

Prepared under grant number 76 NI-99-0045 from the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U. S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

September 24, 1976

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PHASE I EVALUATION OF

INTENSIVE SPECIAL PROBATION PROJECTS

## LOAN DOCUMENT

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P. O. BOX 24036 S. W. POST OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20024

for

U. S. Department of Justice  
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration

prepared by.

J. Banks, Principal Investigator

A. L. Porter

R. L. Rardin

T. R. Siler

V. E. Unger

School of Industrial and Systems Engineering  
Georgia Institute of Technology

### Local Advisory Board

Mrs. Rachel B. Champagne

Dr. Bruce Cook

Mr. George Cox

Dr. Richard E. Longfellow

Mr. Jim Pace

Mr. Inman Phillips

Mr. Bill Read

40513  
C.4

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Probation can be defined (in the words of the American Bar Association's Standards Relating to Probation) as "A sentence not involving confinement which imposes conditions and retains authority in the sentencing court to modify the conditions of sentence or re-sentence the offender if he violates the conditions." Thus, probation is a consequence of an offender's conviction in a criminal court, but it is one which neither confines him in any institution nor releases him entirely from court authority. Adult probation--the part of probation involving non-juvenile courts--is the largest single segment of the American correctional system. Results of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice's 1965 "National Survey of Corrections" [54, p.8] showed that approximately half the 934,000 average daily population of adult offenders under correctional supervision were on probation. It is widely believed that this proportion of offenders on probation has increased since 1965.

Some form of adult probation can be found at virtually every level of government and every geographic part of the United States. Intensive special probation (ISP) offers unusually large quantities of supervision to each probationer and/or unique forms of probation service delivery. It thus encompasses the great majority of innovations and experiments in adult probation, mainly excluding only those programs connected with pre-conviction activities of probation staffs, financing of probation, or unusually light probation supervision. Over the past two decades numerous ISP programs have been implemented in a great variety of locales, concepts and scales. The purpose of this report is to take a first step toward a conclusive evaluation of such programs by systematically assessing the knowledge that has been or can be gained from them. Thus, it seeks not to provide an evaluation of

intensive special probation, but instead to assess the status of the foundation on which an evaluation would have to be based.

### Georgia Tech's Project

This report is one of several being produced by Georgia Tech's Phase I National Evaluation of Intensive Special Probation (LEAA Grant Number 76 NI-99-0045). That project, like the more than twenty other Phase I projects in various criminal justice program areas, is a part of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice's National Evaluation Program. The long term aim of the National Evaluation Program is to determine which types of criminal justice programs are the most productive investments of criminal justice dollars. Each Phase I study is to set the stage for evaluation of a particular program area by determining how particular programs are actually structured and implemented, defining a framework around which an evaluation can be centered and assessing the state of knowledge about the elements of the framework.

To accomplish its Phase I study of intensive special probation, the Georgia Tech ISP team has undertaken a variety of research activities. Initially, a careful review was made of the available literature and opinions were sought from numerous probation experts in order to produce an Issues Paper setting out the important concepts and controversies in the design and evaluation of probation programs. [ 1 ] A list of 126 active projects which appeared to meet the definition of ISP was also assembled from a variety of sources. From that list 46 projects were determined to be actually active and within the scope of ISP. A brief telephone survey was administered to each of these 46 projects, and the results were summarized in [ 2 ]. Drawing on the results of the telephone survey and various informal contacts, 20 project sites were selected for actual visits by Georgia Tech ISP staff. A great deal of information about the intervention strategy, measurements and evaluations used at these sites

was collected during the site visits and summarized in the report Interventions Papers [3]. Intervention strategies found at individual sites were assimilated in a Frameworks report which is a companion to this Knowledge Assessment [4]. Later reports of the Georgia Tech ISP project will present a plan for producing a full evaluation of ISP programs, an approach to evaluating a single ISP project, and a summary of the entire Georgia Tech effort.

#### A Reference Framework

An important element of the National Evaluation Program approach to criminal justice programs is the development of a framework or intervention theory for each class of projects. Frameworks are presented as block-flow diagrams in which blocks represent inputs, activities, and outputs of the projects and arrows indicate assumed directions of causation. By defining the underlying theory of the projects the frameworks provide a useful reference for both validating the concepts implicit in the project design and planning the measurement and evaluation of the projects.

The Frameworks report provides details of such an intervention theory for the ISP projects considered in Georgia Tech's Phase I national evaluation [4]. In that paper it was observed that no single detailed framework could serve for the many ISP projects in the United States. Moreover, when an attempt was made to solicit the outline of a framework from project personnel, the exercise was usually well received by the project, but it was clear that a systematic theory had only rarely been verbalized before Georgia Tech's contact with the projects. Thus, any single framework for intensive special probation projects must be considered both oversimplified and preliminary.

Within such limits, however, it will be useful to offer some single framework as a point of reference for the body of this assessment. Exhibit

I presents such a reference framework. A great deal of discussion of the concepts implicit in Exhibit I will be presented in the chapters to follow. A brief overview is presented in the remainder of this chapter.

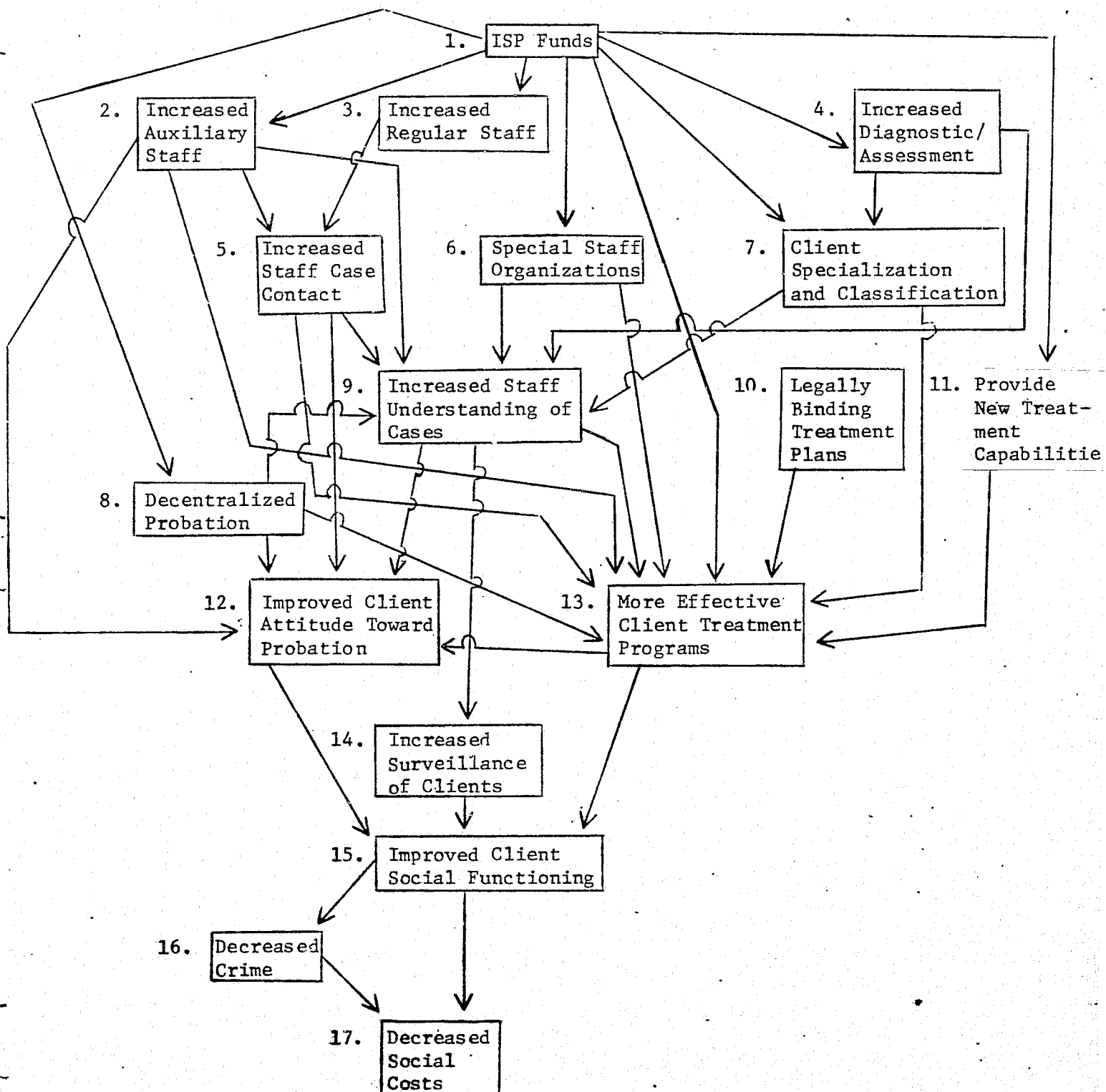
Virtually every intensive special probation project requires some input of "ISP Funds" (block 1). When "Increased Regular Staff" (block 3) are involved, such staff are usually the major project cost. "Increased Auxiliary Staff" (block 2)--typically either volunteers or paraprofessionals--also require some funds, but the amount is usually less because auxiliaries are unpaid or paid less. Increases in either of these forms of staff are presumed to lead to "Increased Staff Case Contact" (block 5). The nature of the contact may take many forms, and the contact may be with the offender or others concerned with his case, but some increase in contact is assumed in intensive probation.

