed-ended questions. The questions asked do not assess the quality of interaction between the probation and parole officer and the offender. The form retrieves information pertaining to report materials submitted. The audit measures the officer in terms of the completion of tasks.

The assessment instrument currently used to measure the probation and parole officer's performance counts the number of times a task is completed or the time frame, yet it does not look at the quality in performing the task. The Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole has identified a need to measure quality interaction in the hope that it will show the characteristics of effective supervision or ineffective supervision of offenders.

Summary

The review of literature showed contradictions and discrepancies in how probationers and parolees should be supervised. Chapter Three is a description of the methodology and the instrument development. It also describes the population of the study. In addition, a description of the sample selection is provided. It also presents a description of the analysis used in the study. This chapter discusses the circumstances under which a qualitative instrument should be used and examines the reliability and validity of instruments. It also suggests when, where, and how focus groups should be conducted.

Chapter Four presents the results of the study. Chapter Five provides a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research and for professional practice.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify probation and parole officer perceptions about the desirable characteristics of offender supervision. This chapter presents the methodology utilized in the study by discussing the population and sampling, instrument development, procedures and analysis, statistics, and expected results.

Population and Sampling

The population encompassed selected senior probation and parole officers in the eight probation and parole districts within the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Junior probation and parole officers, who generally have fewer than three years of experience were not used because of their lack of experience. Senior officers were selected by district supervisors based on their overall effectiveness and their ability to integrate the medical and justice models of offender supervision. Upon selection, each officer was notified of the purpose, time, and date of the focus group. A sample of eight senior probation and parole officers was drawn across all eight probation and parole districts to participate in the pilot study and check the reliability of the instrument and the group process. Three focus groups were conducted with eight officers in each group. All eight districts were represented in the focus groups.

Instrument Development

The instrument was a focus group interview agenda content validated by a panel of experts comprised of all eight district supervisors from the eight Oklahoma probation and parole districts. The state's deputy director in charge of probation and parole was included in the instrument validation. The criteria for selecting probation and parole officers were sent to all eight district supervisors prior to content validation. (See Appendix D.) A meeting was held with the panel of experts in which they were asked to view the questions and offer suggestions for clarification, additions, and/or deletions. Input from the panel of experts was utilized to clarify the

instrument prior to using it with the subjects in the study.

It was tested for reliability with a pilot group of probation and parole officers. Slight modifications were made after the pilot test. They were judged sufficiently minor as to allow the inclusion of the pilot group findings in the study. The focus group instrument included perceptual questions and open ended questions about client supervision by the probation and parole officers. (See Appendix E.)

Procedures and Analysis

The focus groups were conducted in a neutral location outside of the participants' work environments. A conference room at the Employee Training and Development Center in Stillwater, Oklahoma was used to conduct the focus groups.

All focus group participants were asked to read and sign a consent form presented at the time of the interview. The four groups were provided with information about the purpose of the study and the utilization of the results. The groups were given guidelines about participation to follow during the focus group session. The participants were audio taped. The participants were asked general open-ended questions. Follow-up questions were asked when either clarification or more information was needed. All statements were transcribed.

Qualitative analysis of the transcripts from the focus groups was conducted. This consisted of sorting the participant statements in response to each question in order to identify recurrent and common themes and ideas. Each of the group statements was sorted separately, and themes were identified. A summary statement was developed for each identified theme. After individual group findings were recorded, the findings for all four groups were combined and sorted according to themes. The frequency and similarity of comments were noted and grouped accordingly.

Statistics

Frequency counts, statistics, and percentages were selected as the most appropriate procedures for this study. The results of the analysis helped to form the basis for identifying

criteria for the qualitative assessment of probation and parole officer supervision of probationers and parolees.

Expected Results

The study was expected to identify probation and parole officer perceptions about the desirable characteristics of offender supervision. The study was also expected to provide feedback to the human resource division important for the development of training that supports the improvement of probation and parole offender supervision. In addition, the study was expected to provide information to management essential for the improvement of offender supervision by probation and parole officers.

Qualitative Instruments

There are a variety of qualitative research methods available for use in organizational research. Qualitative methods are techniques used for describing, decoding, and translating meaning, rather than measuring the frequency of certain naturally occurring phenomena in the social world (Sassell & Symon, 1994). The purpose of qualitative research is to understand people's interpretations. The focus is holistic in that a total or complete picture is sought. Qualitative research allows flexibility while looking at emerging themes within the research.

Greenbaum (1988) proposed that qualitative research place emphasis on subjective evaluations with less emphasis on empirical measurements. He further noted that smaller samples are used in qualitative research for several reasons. One reason is that qualitative research situations tend to be longer because of the focus on more open-ended questions. Second, qualitative research is not intended to be projected to a larger population. Qualitative research produces greater depth in information and a greater understanding of the whole situation being studied. According to Swanson, Watkins, and Marsick (1997), "When combined with quantitative data, qualitative data can help to elaborate on the meaning of statistical findings. They also add depth and detail to findings" (p. 93). According to Lincoln & Guba (1989), qualitative research is naturalistic in that investigations are conducted under natural conditions.

Key (1997) suggested that the orientation of qualitative research is discovery because theories and hypotheses evolve from data as collected. Qualitative research methods are ideally suited to examining the world from different points of view (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Taylor & Bogdan further stated, "Qualitative research is designed to observe people in their everyday lives, listen to them talk about what is on their minds, and look at the documents they produce" (p. 9). The result is first hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through operational definitions or rating scales.

Kirk and Miller (1986) have argued that qualitative research has been viewed as negative for the wrong reasons, and the problem is further complicated by non qualitative researchers labeling qualitative research as descriptive, by which they believe that it is non-quantitative. Kirk and Miller (1986) stated, "Descriptive work can be either qualitative or quantitative (e.g., descriptive statistics)" (p. 71). They believed more importantly that if a research category is qualitative or not, if it is in some way hypothesis testing, then the work has a potential to modify a paradigm directly. If not, the assembly of baseline information makes a difference and makes an "indirect contribution to the evolution of science" (p. 71).

Validity

"The validity of a measurement procedure concerns the extent to which it is actually a measure of the phenomenon we say we are measuring" (Emmerk & Barker, 1989; Bailey, 1994). Baily (1994) stated that an instrument in qualitative research is valid if it has adequately defined the concept being measured and whether the information being gathered about the concept is germane.

Cassell & Symon noted, "The rationale behind our use of the expert panel is to validate the approach" (p. 121). The researcher allows others to critique the research instrument in the developmental stage, this includes professional colleagues. The use of multiple viewpoints is not the only technique for ensuring validity in qualitative research.

Reliability

Reliability is associated with stability, consistency, predictability, and accuracy. It is the consistency with which a measuring instrument performs. To be reliable, the instrument must consistently measure the factors for which it was designed. However, Taylor & Bogdan argued, "It is not possible to achieve perfect reliability if we are to produce meaningful studies of the real world" (p.9). The more the responses of the people tested are indicative of the phenomenon of interest and no other unrelated occurrences, the more reliable an instrument is (Emmerk & Barker, 1989). One way in which reliability is checked is by giving a pilot test. This allows the respondents to be questioned as to the accuracy of content and familiarity of topic (Maraski & Zimmerman, 1995). According to Kirk and Miller (1986), the success of a research effort at achieving objectivity is measured in terms of its validity and reliability. They further noted that qualitative research is in every sense of the word as scientific as physics, and has as much need for reliability and validity as any other type of research. Kirk and Miller noted,

Qualitative researchers can no longer afford to beg the issue of reliability. While the forte of field research will always lie in its capacity to sort out the validity of propositions, its results will (reasonably) go ignored minus attention to reliability. For reliability to be calculated, it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to document his or her procedure. This must be accomplished at such a level of abstraction that the loci of decisions internal to the research project are made apparent. The curious public (or peer reviewer or funding source) deserves to know exactly how the qualitative researcher prepares him- or herself for the endeavor, and how data is collected and analyzed (p. 72).