ISP projects may also seek to operate by "Client Specialization and Classification" (block 7), i.e., by offering different services to different offender groups. "Increased Diagnostic/Assessment" services (block 4) are often required to support schemes for classifying clients or selection procedures for projects dealing with special client groups. Such special probation capabilities may operate either within or outside a structure of "Decentralized Probation" (block 8), i.e., probation offices operated in the communities where clients live. Another form of specialization is the use of "Special Staff Organizations" (block 6)--often probation teams--to bring multiple supervision talents to bear on each case.

A key justification for all such intensifications and specializations of probation resources is that "Increased Staff Understanding of Cases" (block 9) will result. One assumed cause is the increased familiarity associated with increased contact. Others are the probation staff sophistication resulting from various forms of specialization and increased diagnostic/assessment services.

## EXHIBIT I

## A REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR INTENSIVE SPECIAL PROBATION PROJECTS



Finally, indigenous knowledge, held by paraprofessionals or gained by locating probation in neighborhood facilities, may contribute to staff rapport with clients.

A major objective sought in ISP is "More Effective Client Treatment Programs" (block 13). "Treatment" may involve a wide range of services offered probationers, including a spectrum from psychoanalytic treatment to employment and housing assistance.

ISP programs attempt to increase the effectiveness of treatment in many ways. Increased staff contact with cases permits more direct counseling of clients and improved use of available community resources. Other aids to use of community resources are specialized staff knowledge of programs gained through neighborhood location or client specialization, extra care in formulating "Legally Binding Treatment Plans" (block 10) and additional funds to purchase treatment and service. In a few cases projects directly "Provide New Treatment Capabilities" (block 11). Staff decisions in both counseling and referral are aided by increased understanding and familiarity with cases.

The general purpose of more effective treatment programs is "Improved Client Social Functioning" (block 15). Improved functioning may take the form of positive changes in the client's attitudes and self-image, changes in his family environment, changes in his educational and economic standing, changes in his drinking/drug use habits, or changes in many other elements of the client's relation to society.

The effectiveness of probation programs in bringing about such changes is assisted by "Improved Client Attitudes Toward Probation" (block 12). Among the assumed causes of improved attitudes are the added convenience of decentralized probation and the apparently more supportive role of probation staff associated with increased contact, better staff understanding, more effective referrals, and the less authoritarian image of volunteers and paraprofessionals.

Changes in client functioning may also be brought about by the "Increased Surveillance of Clients" (block 14) implied by increased staff understanding of cases.

One direct and immediate outcome presumed to follow from improved client functioning is "Decreased Crime" (block 16). Decreases are achieved mainly through reductions in clients' recidivism, i.e., return to crime. However, the improved social functioning may have many other implications for "Decreased Social Costs" (block 17). Increased employment, decreased incarceration and decreased crime all make major contributions to social cost reduction.

## CHAPTER II

### OVERALL EVALUATION RESULTS

As defined in Chapter I intensive special probation (ISP) encompasses most of the present day innovations in adult probation programming. Experiments with innovative approaches to probation--even large scale experiments--are not new. Thus, before turning to the detail theory suggested by Exhibit I, it is reasonable to begin an assessment of knowledge about ISP by posing the most important single question

What is known about the overall effectiveness of intensive special probation as a correctional program?

Obviously, the posing of such a broad question raises many issues of definition, e.g., what is effectiveness? However, it appears that by almost any scientifically valid standard which might be applied to available information, the same clear answer would apply, "very little". Only a few valid research findings have addressed the effects of increases in the intensity of probation supervision, and even fewer have evaluated the various forms of special probation.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical review of such overall evaluation results which have been collected as part of the background research and site visits of Georgia Tech's Phase I National Evaluation of ISP. The discussion will focus on the broad difficulties of interpreting and drawing conclusions from those results. Since virtually all the results use some concept of recidivism reduction as a measure of success, the terms "success," "effectiveness," and "recidivism reduction" will be used here interchangeably. Detailed discussion of the definitions and measures appropriate in ISP evaluation is reserved for later chapters.

### Effectiveness of Caseload Reduction in Probation

For many years, probation professionals debated the value of different caseload sizes, i.e., different numbers of clients being assigned per probation officer. Thus, it is not surprising that the overall ISP effectiveness issue which has received the most research attention is the impact of reductions in caseload on probation success.

A number of interesting reviews of caseload research are available in the criminological literature [25,26,27,32,35,40,45]. However, these reviews have given real attention to only one adult probation project, the San Francisco project operated in the federal probation system in the late 1960's.

That project was undertaken in two phases. The first randomly selected probationers for two "ideal" caseloads of 40, two "intensive" caseloads of 20, and one "minimum" caseload of several hundred, leaving all other cases in "normal" caseloads of 70 to 130. The second phase used a selection procedure to assign probationers to caseloads. Because it involved random allocation to different caseload sizes, the first phase is the one most useful in assessing overall effectiveness. Analysis (see for example [28]) showed that, excluding technical violations, the minimum supervision caseload was not significantly less successful than other caseloads. Smaller caseloads appeared to produce more technical violations.

Though it is much referenced and discussed, the San Francisco project would appear to be an unsatisfactory basis for general conclusions about caseload size in adult probation. An obvious concern in generalizing is the fact that the study was operated within the federal correctional system where the mix of probationer's crimes is unlikely to match that in state and local probation. Also, while the "minimum" caseload was handled on a time available basis by several officers, the testing of only two "intensive" and two "ideal" caseloads certainly raises concern about interactions between

results and officer supervision styles. Adams et al., in their critique of the project, observe that there was "deliberate effort to avoid identification of particular officer styles in the research . . . ." [28] Finally, there were a host of minor methodological difficulties with the San Francisco project (discussed for example in [28]) which collectively cast some doubt on the validity of the results obtained.

Beyond the San Francisco project, most discussion in various reviews of caseload research has dealt with parole or juvenile probation projects. Most often discussed are a series of projects in California, including a four phase Special Intensive Parole Unit, a three phase Narcotic Treatment and Control Project, a Parole Work Unit Program, and the California Youth Authority's Community Treatment and Narcotic Control Programs. Though the evaluation of nearly every one of these projects was subject to methodological problems which tend to invalidate results, a general pattern can be discerned from the excellent analyses in [25], [26], [40] and [45]. The adult parole projects tended to detect no significant differences in recidivism rates among offenders in caseloads of different sizes, but some increased success was observed when juvenile offenders were placed in very small caseloads (typically 10 to 20). Typical of the conclusions about juvenile probationers is Lipton, Martinson, and Wilkes observation,

"A clear finding is that intensive probation supervision is associated with reduction in recidivism among males and females under 18 years of age. This conclusion is based on five studies in which youthful subjects were randomly assigned to various forms of intensive supervision and to supervision for varying periods of time up to a maximum of 26 months. Four of these five studies reduced caseloads to 15 (16 in one case) for the experimental group while the controls were placed in caseloads varying from 50 to 101." [45]

Since the late 1960's, the date of most reviews of caseload research, a number of large adult probationer projects have been undertaken in different parts of the United States. Certain of these projects were visited by the Georgia Tech ISP team, and information about others is available in evaluation reports supplied to the Georgia Tech staff. Many projects did not have evaluations which are sufficiently definitive to be quoted here.

One study for which a report, but not a site visit, was available for this assessment is the Intensive Supervision Project operated by the Florida Parole and Probation Commission in 1971-1972 [39]. This project provided service to a sample of 9,030 probationers and parolees randomly selected from the caseloads in various districts of the State. Experimental caseloads consisted of 35 "high risk" probationers and parolees. Control group caseloads contained 70 cases, 35 "high risk" and 35 "medium" or "low risk". Comparison of revocation rates between experimentals and controls who were classified "high risk" (there were at least 1,497 such individuals) showed no significant differences for probationers. Parolees in the experimental group were statistically significantly more likely to be revoked than those in the control group. No analyses are reported on rearrests, reconvictions or other measures of recidivism.