Focus Groups

A focus group is a group interview in which trends and patterns in perceptions are identified. It is a process designed to obtain information in specific areas. Participants should be selected who have special expertise or knowledge about the problem identified. They may have characteristics similar to or different from other focus group members, but the relationship among members should be clarified before selection (Morgan, 1998). The focus group is facilitated by a researcher whose job it is to keep the discussion focused on the issues presented.

Purpose of Focus Groups

Zemke (1988) stated, "The objective of a focus group is to acquire a set of responses from a group of people familiar with the topic, service, experience, or product being discussed" (p. 85). Focus groups are one of the most commonly used method of qualitative research (Morgan, 1998). Greenbaum (1988) noted that the dynamics of the group process generate useful information for several reasons. First, people are more likely to disclose information when discussion takes place in a group setting. Morgan (1998) states, "Inhibition is relaxed in group settings, and the more natural environment prompts increased candor by respondents" (p.45). Second, the stimulation from other group members will generate willingness toward disclosing information. Krueger (1988) claimed that the comments from group members would spark new ideas and thoughts in other participants. And third, "The group dynamics provide insights into how peer pressure plays a role in the degree of overall acceptance of a concept, product, or idea presented" (p. 19). The focus group method is qualitative rather than quantitative in that it lacks numerical recording. Billson (1995) pointed out that focus groups have become respected qualitative instruments for various types of research. For these reasons, focus groups have been utilized by sociologists conducting basic research and by government agencies conducting program evaluations.

History of Focus Groups

Focus groups became popular in the 1980's. However, the concept of focus groups appeared in the 1946 article, "The Focussed Interview", published in the *American Journal of Sociology* by Merton and Kendall. Focus groups emerged from sociological theories in terms of group interaction as well as data collection. In the last few years focus groups have been incorporated in the corporate and public domain in order to study attitudes, values, and the impact of programs or services (Billson, 1995).

According to Morgan (1998), the history of focus groups fell into three periods: (1) Social Science; (2) Marketing; and (3) Research. Social scientists began utilizing various types of group interviews in the 1920's. Focus groups were used in the development of survey

instruments.

According to Morgan (1998), marketers used focus groups from the 1950's through the 1980's as a way of doing research. During this period, market researchers used the term "group depth interviews" to refer to focus groups. The purpose for this type of interview was to uncover unconscious behaviors. During this time applied social research frequently used focus groups as well.

Evaluation research began to make use of focus groups. Richard Krueger investigated the use of focus groups within the stages of evaluation. Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research (Krueger, 1989) provided readers with knowledge of when and how to do focus groups. Academic researchers began incorporating focus groups into their research. Oryx (1995) highlighted the steps in the focus group process. These steps are: (1) identifying the problem; (2) determining the number of focus group sessions; (3) selecting the participants; (4) preparing for the focus group session; (5) conducting the session; (6) analyzing the session; and (7) preparing the report (p. 104).

Focus Group Process

Preparing the focus group session entails such tasks as ensuring a comfortable room for the sessions and one that is neutral in location. Kramlinger and Zemke (1988) stated that video or audio tapes should be checked to ensure proper functioning before the scheduled meetings. They further stated that there should be enough blank tape for three hours or more for each session. Oryx (1995) asserted that an assistant is needed to run the equipment and take notes during the session. Oryx further stated that the assistant should have a copy of the session guidelines.

The actual conduct of a focus group should begin with a general explanation of what will take place. According to Templeton (1987), the focus group session should be kept flowing freely. Templeton also stated that the facilitator should clarify what the participant is saying by paraphrasing the response.

Krueger (1988) suggested that reviewing the session requires sitting down and writing

the key points made in the session and looking at problems that developed. It also requires transcribing the facilitator's notes and the assistant's notes. The audio and/or video tape is also transcribed during this step. Content analysis is one way of analyzing the data. It consists of examining each statement made during the session and finding the emerging categories, themes, or frequencies of words used. The report consists of the facilitator's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The first section presents demographic data about the subjects of the study. The second section presents the findings about the three focus group questions from each of the four groups. The third section presents the themes common to two or more groups. The final section presents the researchers observations.

Thirty-two subjects were part of this study. Each of the eight probation and parole districts within Oklahoma was represented by one officer in each focus group session.

As indicated in Chapter III, subjects were selected by all eight district supervisors within the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole. The selection was based on certain criteria: senior rank as a probation and parole officer, overall effectiveness in supervision, and the ability to integrate the medical and justice models of offender supervision.

The focus group participants were members of one of the four groups, each comprised of eight officers who represented their eight state districts. They were asked the three questions validated by all eight district supervisors of the Oklahoma Probation and Parole Division.

Demographic Data About The Subjects

Four senior probation and parole officers were selected by each of the eight district supervisors. Tables I through IV demonstrate demographic information about the officers according to probation and parole district and specific community, number of years of experience as an officer, gender, and race.

Eighty-one percent of participants were white and 19% were African-American. Fifty-six percent were male and 44% percent female. Fifty-nine percent supervised in rural districts, and 41% supervised in urban areas. The average number of years as a probation and parole officer across all four groups was nine years, and the experience ranged from three to 17 years.

TABLE I

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR FOCUS GROUP ONE

PROBATION AND PAROLE DISTRICT	NO. OF YEARS AS PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICER	GENDER	RACE
District One – Sapulpa	10	Female	White
District Two – Tulsa	11	Male	White
District Three – Chandler	9	Male	White
District Four – Anadarko	7	Female	White
District Five – Stillwater	17	Male	White
District Six – Purcell	10	Female	White
District Seven – Oklahoma City	8	Male	African American
District Eight – Oklahoma City	15	Female	African American

TABLE II

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR FOCUS GROUP TWO

PROBATION AND PAROLE DISTRICT	NO. OF YEARS AS PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICER	GENDER	RACE
District One – Okemah	9	Male	White
District Two – Tulsa	8	Male	White
District Three – Durant	5	Male	White
District Four – Altus	9	Female	White
District Five – El Reno	13	Male	White
District Six – Oklahoma City	3	Male	White
District Seven – Oklahoma City	8	Male	White
District Eight – Oklahoma City	8	Female	White

TABLE III

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR FOCUS GROUP THREE

PROBATION AND PAROLE DISTRICT	NO. OF YEARS AS PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICER	GENDER	RACE
District One – Pryor	16	Female	White
District Two – Tulsa	7	Male	White
District Three – Ada	13	Female	White
District Four – Ardmore	3	Male	African American
District Five – Woodward	11	Male	White
District Six – Oklahoma City	3	Male	White
District Seven – Oklahoma City	10	Female	White
District Eight – Oklahoma City	7	Female	White

TABLE IV

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR FOCUS GROUP FOUR

PROBATION AND PAROLE DISTRICT	NO. OF YEARS AS PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICER	GENDER	RACE
District One – Muskogee	9	Male	African American
District Two – Tulsa	9	Female	White
District Three – Poteau	8	Male	White
District Fourr – Anadarko	4	Male	White
District Five – Enid	11	Female	White
District Six – Norman	6	Female	White
District Seven – Oklahoma City	9	Female	African American
District Eight – Oklahoma City	8	Male	African American

Responses To The Three Focus Group Questions From Each Group

Question One: How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?

The responses were presented in the following tables by the number of themes which emerged, the summary statements, and the number of participant responses within each theme.

In Table V, 88% of Group One respondents stated that probation and parole officers should alternately apply the justice model or the medical model during supervision, based on the needs of clients. Eighty-eight percent of respondents also stated that officers should be allowed to provide as much quality effort in supervising low-risk offenders as in supervising high-risk offenders.

In Table VI, 63% of Group Two respondents indicated that officers should have a more valid offender need assessment tool in order to provide better supervision to offenders. Sixty-three percent of respondents also indicated that officers need more support from the court system in order to provide better supervision to offenders.

In Table VII, 63% of Group Three respondents said that an emphasis on file work means less field supervision of offenders. Fifty percent said that officers need a valid offender need assessment tool in order to provide better supervision.

TABLE V

RESPONSES FROM GROUP ONE TO QUESTION ONE

How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Probation and parole officers should alternately apply the justice model or the medical model based on the needs of the client.	7
2	Officers should be allowed to provide as much quality effort in supervising low-risk offenders as in supervising high-risk offenders.	7
3	The system sets up supervised offenders for failure by placing monetary demands on them.	6
4	The Oklahoma Department of Corrections emphasizes the justice model in probation and parole supervision.	3
5	Probation and parole offender rehabilitation programs are ineffective.	1
6	Urban probation and parole districts have greater support from outside agencies than do rural probation and parole districts.	1
7	Officers should be more justice model oriented toward supervised offenders.	1
8	Offenders are supervised according to the severity or lack of severity of their criminal records.	1
9	Sub Question: Are you allowed the flexibility to use different approaches in offender supervision by team supervisors?	3-YES

TABLE VI

RESPONSES FROM GROUP TWO TO QUESTION ONE

How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers should have a more valid offender need assessment tool in order to provide better supervision to offenders.	5
2	Officers need more support from the court system in order to provide better supervision to offenders.	5
3	The Oklahoma Department of Corrections should place less emphasis on file work in order for officers to provide better supervision to offenders.	3
4	Offenders should have more responsibility placed on them in meeting the terms of their probation or parole.	1
5	Officers should be medical model oriented toward clients.	1
6	Officers should alternately apply the justice model or medical model based on the needs of the offender.	1
7	Oklahoma probation and parole officers should supervise offenders using the same set of standards.	1
8	Sub Question: Do team supervisors allow you the flexibility in the way you supervise offenders?	3-N0

TABLE VII

RESPONSES FROM GROUP THREE TO QUESTION ONE

How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	The emphasis on file work means less field supervision of offenders.	5
2	Officers need a valid offender need assessment tool in order to provide better supervision.	4
3	Officers should devote as much effort in supervising low-risk offenders as in supervising high-risk offenders.	4
4	Officers need more support from team supervisors in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	3
5	Officers need more support from agencies outside of the Department of Corrections in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	3
6	Officers need to be given more flexibility in supervising offenders by team supervisors.	3
7	Officers need to be given smaller caseloads in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	2
8	Officers should supervise all offenders fairly.	1
9	Officers lack the power and authority to supervise offenders in the manner the public perceives that offenders are supervised.	1
10	Officers should be medical model oriented in offender supervision.	1

In Table VIII, 75% of Group Four officers stated that they need more support from the court system in order to provide better supervision to offenders. Sixty-three percent responded that officers need more support from the community by giving the community a clearer understanding of an officer's role and limitations.

TABLE VIII

RESPONSES FROM GROUP FOUR TO QUESTION ONE

How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers need more support from the court system in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	6
2	Officers need more support from the community through a clearer understanding of an officer's role and limitations.	5
3	Officers should be given smaller caseloads in order to better supervise offenders.	2
4	The Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole should communicate consistency throughout the state about how offenders should be supervised.	2
5	Officers should be given the opportunity to supervise low-risk offenders at the same level as high-risk offenders.	2
6	Officers need to have more referral programs at their disposal.	2
7	Officers need more support from team supervisors in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	1
8	Officers need more support from agencies outside of the Department of Corrections in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	1
9	Officers should provide stricter supervision of offenders.	1
10	Officers need to have a valid offender need assessment tool in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	1
11	Sub Question: Are you allowed by supervisors to use the medical and justice model in supervising offenders?	5-NO

Question Two: How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole?

The responses were presented in the following tables by the number of themes which emerged, the summary statements, and the number of participant responses within each theme presented.

In Table IX, 75% of Group One respondents stated that the amount of effort used in supervising offenders should be assessed. Fifty percent stated that officers should not be assessed in areas that may be beyond their control, such as client responsibilities. Another 50% stated that the amount of time spent in supervising offenders should be assessed.

In Table X, 50% of Group Two respondents indicated that probation and parole officers should be evaluated by the same set of standards throughout all eight districts. Thirty-six percent indicated that officers should not be evaluated on file work completed

In Table XI, 50% of Group Three respondents said that officers should not be assessed in areas that may be beyond their control, such as client responsibilities.

In Table XII, 100% of Group Four stated that officers should not be evaluated on the amount of file work completed. Sixty-three percent stated that officers should be evaluated on the amount of effort used in supervising offenders.

TABLE IX

RESPONSES FROM GROUP ONE TO QUESTION TWO

How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	The amount of effort in supervising offenders should be assessed.	6
2	Officers should not be assessed in areas that may be beyond their control such as client responsibilities.	4
3	The amount of time spent in supervising offenders should be evaluated.	4
4	Officers should be given positive feedback during evaluations from team supervisors when appropriate.	3
5	Sub Question: Should the audits measure qualitative supervision of offenders?	2-YES

TABLE X

RESPONSES FROM GROUP TWO TO QUESTION TWO

How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Department of probation and Parole?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	Probation and parole officers should be evaluated by the same set of standards throughout all eight districts.	4
2	Officers should not be evaluated on file work completed.	3
3	Officers should be evaluated on the amount of effort used in supervising offenders.	3
4	Evaluation content hinders the amount of flexibility an officer has in offender supervision.	1
5	Officers should be provided with positive feedback during evaluations from team supervisors when appropriate.	1

TABLE XI

RESPONSES FROM GROUP THREE TO QUESTION TWO

How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Department of probation and Parole?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers should not be assessed in areas that may be beyond their control, such as client responsibilities.	4
2	The amount of effort in supervising offenders should be evaluated.	3
3	The amount of time in supervising offenders should be evaluated.	3
4	Sub Question: Are the same criteria for evaluating officer supervision applied in all eight districts?	3-NO

TABLE XII

RESPONSES FROM GROUP FOUR TO QUESTION TWO

How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Department of probation and Parole?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers should not be evaluated on the amount of file work completed.	8
2	Officers should be evaluated on the amount of effort used in supervising offenders.	5
3	Officers should be evaluated consistently throughout all eight districts.	4
4	Officers should receive more positive feedback from team supervisors during evaluations when appropriate.	4
5	Supervisors should be held made accountable in how an officer is evaluated.	2
6	The officer evaluation forms should not require an officer to list supervision weaknesses.	1
7	Evaluations should acknowledge an officer's ability to balance the justice model with the medical model in offender supervision.	1

Question Three: How should probation and parole officers be trained in order to provide such supervision?

The responses were presented in the following tables by the number of themes which emerged, the summary statements, and the number of participant responses within each theme.

In Table XIII, 88% of Group One respondents stated that pre-service training directly contradicts the way in which paperwork is done within each district. Fifty percent stated that pre-service training should be replaced with CD-ROM training within each district.

In Table XIV, 63% of Group Two respondents indicated that officers should be provided with on-the-job training within each district. Another 63% indicated that pre-service training contradicts how each district requires paperwork to be done. Fifty percent indicated that officers should be trained by a revised manual to be used consistently in each district.

In Table XV, 88% of Group Three respondents said that officer training should be offered within each district due to the inconsistency of pre-service training.

In Table XVI, 50% of the Group Four participants stated that officer training should take place within each district due to the inconsistency of pre-service training.