Another significant caseload reduction project is the Oklahoma Department of Corrections' Special Community Supervision Project reported in [40]. Project caseloads of 50 were randomly selected from the probation and parole population and compared to control caseloads of 160-170. Approximately 90% of the clients were probationers. No significant differences in success rate were observed between project and control groups, but detail methodological difficulties bring into question the accuracy of this conclusion (see [40] for specifics).

The Volunteer Probation Counselor Program in Lincoln, Nebraska [43] essentially reduces caseload to one by assigning a volunteer counselor to each project client. A randomly selected control group receives standard probation supervision. All clients in both groups have been convicted of misdemeanors. Apparently valid results reported by Ku in [43] show substantially lower recidivism rates among the group supervised by volunteers, especially when traffic offenses are eliminated from recidivism calculations. However, the sample sizes associated with the two groups are not sufficient to guarantee statistical significance of the recidivism reduction. Moreover, any reductions may be due more to the special nature of volunteer counseling than the quantity of case contact.

Only one of the 20 probation projects visited by the Georgia Tech ISP team had yet reported evaluation results based on a methodologically sound evaluation plan. That project was the Intensive Services Unit of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Adult Probation Project [12, 57]. Clients of the Intensive Services Unit are sex offenders and persons placed on "psychiatric probation." Caseloads in the project are typically near 50. A comparison of rearrest rates between a sample of project clients and a sample of similar clients in caseloads exceeding 100 showed statistically significantly lower rates for project clients [57]. However, the concept of the project calls for a much different quality as well as quantity of supervision than that experienced in normal caseloads. In particular, the Intensive Services Unit seeks to take a more psychological/psychiatric approach to probation, including a heavy emphasis on assessment. Thus, it is possible that the observed success is a consequence of the special nature of treatment rather than caseload size.

Several other caseload reduction projects encountered as part of Georgia Tech's ISP study claimed recidivism decreased but had either not prepared final analyses or had not employed a valid comparison group in drawing

conclusions. Among the caseload reduction projects visited by Georgia Tech which reported preliminary findings of recidivism reductions were the High Impact Intensive Supervision Narcotics Unit [7] and the Intensive Differentiated Supervision of Impact Parolees and Probationers [8] projects in Baltimore, the Volunteers in Probation project in Evansville, Indiana [14] and the Intensive Supervision Program [12] in Denver. Only the Denver project is known to plan a more complete evaluation in the near future. Project reports were received which implied recidivism reductions associated with decreased caseloads in Utah [59] and in the cities of Dallas [37,38], Cleveland [33], Philadelphia [52], Royal Oak, Michigan [44], and Norfolk, Virginia [47]. However, none of these studies reported recidivism analysis in relation to a satisfactory group comparison evaluation design. It should also be noted that, like the Philadelphia project mentioned above, many projects in both these incomplete and inadequate evaluation groups have special as well as caseload reduction aspects. Thus, any results which are observed could have derived from either the special or the intensive nature of the projects.

Summarizing all the caseload reduction research reviewed in this section, it appears that the weight of scientifically valid evidence is on the side of the hypothesis that caseload reduction alone does not significantly reduce recidivism in adult probationers. However, there is limited evidence to the contrary, and very small caseloads which have proved effective with juveniles. Moreover, results on both sides of the question are so tainted by methodological problems that broad conclusions are not warranted.

#### Effectiveness of Special Forms of Probation

As might be expected because of the wide range of program possibilities, research results on the effectiveness of special forms of probation are even

more sparse than that on caseload reduction. However, the results which were obtained as part of Georgia Tech's review of ISP will be briefly summarized in this section.

A widely advocated special probation scheme is the use of volunteers and paraprofessionals to assist regular probation officers in case supervision. One use of volunteers is in specialized employment counseling like that of the Monroe County (New York) Probation Employment and Guidance Program. A report by Cronin et al. [36], which is apparently based on comparison to a validly selected control group, showed no significant differences in recidivism as a result of the project but did imply some success in obtaining employment for clients. The more standard use of volunteers and paraprofessionals is in providing direct probation counseling and supervision to clients. The only study obtained for this assessment which included a convincing evaluation of such a use of volunteers was the Lincoln, Nebraska Volunteer Probation Counselor Program [55]. Substantial recidivism reductions were measured among misdemeanor offenders but the reductions were not shown to be statistically significant. Other comparative results showing some reductions in recidivism are reported for volunteer programs in Royal Oaks, Michigan [44] and Evansville, Indiana [14].

Another approach to special probation delivery is to specialize the type of treatment provided probationers, either by classifying the probationers and giving different treatment to different classes, or by selecting a special client group for project concentration. Because of the difficulty in arranging a suitable comparison group, no client classification projects reviewed as part of this assessment provided quantitative evidence--either pro or con--for the effectiveness of classification in reducing recidivism.

On the contrary there are several findings which are apparently based on valid evaluation designs in projects with specialized clientele. One such project is the Philadelphia Intensive Services Unit discussed above. This Unit specializes in clients who are either sex offenders or offenders designated by judges as requiring "psychiatric probation." Evaluation results for the Intensive Services Unit [18] show a statistically significant reduction in project client recidivism, as compared to a comparable sample of other probationers.

The Utah SOCIO probation program specialized in Mexican-American clients [59]. Special bi-lingual counselors were provided by the Spanish-speaking Organization for Community, Integrity and Opportunity to Chicano clients of the Utah Division of Adult Probation and Parole. A sample of project clients was carefully matched with comparable clients experiencing the normal probation system. Sample sizes involved were too small to provide statistically significant results, but a reduction of recidivism for the project group was measured.

Another project, operating in four counties of Oregon, concentrates on burglary offenders [20,51]. Recidivism of project clients is compared to that of burglary offenders in four other counties which are reasonably well-matched to the project counties. Results to date show no significant differences between project and matched counties in recidivism.

Two projects were identified which had obtained some results on the effectiveness of probation programs specializing in drug offenders. The Baltimore High Impact Narcotics Unit has operated a valid evaluation design but produced only preliminary results. [7] The Philadelphia Comprehensive Drug Control Project evaluation report makes comparisons only to similar projects in other parts of the United States. [52] However, both projects report some recidivism reductions in project clients.

A third class of special probation projects for which some overall effectiveness results are available includes various programs to decentralize probation

delivery by locating probation supervisors in neighborhood or regional offices. One major project of this type is Caseload Management/Addition to Supervision project in Philadelphia's Adult Probation Department [31,56]. Seven district offices are being operated in different sections of Philadelphia, with clients from other offices being supervised at downtown offices. Personnel in district offices perform all probation functions (including, for example, intake), while central office probation supervisors are specialized into various supervision units. Preliminary, but apparently reliable, evaluation results in [31,56] show no significant differences in recidivism between the two groups.

The Philadelphia Outreach Sub-Offices and Chester District Office project is a decentralization effort of the Pennsylvania State Board of Probation and Parole. Five outreach sub-offices are operated in Philadelphia, and a separate office provides service to neighboring Chester and Delaware counties. Clients not assigned to these decentralized centers are supervised by the Philadelphia District Office in downtown Philadelphia. Caseloads in sub-offices average near 50, and those of the district offices have ranged widely from 60 up. Comparisons between recidivism rates for the central and decentralized offices show decentralized offices statistically significantly lower. However, rough analysis for probationers alone (the project includes both probation and parole) shows recidivism higher in the decentralized facilities.

Two other projects for which less complete recidivism information is presently available are the Pennsylvania Regional Offices and Sub-Offices project, which decentralized probation offices in various parts of the State of Pennsylvania [53], and the Intensive Supervision Program in Denver [12,41]. The Pennsylvania project reports some evidence of lower recidivism among probationers supervised by decentralized offices as compared to those supervised

by large, regional offices, but there are numerous problems in comparing the two client groups. The Denver project has produced only preliminary results, but some differences in favor of the decentralized facilities are reported.

#### Evaluation Design and Implementation

The valid effectiveness results for intensive special probation presented in the two previous sections are extremely limited in number and in many cases negative, i.e., no effect was observed. In assessing why there are so few valid results from the numerous intensive and special probation projects which have been implemented in the past several years, it is worth reviewing the state of the art in designing and implementing ISP evaluations.

A minimal requirement for an evaluation design to be able to detect any change in effectiveness measures which might be attributed to the project is some form of comparison. An effect can only be assessed in relation to some group not experiencing the same treatment as the project group. Before-after comparisons on service in the same probation unit provide some information, but any results obtained are tainted by the possibility that changes in the environment or long term trends, not the project, were the cause of the effect. Comparisons to ad hoc groups--typically probationers receiving the normal supervision--provides more information. Historical and environmental changes are at least experienced by both groups. However, there is no guarantee that any differences observed between the groups is not a consequence of differences in the makeup of the groups rather than differences in treatments. The most valid evaluation designs are ones which use a comparison group, but match or randomly assign members to project and control groups. If a difference between groups is observed in such an evaluation, it can reasonably be attributed to differences in treatment of clients.