TABLE XIII

RESPONSES FROM GROUP ONE TO QUESTION THREE

How should probation and parole officers be trained to provide such supervision?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	Pre-Service training directly contradicts the way in which file work is done within each district.	7
2	Pre-Service training should be replaced with CD-ROM training within each district.	4
3	Training should consist of more abuse interventions.	3
4	Training should be specialized to meet individual supervisory deficiencies in officers.	3
5	Officers should be trained within their districts.	2
6	Officers should be trained in stress management.	1
7	Annual refresher courses in firearms should be offered annually.	1
8	Officers should be trained in using computer networks.	1

TABLE XIV

RESPONSES FROM GROUP TWO TO QUESTION THREE

How should probation and parole officers be trained to provide such supervision?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers should be provided with on -the-job training within each district.	5
2	Pre-Service training contradicts how each district requires paperwork to be done.	5
3	Officers should be trained by a revised manual to be used consistently by each district.	4
4	Officers should be offered training in abuse interventions.	3
5	Officers should be provided with more computer training.	2
6	Officers should be trained in time management.	1

TABLE XV

RESPONSES FROM GROUP THREE TO QUESTION THREE

How should probation and parole officers be trained to provide such supervision?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	Pre-service training contradicts how paper work is done within each district.	7
2	Officers should be provided with refresher courses in self-defense annually.	3
3	New probation and parole officers should be trained as soon as they are hired.	2

TABLE XVI

RESPONSES FROM GROUP FOUR TO QUESTION THREE

How should probation and parole officers be trained to provide such supervision?		
Theme No.	Summary Statements	No. of Participant Responses
1	Pre-service training contradicts how paper work is done within each district.	4
2	Officers should be provided with refresher courses in self-defense annually.	3
3	Officers should be provided with basic computer training.	2
4	Officers should be trained in computer networking.	1

Responses To The Three Focus Group Questions Across The Groups

Question One: How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?

The responses were presented in the following tables by the number of themes which emerged, the summary statements, and the number of participant responses within each theme. A few salient quotes are presented which clarify the summary statements of the points of the greatest consensus. Greatest number of consensus were points identified by a greater number of participants across three or four of the focus groups. Each response quoted is taken from a theme identified across three of the four groups.

In Table XVII, responses are shown across three groups. Twenty-five percent of all respondents stated that officers need to be allowed more flexibility from team supervisors in how they choose to supervise offenders. The following quotes by participants describe the difficulties they find in trying to provide desirable interactions with offenders due to the restraints from their supervisors.

"Most of these supervisors are moody so you are constantly changing the way you supervise because of it. So your supervisor can really have too much control on how you supervise offenders".

"Our district had a change in philosophy. We hear a lot that we are over-supervising offenders and that we are expecting too much from them. We are not allowed any flexibility in how we supervise".

"The issues on which our supervisors want us to supervise offenders is insignificant. They are totally worthless. We should supervise as we see fit".

"I think a lot of supervisors have lost touch with what we do. I think that they have been away from the field for too long".

TABLE XVII

RESPONSES FROM THREE GROUPS TO QUESTION ONE

QUESTION # 1		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers need to be allowed more flexibility from team supervisors in how they choose to supervise offenders.	8
2	Officers should use the medical model in supervising offenders.	4

In Table XVIII, responses are shown across two groups. Thirty-five percent of all participants stated that officers should be given the opportunity to supervise low-risk offenders as high-risk offenders. Twenty-five percent stated that the Department of Corrections should place less emphasis on file work involving offender supervision.

TABLE XVIII

RESPONSES FROM TWO GROUPS TO QUESTION ONE

QUESTION # 1		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers should be given the opportunity to supervise low-risk offenders at the same level as high-risk offenders.	11
2	The Department of Corrections should place less emphasis on file work involving offender supervision.	8
3	Officers need a valid offender need assessment tool in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	5
4	Officers need more support from team supervisors in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	4
5	Officers should be given smaller caseloads in order to better serve the needs of offenders.	4
6	Officers need more support from agencies outside of the Department of Corrections in order to provide better supervision of offenders.	4
7	Officers need more resources available to them for offender referral programs.	3
8	The Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole should communicate consistency throughout the state about how offenders should be supervised.	3
9	Officers should supervise all offenders with fairness.	3
10	Officers should place more responsibilities on offenders.	2

Question Two: How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole?

The responses were presented in the following tables by the number of themes which emerged, the summary statements, and the number of participant responses within each theme. A few salient quotes are presented which clarify the summary statements of points of greatest consensus. Each response quoted is taken from a theme identified across three or four of the groups.

In Table XIX, a response is shown across four groups. Fifty-three percent of all participants said that officers should be evaluated on the amount of effort used in supervising offenders. The following quotes by participants describe the frustrations that they endure due to the lack of information provided on the audits by which their supervision is judged.

"The audits need to be revised to reflect the amount of effort put forth. You may try 14 times to make an unannounced home visit but the audits do not measure that".

"There is no credit on the audits for all the effort an officer uses to supervise because the audits do not request that information".

"It should be based on what we do and what we attempt to do. It isn't across the board and it's unfair".

"Sometimes on the attempts you will get more information than you will ever get otherwise just by talking with the spouses, friends, employers, but you never get credit for those things on the audits".

TABLE XIX

RESPONSE FROM FOUR GROUPS TO QUESTION TWO

QUESTION # 2		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers should be evaluated on the amount of effort used in supervising offenders.	17

In Table XX, responses are shown across three groups. Thirty-four percent of all participants indicated that there should be a statewide consistency in the evaluation of officer supervision. The following quotes by participants describe the contradictions that probation and parole officers face when being evaluated on their supervision of offenders.

"Probation and parole officers are assessed with the same form from district to district, but as far as objectivity most are evaluated differently from district to district".

"It's true that one person may supervise 20 people and another supervise 100 people, yet they are evaluated the same".

"The audits are not consistent, some supervisors will give you credit for things that other supervisors would never allow credit for, there is no objectivity involved".

Thirty-one percent indicated that officers should be evaluated on the amount of time used in supervising offenders. The following quotes by participants describe the frustrations of not getting credit for extra time used in supervision.

"The more people, the more contacts, the more time that is taken up in supervising certain offenders is not considered on the audits. You don't get credit for it".

"The audits don't take into account the time you expand working in the community, contacting victims, and talking to the D.A.'s office".

"You can go into the field and run into the mother, the girlfriend, or the brother of your client and get a great deal of information from them. All of that time spent collecting information is never given credit on the audits".

TABLE XX

RESPONSES FROM THREE GROUPS TO QUESTION TWO

QUESTION # 2		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	There should be statewide consistency in the evaluation of officer supervision.	11
2	Officers should be evaluated on the amount of time used in supervising offenders.	10

In Table XXI, responses are shown across two groups. Twenty-two percent of all respondents stated that officers need positive feedback during evaluations from team supervisors when applicable.

TABLE XXI

RESPONSES FROM TWO GROUPS TO QUESTION TWO

QUESTION # 2		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers need positive feedback during evaluations from team supervisors when applicable.	7
2	Evaluations should assess the level of quality supervision given by an officer.	3

Question Three: How should probation and parole officers be trained in order to provide such supervision?

The responses were presented in the following tables by the number of themes which emerged, the summary statements, and the number of participant responses within each theme presented. A few salient quotes are presented which clarify the summary statements of the points of greatest consensus. Each response quoted is taken from a theme identified across three or four of the groups.

In Table XXII, responses are shown across four groups. Seventy-two percent of all respondents stated that pre-service training contradicts how paper work should be done within each district. The following quotes by participants describe added demands of having to retrain in the area of paper work after receiving training at pre-service.

"I don't think the new officers come back from pre-service any more valuable to the district than when they left. Pre-service only confuses them about how to do paper work".

"Pre-service training is a joke. It is a direct contradiction to how paper work is done within each district".

"You go to pre-service and learn the paper work, but then you have to go back to your district and forget everything you learned at pre-service and learn it the way your district wants you to learn it".

"The training that they give in Stillwater is the biggest joke in training that I have ever been to. It is contradictory to how paper work should be done by probation and parole officers".

TABLE XXII

RESPONSE FROM FOUR GROUPS TO QUESTION THREE

QUESTION # 3		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Pre-Service training contradicts how file work should be done within each district.	23

In Table XXIII, responses are shown across three groups. Twenty-two percent of all respondents indicated that officers should receive refresher courses annually in self-defense.

In Table XXIV, responses are shown across two groups. Twenty-two percent of all respondents said that each district should provide their officers with on- the-job training. Nineteen percent stated that officers should be trained to supervise offenders based on the medical model.

TABLE XXIII

RESPONSE FROM THREE GROUPS TO QUESTION THREE

QUESTION # 3		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Officers should receive refresher courses annually in the area of self-defense.	7

TABLE XXIV

RESPONSES FROM TWO GROUPS TO QUESTION THREE

QUESTION # 3		
Theme No.	Summary Statement	No. of Participant Responses
1	Each district should provide their officers with on-the-job training.	7
2	Officers should be trained to supervise offenders based on the medical model.	6
3	Officers should be trained in basic computer skills.	4
4	Officers should be trained to use computer networks.	2

Limitations

Anecdotal reports from participants suggest that information from focus group sessions may have been compromised by a failure to communicate to some of them the purpose for the focus groups and the conditions under which they were to be undertaken. The following items were specifically mentioned to the researcher and the research assistant during sessions.

1. In normal Department of Corrections procedures, the recording of oral statements is done under two conditions: (1) interviews or interrogations of possible [criminal] suspects; or (2) separation or termination interviews. Because of the failure to forward the information provided to the district supervisors and/or team supervisors, or to all participants, several of them feared that audiotaping of sessions meant that they were either the subject of a possible internal affairs investigation or might be terminated by the Department of Corrections.
2. A number of participants were upset because they were not informed that since they had to drive more than 100 miles to attend the interviews, arrangements had been made for them to arrive the night before and stay in the dormitory. Some of these participants had awakened at 3:00 AM in order to arrive at the scheduled 9:00 AM starting time of the interviews. (It was verified that the researcher had explicitly covered the information in her meeting with the district supervisors in the definition phase of this study. Additionally, this arrangement was explicitly stated in the confirming memos faxed to the district offices which may not have been forwarded to the participants in a timely manner.)
3. Some participants were apparently recalled from vacation in order to attend the interviews, in addition to not being informed of the reason for the focus group or being offered the option of an overnight stay. In one of these cases, extensive travel arrangements had been made at considerable personal expense to allow the parent of the participant to visit with the participant and the family during their approved vacation. (Scheduling this person to one of the other three sessions could have easily avoided this imposition.)

4. In spite of explicit instructions to district supervisors to select their best and most experienced probation and parole officers according to specific criteria, it appears that participant or team supervisors initiated substitution of unselected replacements had occurred after selection had been completed. Exchanges of selected officers among the sessions would not appear to affect the results, but the substitution of unselected officers for selected ones compromises the qualifications of groups.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and for further research.

Summary of Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the selected perceptions of Oklahoma probation and parole officers about the desirable characteristics of offender supervision. Thirty-two senior probation and parole officers participated in the study.

The instrument was a focus group agenda that was developed and content validated by a panel of experts within the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole. The panel was comprised of eight district supervisors and the deputy director of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

Four focus groups were conducted. Of the four, one was a pilot focus group used to check for the consistency and the reliability of the agenda and the process. Because only slight modifications were made as a result of the pilot test, their findings were included in the study.

The focus group agenda consisted of three general questions:

1. How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?
2. How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole?
3. How should probation and parole officers be trained in order to provide such supervision?

Transcripts of the focus group meetings were content analyzed to identify common themes within and across the groups. The themes which were communicated most broadly across the groups were the following in descending order of consensus.

1. Pre-Service training contradicts how paper work is required to be done within the various district.
2. Officers should be evaluated on the amount of effort used in supervising

offenders.

3. There should be statewide consistency in the evaluation of officer supervision.
4. Officers should be given the opportunity to supervise low-risk offenders at the same level as high-risk offenders.
5. Officers should be evaluated on the amount of time spent in supervising offenders.
6. Officers need to be allowed flexibility from team supervisors in how they choose to supervise offenders.
7. The Department of Corrections should place less emphasis on paper work involving offender supervision.

The review of literature was divided into two major areas: distinctions between probation and parole and probation and parole officers. The topics of officer duties, offender supervision, and the roles of officers were examined. The chapter concluded with a discussion about the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn:

1. Pre-service training is frustrating to probation and parole officers due to the inconsistency between the training and the expectations of the various probation and parole districts.
2. The amount of effort used in supervising offenders is not addressed on the audits.
3. There is an inconsistency among districts and within teams about how probation and parole officers should be evaluated by the audits.
4. Caseload per probation and parole officer is too high to allow meaningful client supervision, observation, and interaction / intervention. So-called lower risk offenders are monitored less closely than high-risk offenders are monitored. The result may be that low-risk offenders are accounting for increasingly higher levels of recidivism.

5. The amount of time used in supervising offenders is not addressed in the audits.
6. Officers are not given the flexibility they need from team supervisors in order to effectively supervise offenders based on their own perceptions of offender needs.
7. The Department of Corrections places more emphasis upon whether the reports have been filed then upon the quality of the actual supervision of offenders.
8. The failure by some district supervisors to adequately inform participants about all of the information provided to them pertaining to the focus groups may have negatively affected participant attitude and the outcome of the study.

Recommendations For Practice

The following recommendations for practice are offered:

1. The policies and procedures concerning report writing should be simplified and standardized throughout all eight probation and parole districts across Oklahoma. Pre-service training should reflect those standards and be made available to officers through the use of CD-ROM training.
2. All evaluations should address the same areas and include attempts made, geographical distances covered by officers, and amount of effort employed in supervising offenders.
3. All supervisors responsible for evaluating probation and parole officers should be required to document why an officer was given a high marking or low marking in a particular area.
4. Audits should reflect such issues as the amount of time and effort employed in offender supervision by allowing for open-ended questions and responses pertaining to those areas.
5. A system should be developed that provides the typical or average amount of time required for routine activities in offender supervision. These data, combined with reasonable allowances for travel time and a safety factor for unexpected emergencies, should enable the calculation of the actual expected workload. For

example, if these data indicate that the client case load and current departmental regulations/policies require 53,416 hours of work in a month and there are only 300 probation and parole officers or 48,000 man hours, then it becomes obvious that not all of the work can be done. Additional officers would need to be hired or lower priority work would need to be eliminated.

6. Changes in the way an officer is supervising an offender should only proceed on written authorization with documentation detailing the reasons for the change. This will help avoid momentary decisions and repeated switching among several alternative ways of doing things.
7. A computer program should be developed to generate a personalized case plan from a series of probation and parole officer responses to a series of screen prompts, questions, or menu selections. Standardized documents could be entered into the final document based on the responses from the probation and parole officer. This plan could be automatically included in the client's master file in the local office. It could then be transmitted electronically to the central data-collection point in Oklahoma City as an overnight batch process. This would reduce the amount of time officers spend doing paper work instead of actual field work.
8. The Oklahoma Department of Corrections should immediately implement (or contract with an Internet provider) a departmental wide Intranet to link all officers and employees electronically.
9. Accountability for supervision must begin and be modeled from the top. Supervisors of probation and parole officers must make themselves accountable in writing for officer rating variations; for changes in directions about offender supervision; and for deviations in views about paperwork before implementing such accountability from officers for offender supervision, or no such implementation will be effective. Likewise, supervisors of officers must display more respect and consideration of the needs of officers than was indicated by the

failures of communication for the officer focus groups before they can expect the same from officers supervising offenders.

Recommendations For Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are made.