Review of the materials and site visits assembled for this assessment reveals that a major cause of the present poor state of overall effectiveness information is the total absence of a convincing evaluation design in the majority of projects. Of the 20 projects visited by Georgia Tech teams, only half indicated any form of quantitative group comparison evaluation of overall effectiveness. Seven of the ten comparative designs were either randomized control group or matched group designs, and the remaining three were companions to ad hoc groups. Of the numerous project reports and evaluations assembled from projects not visited, only the 12 mentioned in previous discussions reported any comparative results. Three used before-after comparisons, three used ad hoc comparison groups, and six used random or matched control groups.

Even where a valid evaluation plan exists there is no assurance of satisfactory implementation. One class of problems is well known in the social science literature. Internal difficulties in the operation of the projects produce breakdowns in the validity of comparisons. Judges sometimes choose to specifically order clients assigned to a project group in violation of a random assignment rule. Similarly clients may be transferred from an intensive to a lower service probation unit after successfully completing a few months of probation. Comparisons between the groups are thus confused by the transfers.

It is important to note that by no means all projects visited by Georgia Tech had experienced such difficulties with implementation. In fact, most of the sites with random or matched control groups had not experienced difficulty in maintaining the validity of the design. Excellent examples are High Impact Narcotics Unit and the Intensive Differentiated Supervision Unit in Baltimore, both of which apparently maintained quite sound random control group designs. [7,8].

A much more common difficulty destroying the usefulness of evaluation results is inadequate time and support for evaluation. Of the ten visited sites with evaluations only one has definitely produced a meaningful evaluation report, and only one or two others can be expected to produce such reports. To understand the reason for this absence of follow-through it is worth reviewing a hypothetical, but typical project history.

The project is designed to operate over a three year period with the hope that the local agency housing the project would assume funding after initial grant funds are exhausted. During the first year of operations a host of difficulties arise in obtaining sufficient numbers of clients and in establishing adequate data collection procedures for evaluation. Thus, results for the initial period are not representative. During the second year the project and the project data collection schemes perform quite adequately. During the third year, because grant funds are about to expire, a freeze is placed on hiring of staff. As vacancies occur they are not filled, and personnel are transferred as quickly as possible to positions which become available in the regular probation organization. Thus, the third year is also not representative. The one project group that is not transferred to regular probation operations is the evaluation staff. As soon as outside employment opportunities present themselves, evaluators leave and are not replaced. A final evaluation of the project is either never performed or performed in a very cursory manner.

Several aspects of case histories like this hypothetical one present major difficulties for adequate evaluation of intensive probation. The greatest difficulty is that the three year time period is far too short for adequate evaluation (many projects have even shorter duration). As noted, operations reach a typical state only during the middle months of the project. If even one year of follow-up is allowed in assessing recidivism, it is impossible for results from the typical period to be available before the end of the project. This is especially true if reconviction, rather than rearrest is used as a measure of recidivism (as recommended by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals [48]) because of court delays in processing cases to conviction. This timing dilemma also brings about

the tendency to disregard evaluation at the end of the project. If the project has already ended, then its success or failure cannot be of much interest to regular probation officials. Their continued interest and support of evaluation can be expected only if evaluation results arise early enough to guide them in program planning, for example, in deciding whether to assume costs of the project when grant funds expire. Similarly, the support of project staff in carefully collecting evaluation data cannot be expected if it is apparent that the data will not produce results during the life of the project. If meaningful evaluation is to be obtained from probation projects, the duration of the projects must be extended long enough to permit useful results to be reported back to project management and staff well before the termination of the project.

Even if valid evaluation of sufficient duration to produce meaningful results were being implemented as part of the many intensive and special probation projects, however, it is unlikely that it would soon be possible to produce general conclusions about the usefulness of intensive special probation as a criminal justice program. The careful measurement of an effect attributable to a project in one setting provides little information about how a similar project would operate in a different setting.

Two major classes of variables are at work in any probation project which do not prohibit the identification of a project effect but do affect the generalizability of the results. One such class includes the many differences in clients, environment and probation staff which might be encountered by a particular project, but are exogenous to the project. A very partial list, drawn from the materials reviewed for the assessment, is shown in Exhibit II. Taken together these variables could significantly effect the success or failure of otherwise equal projects.

EXHIBIT II  
PARTIAL LIST OF EXOGENOUS VARIABLES  
SUGGESTED AS CAUSES OF OUTCOMES

Client Differences

- Criminal history
- Fraction of parolees included in the client set
- Social/economic status
- Age, sex, race
- Education
- Social/psychological maturity
- Substance dependencies
- Family status
- Previous experience with probation supervision

Environment Differences

- Availability of community services
- Urban vs. rural character of the community
- Economic status of the community

Probation Staff Differences

- Personal style of officers
- Officer enthusiasm for the project
- Prior officer probation experience

To increase the generalizability of results from a probation evaluation it is necessary to at least measure variables like those noted in Exhibit II. However, only a few of the many projects reviewed for this assessment reported any systematic control for such effects. In fact, the only device used in more than one or two isolated cases is the California Base Expectancy instrument which seeks to predict the probability of a client recidivating [40,49]. Additional discussion of the Base Expectancy is provided in Chapter III.

The second class of variables which must be considered in generalizing results from one probation project to another are those endogenous to the project. Simply because the same number of probation officers or the same number of decentralized offices are provided to a probation project, it does not follow that the same results will accrue. This observation continues to hold even when the many conditions in Exhibit II are substantially equal in the two projects. An in-depth understanding of the processes by which the project effected success must be obtained in order to assure that a similar project is following the same approach.

Unfortunately, the next several chapters will show that attempts to develop a systematic understanding of ISP interventions have at best been primitive. No project visited or otherwise reviewed for this report used more than very rough measures of project interventions. Almost none used any validated measurement instruments whatever. Thus, even in the relatively few cases where effects have been measured through valid evaluation designs, very little knowledge was obtained.

In recognizing the need for more effective control information about both project programs and exogenous variables, it is important to

distinguish two different standards of validity which might be applied to procedures and instruments to measure particular variables. At one level, is validity as an operational tool. In this regard, for example, a client classification scheme is useful if it reliably indicates the type of treatment to which the client should be subjected. Another example is an instrument which reliably evaluates whether a client should be granted probation. This operational validity standard is very high and quite difficult to meet. Few instruments are known which have achieved operational validity.

The control level of validity required to improve the knowledge value of probation experimentation is much less demanding. In the case of a client classification instrument, the control level of validity requires only that over a large sample, clients requiring a particular type of treatment will have a statistical tendency to be concentrated in a treatment group defined by the instrument. In the granting of probation, an instrument would need only to have a statistical tendency to group clients by their chances of successful probation. It is quite possible that instruments and instrument design approaches which are not promising in terms of operational validity could meet the standard of control validity. More attention to such instruments is needed.

### CHAPTER III

#### INTENSITY OF PROBATION SUPERVISION

The reference framework for intensive special probation projects in Exhibit I (Chapter I) portrays a rough theory of the sequence of causation through which probation program innovations are assumed to bring about desired social outcomes. A fundamental principle underlying many of the assumptions implied by the arrows in Exhibit I is the concept of intensive probation, i.e., probation supervision involving quantitative and/or qualitative increases in the depth of supervision service. In this chapter the many dimensions and hypotheses associated with the concept of intensive probation will be reviewed and assessed as to the present state of knowledge.\*

##### Increased Contact

Case contact in probation supervision is the amount of interaction between probation staff (regular and auxiliary) and the case including not only direct interaction with the client, but also interaction with other persons interested in his case (family, employers, etc.). The most straightforward of the ISP projects are those which begin with the assumption:

Decreases in the average number of cases assigned individual probation officers result in increases in the average amount of officer contact with cases.

An immediate problem in assessing the validity of such an assumption is the selection of an appropriate measure of contact. The approach most often taken in probation studies is to measure contact on the basis of the total number of contacts with the case. A smaller number of studies substitute estimates of the total time officers are in contact with cases.

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\*References are made throughout to results from probation studies which are described more thoroughly in Chapter II.