1. A study needs to be conducted with the team supervisors in each probation and parole district in order to identify their perceptions about the desirable characteristics of offender supervision. The differences of perceptions between the officers and their team supervisors could then be compared and resolved. The findings could be compared to the findings from probation and parole officers to determine whether and where gaps exist in the perceptions. Ultimately, a better offender supervision evaluation form could result.
2. A similar study needs to be carried out with probation and parole district supervisors and upper management of the Department of Corrections to determine the perceptions they hold about desirable characteristics of offender supervision by probation and parole officers.
3. Probation and parole officers and team and district supervisors must be brought together in a forum which allows them to communicate openly about mutual expectations for performance and how to reach those expectations. Mutually negotiated job descriptions would be the outcome.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, H.E., Eskridge, C.W., Latessa, E.J., & Vito, G.F. (1985). Probation and parole in America. New York: Free Press.
- American Correctional Association: Field services. (March 1981). Maryland: American Correctional Association.
- Anderson, A. (1989). Interpreting data: A first course in statistics. New York: J.W Arrowsmith LTD.
- Bailey, K.D. (1994). Methods of social research. New York, New York: The Free Press.
- Billingsley, K., Golembrewski, K.B., & Yeager, S. (1994). Measurement change and persistence in human affairs: Type of change generated by OD designs. Organization Development Annual. 5, 71-82.
- Billson, J.M. (1995). Conducting focus groups. Washington: American Sociological Association.
- Byrd, J.W, DeComo, R.E, & Lake, L. (August 1988). An assessment of management systems for parole and probation services: A technical assistance report to the State of Maryland department of public safety and correctional services.
- Carter, R.M. (1976). Probation, parole, and community corrections. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Carsell, C., & Symon, G. (1994). Qualitative methods in organizational research: A practical guide. London: Sage Publications.
- Champion, D.J. (1990). Probation and parole in the United States. New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Clear, T.R., & O'Leary, V.O. (1983). Controlling the offender in the community. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Clear, T.R., & Latessa, E.J. (1993). Probation officer roles in intensive supervision: Surveillance versus treatment. Justice Quarterly, (10), 441-462.
- Clear, T.R., Clear, V.B., & Burnell, W.D. (1989). Offender assessment and evaluation: The pre-sentence investigation report. Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing Co.

- Cohen, N.P., & Gobert, J.G. (1983). The law of probation and parole. Colorado Springs: McGraw-Hill.
- Cohn, A.W. (1994). History of probation and parole: Field officer resource guide. Baltimore: United Press.
- Dillinger, S.D., Montgomery, R.H., & Tabor, R.W. (1990). Probation and parole in practice. Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing.
- Emmert, P., & Barker, L.L. (1989). Measurement of communication behavior. New York: Longman.
- Evens, D.J. (1994). Managing change in probation and parole: Field officer resource guide. Baltimore: United Book Press.
- Fulton, B., Latessa, E., Stichman, A., & Travis, L. (1997). Moderating probation and parole officer attitudes to achieve desired outcomes. The Prison Journal, 77 (3), 295-310.
- Greenbaum, T.L. (1988). The practical handbook and guide to focus group research. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books.
- Greenbaum, T.L. (1993). The handbook for focus group research. New York: Lexington Books.
- Hellstern, G.M., Levine, R.A., Solomon, M.A., & Wollman, H. (1981). Evaluation research and practice. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Harris, G.A. (1991). Tough customers: Counseling unwilling clients. Springfield, VA: Goodway Graphics.
- Kay, B.A. and Vedder, C.B. (1971). Probation and parole. Springfield: Charles C Thomas, Publisher.
- Kerlinger, F.N. (1986). Foundations of behavioral research (3rd ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.
- Key, J. P. (1997). Research design. Unpublished manuscript, Oklahoma State University at Stillwater.
- Kirk, J., & Miller, M.L. (1986). Reliability and validity in qualitative research. San Francisco: Sage Publications.

Klein, M.W. (1988). Alternative sentencing. New York: Sage Publications.

Kramlinger, T., & Zemke, R. (1988). Figuring things out: A trainer's guide to needs and task analysis. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

Krueger, R.A. (1988). Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Krueger, R.A. (1998). Developing questions for focus groups. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Krueger, R.A. (1998). Moderating focus groups. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Krueger, R.A. & King, J.A. (1998). Involving community members in focus groups. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Krueger, R.A. (1998). Analyzing and reporting focus group results. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lindlof, T.R. (1995). Qualitative communication research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Luxenburg, J. (1983). Probation casework. New York: University Press of America, Inc.

Muraski, M., & Zimmerman, D.E. (1995). The elements of information gathering: A guide for technical communicator, scientists, and engineers. Phoenix: Oryx Press.

Morgan, D.L. (1998). The focus group guidebook. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Morgan, D.L. (1998). Planning focus groups. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Oklahoma Department of Corrections Policy and Operations Manual. (1997). Audit Form: Case Opening and Authority Documents. Section A, OP-160501.

Oklahoma Department of Corrections Probation and Parole Officer's Field Manual. (1973).

Silverman, D. (1997). Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Swanson, B.L., Marsick, V.J., & Watkins, K.E. (1997). Qualitative research methods: Human Resource Development Research Handbook. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Taylor, S.J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). Introduction to qualitative research methods. New York, New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Templeton, J.F. (1987). Focus groups; A guide for marketing and advertising professionals. Chicago: Probus Publishing Company.

The American Heritage College Dictionary. (1993). Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Travis, L.F. (1985). Probation, parole, and community corrections: A reader. Prospect Hill, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

United States Department of Justice. (1997). Probation and parole statistics [On-line]. Available: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pandp.htm>

Walsh, A. (1992). Correctional assessment, casework, and counseling. Lanham, MD: American Correctional Association.

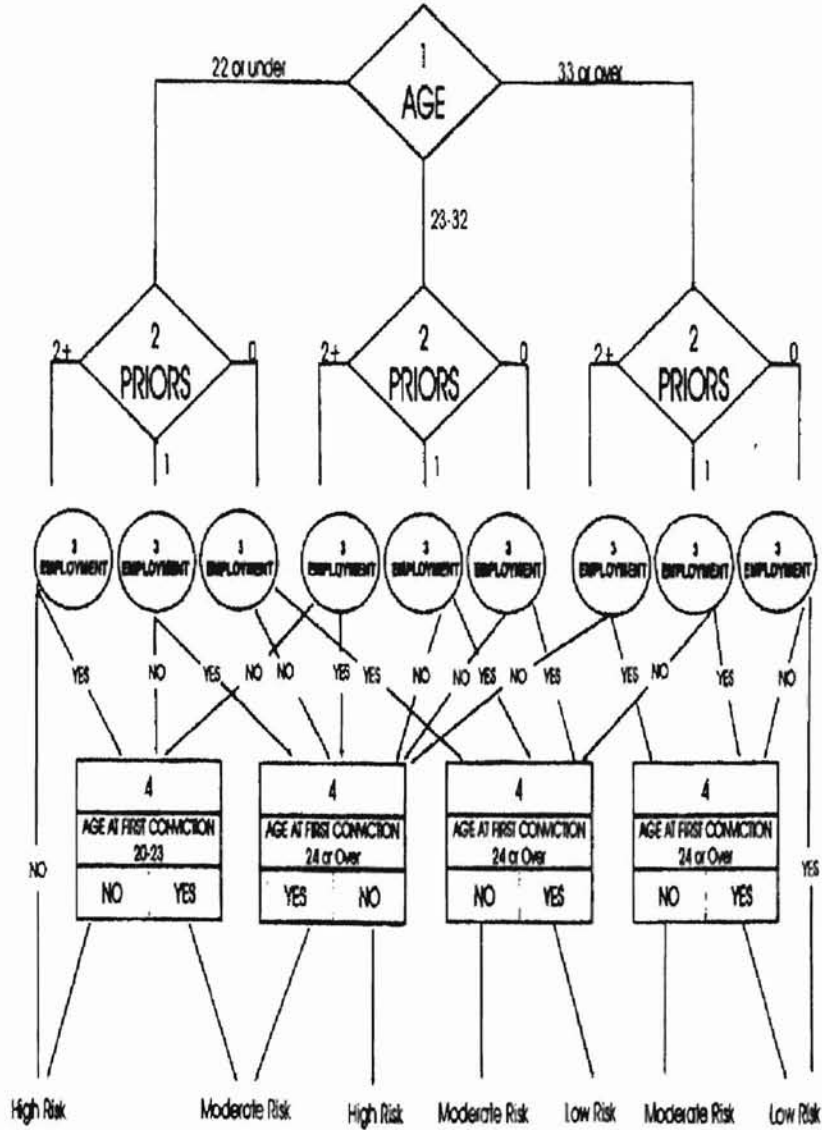
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
PROBATION AND PAROLE RISK CLASSIFICATION

PROBATION AND PAROLE RISK CLASSIFICATION

Offender: _____
 DOC#: _____
 Date: _____
 Officer: _____

Data Box	
1	Current Age <input type="checkbox"/> 22 or under <input type="checkbox"/> 23-32 <input type="checkbox"/> 33 or over
2	Prior Convictions (adult) <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> One <input type="checkbox"/> 2 or more
3	Was Offender Employed at Least 80% in last year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4	Age at First Conviction or Adjudication <input type="checkbox"/> 19 or under <input type="checkbox"/> 20-23 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 or older
Assigned Risk Level	



Reason for override: _____ Supervisor approval: _____

APPENDIX B
PROBATION AND PAROLE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS

**PROBATION AND PAROLE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS
ESTABLISHING BASELINE/RE-ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS**

Offender Name: _____ DOC# _____ DOB _____ Race/Sex _____

Case Type _____ CO/CRF# _____ Date Placed on Supervision _____

Date of Discharge _____ Supervising Officer _____ Badge# _____ District _____

Controlling Offense Category: (Circle Appropriate)

(1) Drug/Alcohol (2) Property (3) Violent (4) Sex (5) Forgery/Bogus Checks

Special Conditions: (Circle Appropriate)

(1) Community Service (2) Substance Abuse Counseling (3) Sex Offender counseling
(4) Education (5) County Jail Time (6) Financial Obligations (7) Victim Impact Panel
(8) Mental Health Counseling (9) Other

NEEDS CRITERIA

<p>Substance Abuse</p>	<p>Low -No evidence of drug usage in last 2 years. No use during commission of crime; no positive UA; no evidence of immediate family using intoxicants; family members report no evidence of offender using/abusing substances; offender denies substance use; officer has not observed use.</p> <p>Moderate- Evidence indicates usage within 6 months -last 24 months and/or there are life disruptions due to the offender's use. Use for some crime but not all: offender tested positive for one drug or admitted use of drug in lieu of UA; family members stated that offender previously had problem/experimented with drugs, but no evidence of use in 2 years; Offender admits use, but not within last 6 months; Staff member observes evidence of usage recently, but not currently under the influence; Siblings are current/former users.</p> <p>High- Evidence indicates usage currently/within past 6 months &/or the offender is unable to function due to usage. Offender was using a substance during all previous crimes; Offender tested positive for more than one drug; Family members stated abuse had been over an extended period of time and/or has occurred within the last 30 days; Offender admits to use within the past 6 months; Offender is seen by a staff member to be intoxicated; Mother, father, and /or spouse are currently using substances.</p>			
<p>Academic Vocational Employment</p>	<p>Low- Satisfactory skill level and employment and/or is a student, homemaker, or is disabled. Offender has completed high school, GED, or any higher education; Adequate skills to provide for means of support or offender has completed a training program.</p> <p>Moderate- Skill level could be improved, employment history indicates only 60 percent employment during past 12 months. Offender completed 9-12 grade; Currently enrolled in trade or vocational program.</p> <p>High- Offender is unskilled with employment under 60 percent during the past 12 months. Offender has completed 7th grade or below; no job skills can be identified or job skills do not provide a means of support.</p>			

Financial Conditions	<p>Low- Offender is self-sufficient for over 2 years and can pay all the legal and financial obligations. The offender has no outstanding legal financial obligations and a monthly income over \$1,300.</p> <p>Moderate- The offender has filed bankruptcy or utilized credit assistance programs, cannot meet all current obligations and/or has a current obligation that outweighs income. The offender should consider if there are outstanding financial debt from other court ordered obligations. The offender reports a monthly income between \$800 - \$1,300.</p> <p>High - No history of self-sufficiency and offender depends on others for financial support. The offender has past due financial debt fees/fines due in the current case. The offender reports a monthly income between \$0 -\$800.</p>			
Marital/ Family Relationships	<p>Low- Long-standing relationship and primarily a pro-social network of associates and maintains good relationship with family. The offender has 0-2 dependants who are in offender's custody. The offender has no co-defendants, no other family member having been arrested or convicted of criminal activities.</p> <p>Moderate- Offender has history of short-term relationships with little desire to develop long-term relationship, has a strained relationship with family and/or associates have history of criminal behavior. Offender has a history of marital separation, divorced, or widowed, 2-4 children in custody of offender and/or shared custody by another. Offender sometimes has co-defendants, and/or family members that have been convicted of criminal activities.</p> <p>High- Offender has no positive relationships with non-criminals, takes no responsibility for relationship with family, evidence that offender is gang member, family has criminal orientation. Offender has never been married; 4 or more children of which they have no custody; always has co-defendants; parents and/or siblings have been convicted of criminal activities.</p>			
Emotional Stability & Mental Stability	<p>Low - If there are no symptoms or evidence of emotional instability and the offender is able to function independently. If the offender denies any physical, sexual, or mental abuse; has no signs of mental or emotional health problems; has no arrest for misdemeanor or felony violent crimes; no report from family, self, or officer impression of instability or violence, and is able to function independently.</p> <p>Moderate - Offender exhibits some mental and emotional health problems but is not involved in treatment. Reports from family, self, or officer impressions of inappropriate anger management or needs some assistance towards self-sufficiency.</p> <p>High - Offender describes, acts of physical, sexual, or mental abuse; offender exhibits signs of mental or emotional problems, and is not involved in treatment. Reports from family, self, or officer of violent behavior or has limited ability toward self-sufficiency or independent living.</p>			

APPENDIX C
CASE PERFORMANCE REVIEW FORM

CASE PERFORMANCE REVIEW FORM

OFFENDER _____ DOC # _____ DATE _____

PPO/CCM/COIII _____ AUDITOR _____ DISTRICT _____

CHRONOLOGICAL: Audits for previous six months, excluding current month.

- Yes ___ No ___ 1. Do the chronological address the special rules and conditions/law enforcement contacts/program participation/referrals made? Are they legible? (If no, specify in comments below).
- Yes ___ No ___ 2. Is the *behavioral contract* addressed and is the case plan current? (If the *behavioral contract* is waived, check yes).
- Yes ___ No ___ 3. Are ordered financial obligations i.e.: court costs, fees, restitution, etc.) current as required, or are delinquencies addressed? (If not ordered, check yes).
- Yes ___ No ___ 4. Is present classification level timely and accurate, and are assessment and reassessment forms in the file as required?
- Yes ___ No ___ 5. Is offender contact, both field and personal as required by classification level, documented? If not, have attempts been made to gain compliance? If EMP, has the offender been enrolled as required?
- Yes ___ No ___ 6. Has the current supervising officer verified the residence as required? (if not required, check yes).
- Yes ___ No ___ 7. Is employment, school, or other income verified as required? (If not, have attempts to verify been documented)?
- Yes ___ No ___ 8. Are case reports present, timely, and accurate as required and are follow-up reports present? If ISC, have programs and conduct reports been submitted as required?

Yes ___ No ___ 9. Has urinalysis been conducted as required?

Yes ___ No ___ 10. Has the case been reviewed for advance
termination/unsupervised status? (If not eligible, check yes).

COMMENTS: _____

PPO RESPONSE: _____

Date corrections due: _____ Date corrections received: _____

Team Supervisor: _____ Officer: _____

APPENDIX D
LETTER OF CRITERIA FOR OFFICER SELECTION

April 16, 1998

TO: District Supervisors

FR: Gayla Fritts

SUBJ: SUPERVISION STUDY

I am pleased to inform that Ms. Waters invited me to attend the District Supervisor's Meeting on April 21, 1998 to discuss the offender supervision study. At that time, I will also present focus group questions for your review and feedback.

Please bring to the April 21 meeting, the names of Senior Probation and Parole Officers who will be selected to participate in focus groups.