On the basis of these measures, some limited results are available which tend to support the assumption that decreased caseload results in increased contact. The San Francisco study, which varied caseload levels in the federal probation system, showed significantly higher numbers of contacts associated with lower caseloads [26,28]. A statistically significant increase in the number of contacts was observed in the Florida Intensive Supervision Project. [39] Significant increases were also reported in the time of contact with cases in the Florida study. Similarly, increases in number of contacts and time of contacts were reported in California's Special Intensive Parole Unit studies. [40] As part of Georgia Tech site visits, the Philadelphia Intensive Services Unit [15] and the Baltimore High Impact Narcotics Unit [7] indicated preliminary findings in increases in contact. All these studies measured contact levels in comparison to matched or randomly selected control groups and can thus be considered reasonably convincing though each had some methodological difficulties.

Some hesitancy appears warranted, however, in concluding that increases in contact will automatically result from decreases in caseload. One concern is that results in the studies mentioned above may have been (at least partially) a consequence of differences in enthusiasm for careful reporting of contacts. Project personnel could be expected to record contacts more meticulously than over-burdened probation officers carrying large, control group caseloads.

A more significant concern is the one voiced at a number of sites visited by Georgia Tech personnel that certain types of probation officers may find it difficult to adjust to a pattern of increased contact when caseloads are reduced [7,8,12,15,19]. Probation officers accustomed to devoting most of their time to pre-sentence investigations and routine paperwork on cases may find themselves completely unequipped to undertake additional direct contact with cases.

No probation study reviewed for this assessment had employed any validated instrument which might be used to detect such prior dispositions of probation officers. A literature of correctional officer typologies does exist (see for example [29]). However, this literature has apparently not been brought to bear systematically on the issue of controlling for supervisor styles in determining whether a probation department will be receptive to increased contact.

A second broad approach to increasing the probation supervision resources available for case contact is the use of auxiliary staff--volunteer and paraprofessional probation supervisors. An important justification for the use of such programs is the assumption:

Assignment of volunteer or paraprofessional counselors to probationers results in an increase in the average amount of contact with cases.

Observe that in such cases a "reduction in caseloads" may not technically occur. Legal caseload responsibility is typically left with a professional probation officer even if the great bulk of actual contact is performed by the volunteer or paraprofessional. In fact, caseloads may technically increase because officers supervise large numbers of probationers through auxiliary staff assistants.

It is intuitively reasonable to expect that large scale use of volunteers and paraprofessionals in a probation jurisdiction would increase the average contact per case. The only reason this assumption would not follow is if the probation officer's time consumed in recruiting and supervising auxiliary staff was equivalent to the time spent by the auxiliary staff in contact with cases. There appears to be no reason why this issue could not be studied, but unfortunately, no probation project reviewed for this assessment included comparison of the quantity of contact with clients in a volunteer or paraprofessional project group versus that in an appropriate comparison group.

Since several visited projects did employ substantial professional staff in managing auxiliary personnel--staffs which could have been providing direct contact if auxiliary personnel were not being used--it must be concluded that the contact effect of volunteer and paraprofessional projects has not been definitively established.

One final consideration in the assumed model for probation projects seeking to increase contact can be stated as the assumption:

Increased probation contact with cases results in more effective probation treatment.

Of course, an adequate investigation of this question requires a satisfactory measure of treatment effectiveness. However, it should be noted that to the degree treatment effectiveness can be measured by recidivism in any form, the caseload reduction literature reviewed in Chapter II tends weakly to refute the above assumption. A majority of the projects mentioned above which measured significant increases in contact in connection with caseload reductions, also measured no decreases in recidivism rates with smaller caseloads. Thus, the studies tend to imply that increases purely in the quantity of contact (as measured by number or time of contact) do not affect treatment success.

#### More Efficient Contact

An alternative intensity dimension to the pure quantity of contact with probation cases is the efficient use of contact time. Many schemes for ISP can be viewed as seeking to improve the efficiency of contact through more effective management of probation staff. The most widely employed approach is the use of some form of case classification. Such projects depend strongly on the assumption:

Clients can be efficiently classified into groups for which different amounts of supervision are appropriate.

If the assumption is true, allocation of probation supervision resources on the basis of the classification should result in more productive probation contact.

Numerous classification systems have been proposed or used in various locales. A survey in Georgia Tech's Issues Paper [1] on ISP reported classifications in use in Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma and California, and [42] describes a British system. The classification systems address at least two rather different dimensions of client need.

On the one hand are classifications which seek to determine the degree of risk associated with a particular client. Risk is usually defined in terms of potential for recidivism. Other classification approaches attempt to measure the amount of supervision service required by the client. The difference between the two dimensions is illustrated by a moderate risk offender who, because he indicates a receptivity to counseling, may be most worthy of probation officer attention.

In spite of the widespread use, however, very little research is known which has successfully validated probationer classification techniques. One exception is the California Base Expectancy Score which has demonstrated the useful capability to forecast the recidivism risk associated with various client groups. [40,49] An original version was developed as part of California's Work Unit Parole Program and proved effective in assessing risk over a number of years with numerous cases. [40] A modified, probation version was developed and applied successfully in the federal probation system. [49] Both concentrate heavily on the client's prior arrest record, substance dependencies, employment history and family influences. The latter is reproduced in Exhibit III.

## EXHIBIT III

CALIFORNIA BASE EXPECTENCY SCORING SYSTEM  
(Source [49, p. 5])

## SCORING FORM

Characteristic	Points
A. Arrest-free period of 5 or more consecutive years . . . . .	12 _____
B. No history of opiate usage. . . . .	9 _____
C. Few jail commitments (none, one or two) . . . . .	8 _____
D. Most recent conviction or commitment does not involve checks, forgery or burglary . . . . .	7 _____
E. No family criminal record . . . . .	6 _____
F. No alcohol involvement. . . . .	6 _____
G. First arrest not for auto theft . . . . .	5 _____
H. Twelve months steady employment within one year prior to <u>arraignment</u> for present offense. . . . .	6 _____
I. Four to 11 months steady employment prior to <u>arraignment</u> for present offense (If given 6 points on Item H, add also 4 points for this item) . . . . .	4 _____
J. No aliases. . . . .	5 _____
K. Favorable living arrangement. . . . .	4 _____
L. Few prior arrests (none, one, or two) . . . . .	4 _____
SUM OF POINTS	76

## SCALE FOR POTENTIAL ADJUSTMENT

C  
00-36B  
37-56A  
57-76

Since recidivism data and simple descriptors of the client and his environment can be obtained fairly easily, it should be possible to eventually develop satisfactory approaches to predicting the recidivism risk associated with a given client group. The matter of a scheme to evaluate the type and amount of probation supervision which should be provided a given group of clients is a much more complex task. In the general field of corrections numerous classification schemes taking such a treatment focus have been proposed and researched. A complete review of this literature is beyond the scope of this report but it can be stated that no method has achieved wide acceptance.\* Moreover, it is worth noting that only one well-researched approach, the Jesness Inventory, was found in use at any of the 20 sites visited by Georgia Tech as part of this project, and it was only used at one site. [10] Thus, it appears that a severe knowledge gap exists at least in bringing past research on client classification to the level of practical usefulness to large scale probation projects.

#### Qualitative Differences in Contact

A third, and more nebulous dimension of the intensity of probation supervision is the quality of the interactions between the probation staff and the client or persons important to him. In some cases the quantity of contact may not be increased at all but it is hoped that special knowledge and orientation of the probation staff will lead to more effective use of contact time. A partial list of the quality-change assumptions underlying various ISP projects would include the following:

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\*A good summary is provided in the report of the National Advisory Commission of Criminal Justice Standards and Goals on Corrections. [48]

Specialization of the project in clients of a particular type will result in increased officer understanding of the subject client-type and thus in more intensive officer-case interaction.

Organization of the probation staff into teams jointly supervising the same caseload will result in a better match of officer skills and client needs in particular situations and thus in more intensive officer-case interaction.

Indigenous knowledge and less-authoritarian images of volunteer and paraprofessional probation supervisors results in a more frank and thus more intensive staff-case interaction.

Decentralization of probation facilities into client's neighborhoods results in increased officer familiarity with the social environment in which clients live and thus in more intensive officer-case interaction.

More thorough diagnostic and assessment activities at the point of probation intake leads to increased officer understanding of clients and thus to more intensive officer-case interaction.

Each of the above assumptions can, in turn be seen to have two component steps. A first "knowledge" sub-assumption presumes that a particular program specialization will lead to increased staff knowledge or understanding of the client and his environment. A second "translation" sub-assumption presumes that increased knowledge will be translated into more meaningful interaction between the probation staff, the client and his environment.

Many probation staffs are intuitively quite certain that such effects do occur in ISP projects. Unfortunately, no quantitative procedure or research study was identified for this assessment which dealt with either of the two dimensions in any probation project seeking to change the quality of contact. In a few cases ad hoc opinion surveys were administered to clients of probation staff, but none of these has any demonstrated validity.

It is an interesting paradox that the absence of meaningful measures of the quality of staff-case interaction does not mean that quality is not systematically recorded. In virtually every probation jurisdiction, staff keep (often voluminous) narrative notes on their contacts with each case. In many cases these notes are supplemented by monthly or quarterly progress reports. However, these narrative descriptions of case developments are almost never translated into

quantitative information except in terms of counts of contacts classified by the person contacted.

One pioneering investigation of methods for obtaining better quantitative information about the quality of contact is the British Home Office Study, Social Work in the Environment by Martin Davies. [42] Davies and Margaret Rayfield present the useful analysis of numerous approaches to understanding the quality of probation casework which is reproduced in Exhibit IV. The study actually adopted Approach VI, analysis of casework records. An ad hoc scoring scheme was used to reduce various casebook comments to quantitative measures of contact quality.

The approach taken in the Davies report cannot be considered validated or suitable for widespread application. However, it was sufficiently successful to suggest that contact quality measurement is feasible. Exhibit IV enumerates many avenues to try. A host of other approaches might be added to that list. One example is an enriched contact classification system which captures vital elements of quality, but is still sufficiently compact to be applied by probation staff as they write case narratives. Whatever the approach, it is clear that very little advance can be made in the state of knowledge about probation projects seeking a qualitative intensification of the staff-case interaction until adequate measurement techniques are developed.

#### Can Probation Contact be Intensive?

One final issue in assessing knowledge about the intensity of probation is the fundamental assumption on which all intensive probation projects are founded. Simply stated, the assumption is as follows:

It is possible, within the limits of generous, but feasible allocations of probation staff, to bring about an intensive interaction between staff and probationer.

## EXHIBIT IV

DAVIES-RAYFIELD ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES TO  
UNDERSTANDING QUALITY OF PROBATION CONTACT  
(Source [42, pp. 113-115])

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
I. Participant observation	(i) Client no knowledge of research (ii) No data loss (iii) Useful in the development of a conceptual scheme and general theory--provides data for planning quantitative research	(i) Researcher's subjectivity may influence the results unduly (ii) Scope of project necessarily limited
II. Non-participant observation:		
(a) Research worker present at interview	(i) Eliminates subjectivity of social worker (ii) No data loss	(i) Research may intrude on treatment and affect it (ii) Costly in time and skilled labour; otherwise scale of project necessarily limited
(b) Use of one-way screen	(i) and (ii) as above (iii) Client no knowledge of research (unless, as is often the case, he is told of the research procedures)	(i) Possible intrusion on treatment if social worker aware of research (ii) Costly in time, equipment and skilled labour otherwise limited scale
III. Analysis of tape recordings	(i) Minimum data loss, except for facial expressions and activity details (ii) Eliminates to a large extent subjectivity of social worker	(i) Costly in time and labour; otherwise scale project (ii) Recordings require transcribing (iii) Possible intrusion on treatment

Method	Advantages	Disadvantage
IV. Analysis of process recordings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Reduced data loss</li> <li>(ii) Client no knowledge of research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) May intrude on treatment</li> <li>(ii) Costly in time of research worker; otherwise limited scale project</li> <li>(iii) Social workers require training, extra time and secretarial support. Reduced caseloads, perhaps</li> <li>(iv) Subjectivity of social worker may influence results</li> <li>(v) Some data loss inevitable</li> </ul>
V. Questionnaire/ interview of social worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Large scale project more feasible</li> <li>(ii) Can study a longer period of treatment</li> <li>(iii) Client no knowledge of research</li> <li>(iv) Research need not affect treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Data loss inevitable-- subjectivity of social worker very significant</li> <li>(ii) Requires trained interviewers or</li> <li>(iii) Social worker has to complete a lengthy questionnaire</li> </ul>
VI. Analysis of casework records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Client no knowledge of research</li> <li>(ii) Research need not affect treatment</li> <li>(iii) No extra burden on social workers</li> <li>(iv) Large scale project for period of treatment possible</li> <li>(v) Not an expensive project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Data loss inevitable-- subjectivity of social worker very significant</li> <li>(ii) Some records missing or incomplete</li> <li>(iii) Research worker's subjectivity may influence results</li> </ul>

The important question implicit in this assumption is whether even a generous allocation of staff time can lead to a degree of contact which can be fairly described as intensive. Carter, Glasser, and Nelson comment

"If the probationer or parolee is awake 16 hours a day, a once-a-month treatment of 30 minutes duration represents something in the nature of one-tenth of one percent of his total waking hours. This small amount of time is of doubtful significance in the complex social life of the offender, 99.9 percent of which is spent under the influence of many 'significant others.'" [32]

While one of the probation projects which would today be classified intensive would undoubtedly allocate more than 1/2 hour per month to each case, the question remains, Would even six or seven hours of probation contact per month have any significant impact in comparison to a total of 400 or 500 waking hours? The question is thought provoking, but no systematic answer to such a question will be possible until more careful measurements of the intensity and effects of probation contacts have been developed and implemented.

## CHAPTER IV

### TREATMENT AND CLIENT CHANGE

Most probation agencies in the United States see their functions as one of bringing about changes in probationer life styles which permit clients to function more successfully in society. These changes are to be accomplished by services--collectively called treatment--which are either provided directly by the probation staff or offered through referral of the client to other community service organizations.

The literature supporting one or another treatment approach is voluminous and diverse in both the types of treatment to be offered and the ends sought. A brief review is provided in the Issues Paper produced by this project [1]. Since the range and volume of treatment literature is so great, another review will not be attempted here. Even though it is recognized that the goal of some ISP projects is wholly to offer a new form of treatment, the problems of measuring the effectiveness of the treatments is as diverse as the treatments themselves. However, there are some widespread assumptions about how ISP programming impacts treatment which should be investigated. Such assumptions are the focus of this chapter.

#### Intensity of Treatment

In Chapter III, the various probation project assumptions leading to an increase in the intensity of probation supervision were discussed. The discussion left open the question, "What goals are sought from more intensive supervision?" One often voiced answer is "intensive treatment." The implied assumption can be stated as follows:

Intensive levels of probation contact will result in qualitative and/or quantitative increases in the intensity of treatment afforded clients.

All ISP projects visited as part of this study which made any attempt to measure quantitatively the intensity of treatment did so in one or more of three ways. Contacts were counted; time duration of contacts was recorded; referrals of clients for employment or service were counted and occasionally designated as either "successful" or "unsuccessful."

None of these measures can be presumed to have anything but the crudest connection to intensity of treatment. A tabulation of referrals provides some information about the degree of community service usage by probation officers, but offers no information about the treatment obtained by the client. Even when referrals are divided on the basis of whether the client actually obtained any service (i.e., classified "successful" and "unsuccessful") there is no measure of either the quality or the quantity of treatment ultimately obtained.

Contact measures may be even poorer indices of treatment intensities. First, many contacts are not treatment-oriented at all; the goal is surveillance. Tabulating such contacts certainly gives no information about treatment. In those cases where treatment is provided there is no reason to believe either the time or the number of contacts will measure the intensity of treatment. In fact, conversations at one visited site suggested there may be an inverse relationship between time of contact and intensity of treatment. [18] Long, rambling contacts may merely indicate that nothing was being accomplished.

As in the discussion of intensive supervision in Chapter III, the key step to improving knowledge about the intensity of contacts--including treatment-oriented contacts--appears to be quantification of the voluminous, narrative case notes maintained by practically every probation jurisdiction. Virtually every ISP site visited as part of this research indicated that information about client progress in direct counseling, in employment, and in community service programs was documented in case narratives. Informal perusal of case notes at several sites confirmed the significance of the information recorded.

A systematic investigation of the intensity of treatment afforded clients of ISP projects can come only after schemes are developed for quantifying such case documentation.

#### Improved Treatment Judgments

Whether the types of treatment to be considered are in the class of assistance with physical needs or sophisticated psychiatric counseling, an assumption underlying many ISP projects is that the program structure being offered will bring about improved staff decisions on the treatment to be provided a given probationer. A partial list of specific assumptions would include the following:

Increased diagnosis and assessment effort at client intake leads to better probation staff judgments about appropriate treatment plans.

Location of probation offices in the neighborhoods where clients live assists in keeping probation officers informed about the community services available in the area.

Employment of indigenous paraprofessionals or volunteers from neighborhoods where clients live assists in keeping probation staffs informed about the community services available in the area.

Treatment-oriented client classification systems can be devised which distinguish among clients on the basis of the type of treatment needed.

Concentration of a probation project on a specialized class of clients assists probation supervisors in keeping informed about the community services suitable for that class.

Legal enforceability of treatment plans through behavioral contracting brings about more careful selection of treatment.