Through my research, I have learned that probation and parole supervision is complicated and requires a wide range of skills to promote positive behaviors or to react to unacceptable behaviors exhibited by clients. It is my understanding that the more successful officers are those who have integrated all the necessary skills associated with supervision and control and are able to initiate or respond appropriately, drawing from a full range of options. Officer selection based on integration of a social and law enforcement view toward supervision of offenders is necessary. Officers who meet that description are the ones you will want to select to represent the input of your District. **We are interested in expert input, not necessarily representative opinions.** Additional selection criteria are as follows:

1. Senior probation and parole officers
2. Officers who have demonstrated competency as described in the above paragraph
3. Officers who are representative of the district based on gender and ethnicity.
4. Officer who are relatively effective in the supervision of offenders

You may use the attached flyer to notify officers of their selection. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have any additional questions. Phone: (405) 744-8684 Fax :(405) 744-8735
E- Mail fgayla@okstate.edu

Again, I thank you for your interest and assistance. I am certain the study will provide you with a great deal of meaningful information to base future supervision strategies and training.

**Oklahoma Department of Corrections
Probation and Parole Supervision-Focus Group**

Congratulations on your selection to participate in the Probation and Parole Supervision focus group scheduled for _____
Date

at the Employee Training and Development Center,
Stillwater, Oklahoma
from 9:00 to 12:00

For those traveling 100 or more miles
overnight accommodations can be arranged by calling:

**Gayla Fritts
between 12:00 PM and 4:00 PM
at (405) 744- 8684**

Please notify the chain of command if you are unable to attend so an alternate participant can be selected.

**Thank You !!
We are counting on your expert participation.**

APPENDIX E
FOCUS GROUP AGENDA

Focus Group Questions

1. How should offenders be supervised by probation and parole officers?
2. How should offender supervision be evaluated by the Oklahoma Division of Probation and Parole?
3. How should probation and parole officers be trained in order to provide such supervision?

APPENDIX F
CONSENT LETTER

Statement of Informed Consent

I, _____, agree to participate in this research project, "The perceptions of selected Oklahoma probation and parole officers about the desirable characteristics of offender supervision" that is being conducted by Gayla Fritts from Oklahoma State University who can be reached at (405) 744-5095. The Institutional Review Board contact person is Gay Clarkson who can be reached at 305 Whitehurst, OSU, Stillwater, 74078, (405) 744-5700.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to hold a series of group interviews to find out about the perceptions that are held by probation and parole officers about desirable characteristics of supervision of offenders. We will discuss general ideas about probation and parole officers and offenders; and perceptions as to what quality interactions with offenders should be.

I understand that the study involves a focus group interview that lasts three hours or less, which will be audiotaped and may be videotaped. I understand that the members of the research team will be the only ones reviewing the taped sessions and that upon completion of review the tapes will be destroyed. I understand that because of this study, there could be violations of my privacy. To prevent violations of my own or others' privacy, I have been asked not to talk about any of my own or others' private experiences that I would consider to be personal or revealing.

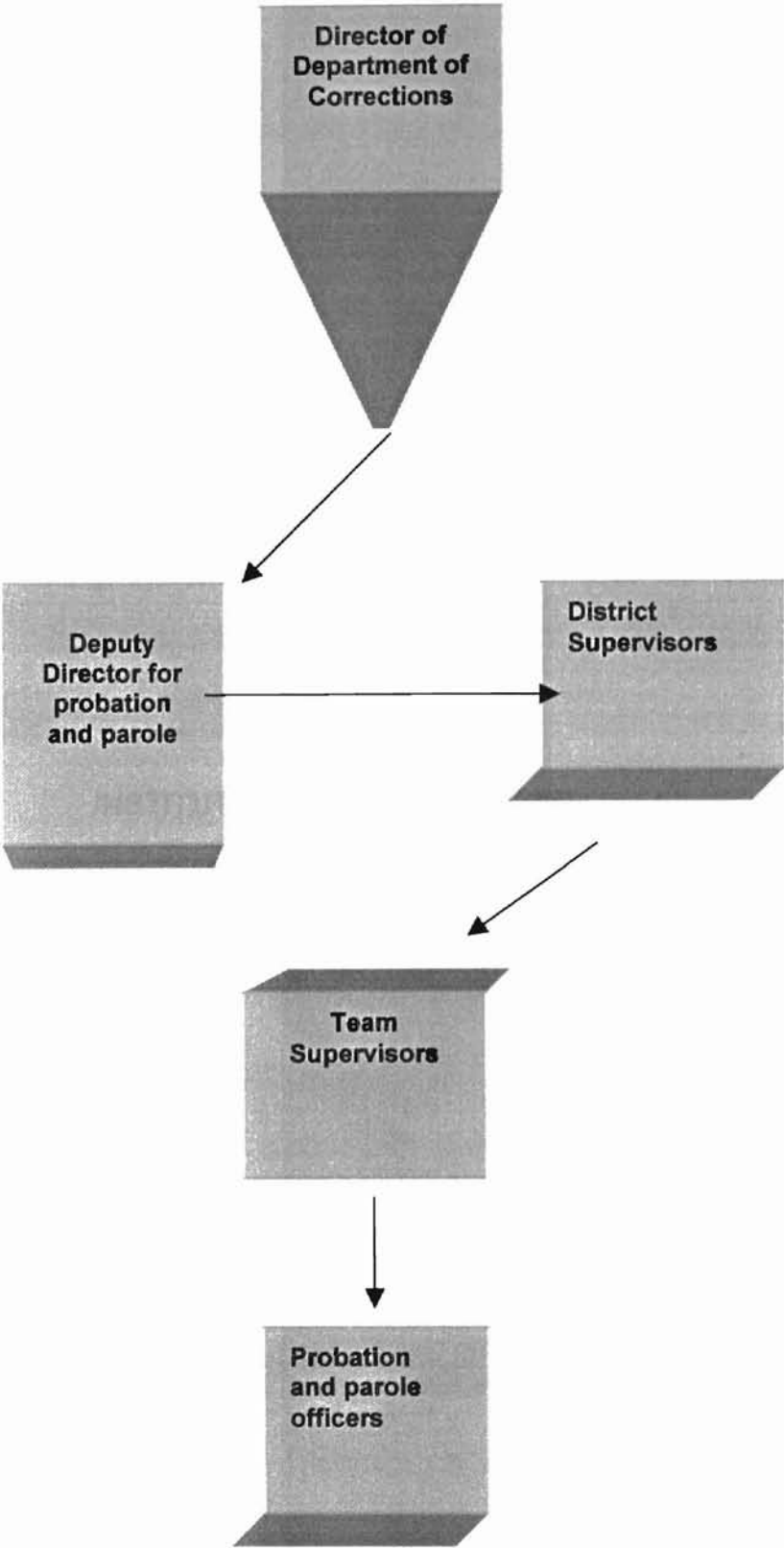
I also understand that I have an obligation to respect the privacy of the other members of the group by not disclosing any personal information that they share during our discussion. I understand that all the information that I give will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and that the names of all the people in the study will be kept confidential. I understand that I may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study, but that my participation may help others in the future. The members of the research team have offered to answer any question I may have about the study and what I am expected to do.

I have read and understand this information and agree to take part in this study.

Today's Date

My Signature

APPENDIX G
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR THE
DIVISION OF PROBATION AND PAROLE



APPENDIX H
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVAL LETTER

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 06-05-98

IRB #: ED-98-125

Proposal Title: PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA PROBATION AND PAROLE
OFFICERS ABOUT DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDER SUPERVISION

Principal Investigator(s): William R. Venable, Gayla M. Fritts

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE
APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: 

Date: June 10, 1998

Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Gayla M. Fritts

VITA

Gayla Fritts

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS ABOUT DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDER SUPERVISION

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Seminole, Oklahoma, on February 4, 1968, the daughter of Robert Fritts and Nancy Martin.

Education: General Equivalency Diploma from Russellville, Arkansas in June 1990; received Bachelor of Art degree in Speech Communication from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in December 1994. Completed the requirements for a Master of Science degree with a major in Human Resource Development at Oklahoma State University in July, 1998.

Experience: Training Consultant from 1994 to present; employed by Oklahoma State University, Department of Occupational and Adult Education/Human Resource Development as Graduate Research Assistant from 1997 to present.

Professional Memberships: Central States Communication Association.

Academic Honor: Graduate Research Excellence Award. July, 1998.