As with many other elements of ISP, working professionals are often convinced that one or more of the above assumptions hold, but no scientifically valid research has demonstrated the fact. Moreover, since the immediate objectives of treatment are so diverse and controversial, it may not be possible to directly assess the validity of such assumptions about probation staff decision-making.

One dimension of decision-making which can be assessed is information. It should be possible to structure projects where the knowledge of probation officers about available resources is compared between the project staff and

a suitable control staff. One straightforward step in this direction is included in the Social Research Associates evaluation of Philadelphia's Intensive Services Unit. [57] A "Community Resource Inventory" was prepared listing names of numerous community service agencies, including some nonexistent ones. Agents were asked to indicate whether they had heard of or made referrals to each agency. Scoring of the Inventory provides a rough measure of the familiarity of probation agents with available services.

Managers often comment that a good decision does not necessarily have to be associated with a good outcome. However, for aspects of treatment decision-making other than probation officer knowledge to be measured it may be necessary to accept such an assumption. If treatment programs selected by probation staff operating under one or another ISP concept lead to the desired changes in client life style, it may be necessary to conclude that the treatment decision was appropriate. If outcomes are undesirable, the contrary conclusion may have to be drawn.

#### Client Receptivity to Probation Treatment

The Corrections report of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals comments [48]:

"In the process of trying to implement this [treatment] model, correctional systems turned to the social work profession for assistance and introduced the caseworker into the penal situation to diagnose and treat the offender. This attempt to incorporate casework theory into penal institutions has been warped, however; by a failure to absorb two of the most basic tenets of social work. The first of these is that, for casework to be effective, the individual must perceive that he has a problem and be motivated to seek help; this is the principal of voluntarism. The second is that the goals of the casework process must be established by the client; this is the principle of self-determination."

These remarks point out an important, but often overlooked issue in probation treatment: Social work developed for settings where clients can choose whether

to accept the service may not be appropriate for situations where clients are legally bound to accept the treatment.

One programmatic approach to reducing difficulties which might arise in "treatment" of unwilling clients is to seek programs which reduce client hostility toward probation. A number of programs include such an approach in their rationales. A partial list of the implied assumptions would include the following:

The less-authoritarian roles played by volunteer and para-professional probation counselors leads to a relationship with probationers characterized by less hostility and suspicion and more client motivation for change.

Intensive interaction of probation staff with clients leads to a sense that "somebody cares" in clients and thus to reduced hostility toward probation.

Decentralized location of probation offices leads to improved neighborhood attitudes toward probation and thus to improved client attitudes toward probation.

Decentralized location of probation offices provides a more convenient and less imposing setting for probation and thus leads to improved client attitudes toward probation.

Once again, many probation professionals working with ISP projects are certain one or more of the above assumptions holds. However, the efforts to scientifically check assumptions have been minimal. It is not uncommon for ISP projects to administer some form of attitude questionnaire to probationers during or at the end of supervision. Visits to ISP project as part of this study found such questionnaires had been used at a majority of sites.

Unfortunately, there appears to have been no consistency or provable validity to the client attitude surveys which have been administered. A common phenomena is for each site to create its own ad hoc survey instrument with very little regard for previous experience with such instruments.

Because so many sites have experimented with attitude surveys, it appears feasible to develop a scheme which would validly assess attitudes toward probation, and thus permit meaningful investigation of the assumptions presented above. However, an accepted instrument has not yet been produced.

### Client Change

The presumed object of all the treatment programs mentioned above, as well as non-treatment surveillance of clients, is to bring about some degree of improved client social functioning. Some such improvements have direct, observable social impact because they are reflected in behavior. Examples are reductions in future criminal activity and increases in employment. Social outcomes of this type are discussed further in Chapter V.

A number of the intervention theories developed as part of Georgia Tech's visits to 20 ISP sites, however, suggest that long term improvement in client functioning requires changes in client attitudes about himself and society. In detailed analysis presented in the Frameworks report, it is noted that some theories assume client behavior must be changed first, with attitudes changing after realization of the success associated with better behavior; other theories operate in reverse, with attitude change preceding behavior change. [4] In either event client social attitudes become an important dimension of client change.

Only a few of the many projects visited and reviewed for this assessment reported any systematic attempt to measure client social attitudes. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was used in Maryland's Out-patient Treatment Clinic for Special Offenders to measure changes in client personalities resulting from project efforts. [50] Findings were inconclusive, and some difficulty was reported in obtaining good test results from marginally literate clients. The Lincoln, Nebraska Volunteer Probation Counselor Program employed the five scales of the California Psychological Inventory to measure personality change in clients. [43] Statistically significant changes were observed on three scales: responsibility, socialization, and achievement by conformance. Psychological testing of clients is also alluded to in Leehouts' discussion of the Royal Oaks, Michigan volunteer program. [44]

The usage of these standardized tests to measure client attitude change is far too sparse to suggest any pattern of success. However, it does not seem unreasonable that some of the hundreds of standardized tests used in various branches of psychology, social work and counseling would be useful in probation treatment evaluation. In fact, it is surprising that more investigation of this type has not already occurred.

## CHAPTER V

### EFFECTIVENESS AND COST

The purposes for which probation projects reviewed in connection with this assessment have been established center around three broad goals. The first is a social work goal of improving client social functioning; a second is a criminal justice goal of reducing future criminal activity in clients; the third is a cost goal of increasing the use of probation as an alternative to incarceration. The three can be related as indicated in Exhibit I (Chapter I) by three sets of assumptions:

Improved client social functioning leads to decreased future criminal activity.

Improved client social functioning leads to decreased social costs through increased employment and decreased dependence of the client on society.

Decreased recidivism in clients leads to immediate reductions in costs of crimes and indirect savings made possible by increased use of probation without decreased public safety.

That these assumptions are at least partially valid is almost self-evident. However, there are many complex problems in quantifying relationships. These quantification problems are the focus of this chapter.

#### Recidivism

By far the most commonly employed measures of probation outcomes are those which deal with recidivism, i.e., negative behavior on the part of clients which results in their being rearrested, reconvicted, revoked, etc. For many years, such measures have been widespread (though not entirely accepted) in the field of corrections. However, many issues concerned with the measurement and use of recidivism information are still unresolved.

The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals has recommended the following definition of recidivism: [48]

"Recidivism is measured by (1) criminal acts that resulted in conviction by a court, when committed by individuals who are under correctional supervision or who have been released from correctional supervision within the previous three years, and by (2) technical violations of probation or parole in which a sentencing or paroling authority took action that resulted in an adverse change in the offender's legal status. Technical violations should be maintained separately from data on reconvictions."

Critical points in the definition include:

- (i) Recidivism should be measured by reconviction rather than rearrest or reconviction
- (ii) Crimes in all jurisdictions should be included in recidivism calculations
- (iii) Measurement should include the period under supervision and three years after
- (iv) Incidents other than reconvictions which lead to revocation should be separately tabulated as "technical violations."

None of these points is very new, yet practically no ISP project reviewed or visited in preparing this assessment used a standard like the one above in calculating recidivism. Most considered only rearrests; most considered only the period when the client was under correctional supervision; most included only offenses from the city or state in which the probation project was housed.

One important reason for this widespread deviation from the recommended standard is time. As noted in Chapter II, most ISP studies are required to produce evaluation results within one or two years after service begins. In such a short project evaluation period there is no opportunity for use of reconviction data, which generally follows rearrest by many months. There is also no opportunity for follow-up after release from probation.

The more perplexing problem is inadequacy of information. State and national criminal justice officials have promised for more than a decade that information systems would be developed which permitted systematic tracking

of offenders, in terms of both rearrest and reconviction (see for example Appendix C of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice Task Force Report: Crime and Its Impact--An Assessment [55]). However, none of the twenty probation sites visited as part of Georgia Tech's study of ISP had available such an information system. In some cases systems existed or were "under development," but they could not reliably identify rearrests and reconvictions of probation clients. Thus, ISP projects were forced to rely on informal and arduous efforts by evaluators to obtain recidivism data. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that calculations were limited to the most available information--rearrests in the immediately surrounding jurisdiction of clients still under supervision. Until adequate, national offender information systems are available, it is unlikely that this standard of practice, and thus the quality of ISP knowledge, will improve.

One other recidivism measure in fairly widespread use in the United States circumvents the information system problem. Recidivism is measured in terms of the proportion of cases terminated by revocation or absconding. This so called "violation index" is inherently easy for probation personnel to calculate because it draws on immediately available administrative documentation. However, its validity as a measure of ISP performance is subject to several serious limitations.

One difficulty is inherent in any scheme which considers only the period of supervision in calculating recidivism: calculated rates are a consequence of the average time probationers are under supervision. Any program which includes an element of early release from probation can be expected to appear relatively more successful in terms of recidivism during supervision.

A second severe limitation of the violation index is shared only by recidivism measures which focus on revocation rather than rearrest or reconviction. The nature of an ISP program may have the effect of encouraging or

discouraging revocation and thus artificially affecting "recidivism." Nearly a decade ago the San Francisco experiment measured a significant increase in revocations from technical violations when caseloads were reduced in a federal probation office [28]. Earlier findings in careful studies of the California parole system observed similar phenomena. [40] Thus many criminal justice professionals have come to expect higher rates of technical violation as a consequence of ISP.

An interesting result of consultation with many probation officers in ISP projects during Georgia Tech site visits is that the well-known overloading of prisons is bringing new and severe pressure to limit revocations. This pressure not only causes severe reductions in technical violations but often means that reconviction will not automatically lead to revocation. Thus there may be a tendency for revocations to underestimate recidivism, especially in ISP projects where probation officers have enough detailed knowledge of cases to discriminate between "minor" and "severe" reconvictions.

#### Costs and Cost-Benefits

In defining relevant costs of correctional projects, Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks commented as follows:

"There are at least three types of costs that should be included in a determination of economic benefits of treatment programs. The first type is direct program costs. Such costs include staff salaries, physical facilities, court costs, police processing costs, and detention costs. The second type is indirect costs to government. Such costs include loss of revenue derived from state income and sales taxes paid by offenders, and welfare costs paid to offenders' dependents. The third type includes social costs. Social costs include wages lost by the victim, the loss of money by a robbery or a burglary victim, and the human damage done by an opiate addict to himself." [45]

Costs by this definition provide a unifying basis on which to assess all the standard goals of ISP projects. Savings in crimes reduce processing costs

and social costs. Improvements in client social functioning are reflected in increased revenue from his or her employment and decreased welfare receipts. Diversion of offenders from incarceration reduces direct and indirect costs at a possible price in social costs associated with increased crime.

Since costs do provide a common demoninator in probation evaluation, it is rather surprising that so little real analysis has been directed toward them. In Georgia Tech's 20 visits to ISP sites, no project was encountered which made any serious attempt to deal with costs in evaluation (though the Michigan site plans to study cost in the future). [15] Each site maintained the accounting of direct project costs required for grant administration, but the cost data were rarely analyzed in evaluation. When costs were evaluated at all, the focus was always on comparison of the cost per client in different types of probation delivery (e.g., [ 57 ] on the Philadelphia Intensive Services Unit). Since not even the "overhead" costs of parent agency support for probation projects were included in these cost studies, they cannot be considered usable ISP knowledge.

Two reports from states not included in Georgia Tech site visits provide more comprehensive cost studies comparing probation and incarceration as correctional programs. One provides a detailed cost investigation in Texas and the other is a more cursory analysis in Tennessee [34,58]. Neither considered the social costs mentioned in the quotation above, but both considered most direct costs. The Texas study also measured some indirect costs to government. In both cases there are many points in the cost calculations where controversy could be raised. However, the conclusions are quite similar: Incarceration costs 8 to 10 times more than probation per client.

Without accepting the exact figures in these two studies it can be concluded that the time has come to give more than lip service to calculation of total project costs. Estimation of the social costs of a program--cost impacts

of crime on the victim, human costs of incarceration on the client, etc.--is a complex and nebulous task which is probably beyond the limitations of presently available data. But there appears to be no reasonable barrier to careful and regular analysis of all the other costs of an ISP program. Satisfactory application of cost accounting procedures long used in industrial settings would make possible the accurate estimation of direct government costs of probation. In a like manner, it should be rather simple for probation agencies to keep track of the indirect costs to government associated with tax loss from unemployment and welfare payments. Both employment and welfare data are routinely solicited from clients in many jurisdictions.

If adequate measures of direct and indirect government costs were obtained, the unestimated social costs could be accounted for satisfactorily through crime-cost ratios. In particular, a project could be evaluated in terms of the estimated number of future client crimes prevented, divided by the net governmental cost of the program. Since most social costs are consequences of crime, such a measure would tend to encourage social costs savings through crime reduction. At the same time it would provide a basis for directly comparing criminal justice programs with different governmental costs.

One assumption which prevades the thinking of even many devoted advocates of intensive special probation is that it cannot be justified on a cost-effectiveness basis. The large direct cost increases which occur when regular probation service is replaced by some form of ISP are automatically assumed to far exceed the economic benefit. For such persons, ISP is justified only in the sense that it provides badly needed social service to socially disadvantaged clients.

If the Texas and Tennessee results outlined above prove to be accurate precursors of careful cost-effectiveness studies in ISP, it is entirely possible that this negative presumption about ISP will prove wrong. The costs

of incarceration are so great that probation could be quite cost-effective if ISP programs succeed in reducing, or at least stabilizing recidivism rates. If only for this important motivational issue, further cost-effectiveness analysis of ISP is warranted.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In assessing what is known and what is knowable about intensive special probation (ISP) one is struck by a sad paradox. While ISP has been in widespread use in many forms and many locales over the past two decades, very little general knowledge has been obtained. In fact the only hypothesis about which enough valid information is available to warrant the venturing of an educated guess is that the addition of regular and/or auxiliary probation staff results in an increase in the average number of contacts per case.

On the other hand, many of the crucial issues in probation are well within the range of questions which can be investigated scientifically. All but a few of the programmatic assumptions enumerated in Exhibit I and in the discussion of previous chapters are subject to direct empirical study.

Results in Chapter II show that one major cause of the absence of knowledge about these knowable issues in ISP is the relative infrequency of evaluation designs which employ suitable comparison and control groups. Projects where time permitted the designs to be implemented were even more scarce. However, valid designs have been successfully implemented in a number of locales and a few have been carried to fruition. The widespread presumption that controlled experiments are impossible in a working probation environment is apparently not warranted.

The more prevalent problem is the almost total lack of adequate instrumentation with which to control and measure ISP research. Present techniques permit the adequate documentation of neither the environment in which a project operates, nor the nature of the clients and the project staff, nor the ISP service provided, nor the outcomes observed. A heavy investment in carefully designed, control group experiments in ISP will produce little new knowledge unless these instrumentation problems are dealt with first.

These broad conclusions about the state of knowledge in ISP lead to the following specific recommendations:

1. Any project which is expected to produce valid new knowledge about ISP should be required to implement a design providing for an adequate comparison base. Moreover, the project should be allowed to endure for at least five years, subject only to periodic monitoring to assure that the planned process and evaluation are being carried out.
2. Crime-cost ratios should replace recidivism as the standard of probation effectiveness evaluation. Crimes included in such ratios are those prevented by control of recidivism and costs include all major direct and indirect cost (tax loss, welfare, etc.) to government of ISP programs. Such ratios provide surrogate measures of total economic cost by letting numbers of crimes function as an approximate measure of difficult-to-estimate, non-governmental costs.
3. To permit satisfactory implementation of recommendation number 2, standards for cost accounting in corrections should be evolved that enumerate how staff overhead, building and equipment, shared employee and other difficult cost allocation questions are to be handled.
4. To permit satisfactory implementation of recommendation number 2, standard procedures should be derived for probation officers to record client earnings and welfare payments to clients.
5. Both to implement recommendation number 2 and to add precision to probation knowledge generally, development of reliable offender tracking information systems on a national basis should be pursued as rapidly as possible.
6. Classification instruments should be devised and validated on a wide scale which provide adequate control information about at least the following exogenous variables in an ISP project:
  - a. The risk of probation associated with project clients.
  - b. The personal supervision style of project staff.

In both cases the validity for acceptance should be the ability to provide group mean information that is helpful in generalizing from single project results rather than the ability to provide specific information useful in prescribing treatment for individual clients or training individual supervisors.

7. The concept of caseload as a standard measure of the degree of service provided probation clients should be replaced by measures of the quality and quantity of case contact.
8. To implement recommendation number 7, and to afford an opportunity to seriously effect research on probation treatment methods, standard instruments should be devised and validated on a wide scale which assess various dimensions of the quality of case contact on quantitative scales. As with recommendation number 6, the standard of validity required of such instruments should be the ability to produce useful group mean information about contact and treatment as opposed to specific information suitable for judging an officer's management of a particular case.
9. Standardized instruments should be devised and validated on a wide scale which measure client attitudes toward probation. Again, the required standard of validity should be the provision of useful group mean information rather than judgments on particular clients.
10. Standardized instruments should be devised and implemented on a wide scale which measure changes in client social attitudes. A suitable place to start searching for such instruments is the many scales already in use in psychology, social work and counseling. As with other instruments, the standard of validation required of client social attitude scales should be the ability to provide

group mean information helpful in understanding the gross effects of probation treatment as opposed to information suitable for evaluating the progress of a particular client.

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