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THE PRIORITIZATION OF TREATMENT AMONG TEXAS PAROLE OFFICERS

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A factor analysis using data from 559 parole officers is used to examine the relationship between officers' traits, work situation, and perceived needs. The results show an overwhelming desire for more treatment resources that challenge some established typologies of community supervision officers. Results suggest that seniority, job type, and caseload size were the most powerful factors in predicting the prioritization of treatment resources, whereas race, city size, political ideology, gender, and education also affect respondents' desire for treatment resources. Placed in a context of evolving agency policies, the growing popularity of the "new penology," and the privatization of mental health and substance abuse services, the interpretation of the data is of heuristic interest to national corrections planning.

Keywords: *community corrections; parole officers; treatment*

Community corrections are integral to control and reintegration offenders but simultaneously attract the antagonism of the justice system's critics. Some justify probation and parole as cost-saving devices, whereas others see them as a means of giving selected offenders a humane second chance (Burke, 1995; Duffee & Carlson, 1996; Petersilia, 1997). A few argue against the very existence of community supervision, especially parole, on grounds that it is too lenient (Burke, 1995; Conrad, 1979), but others believe that supervision and related fees are so punitive as to assure high rates of (re)imprisonment (Richards & Jones, 1987). Despite the controversy over their role in the justice system, no firm conclusions can be drawn from the literature as to how probation and parole officers (PPOs) define the goals of their work. Nor has research satisfactorily identified the main impediments to achieving those goals. These questions are especially pertinent today as the concept of treatment-reintegration is increasingly challenged by the new penology's focus on accountability and risk management.

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Probation and PPOs link offenders to the formal mechanisms of both control and rehabilitation and thus play a vital role in corrections. The attitudes of PPOs, and the adequacy of the resources provided them by the agency and community, are crucial indicators of the ability of community corrections to discharge its basic functions. The literature suggests three divergent explanations of PPO supervision style that predict job role orientation and officer priorities; one portrays the PPO as focused on case management and treatment, another suggests more of an administrative-control approach, and a third suggests that preferences and priorities are driven by a complex of environmental factors that may defy explication.

The literature supporting the efficacy of a treatment orientation in PPOs is plentiful and long-standing (Hagerman, 1980; Hanlon, Bateman, & O'Grady, 1999; Herie, Cunningham, & Martin, 2000; Leibrich, 1994; Lotke, 1997; Wilson, 1978). Similarly, the education, race, and seniority of other correctional professionals have been associated with support for treatment (Cullen, Latessa, Burton, & Lombardo, 1993). However, public rejection of leniency in corrections, loss of faith in the efficacy of treatment, tightening state budgets, and other factors have created a "new penology" focused on risk management and administrative efficiency. This approach does not try to eliminate or reduce crime; it simply tries to improve the coordination of the social control system and reduce its cost (Feeley & Simon, 1992; "States Adopting Civil Commitment," 1997). It is mainly concerned with the regulation of actuarial groups (e.g., same-sex child molesters), the use of conditions as a means to quick and forceful intervention, and the potential ability of community corrections to reduce the risk to the public posed by offenders under supervision (Evans, 2000). It appears to be linked to calls for the abolition of parole (Burke, 1995; "Parole," 2001), a return to more punitive and determinant forms of sentencing (Beckett, 1997; Moore, 1995), and increasing use reliance on innovative control methods (Soma, 1994).

This new penology seems to underlie the assertion that PPOs now serve mainly as "agents of the state" rather than of reintegration (Kingsnorth, Cummings, Lopez, & Wentworth, 1999). Similarly, Torres and Latta (2000) argue that organizational skills and an authoritative, forceful approach are the core requirements for supervising drug offenders in the community. Also congruent with the new penology is the suggestion that reconviction measures be used to rate PPO effectiveness (Crosland, 1995). This view suggests that PPOs will be oriented to control, prioritize laws and policies that give them power to control offenders, and conceptualize their role as one focused on incapacitation and deterrence. This sort of rhetoric is certainly common among the agency heads that guide community supervision agencies (e.g.,

Beto, Corbett, & DiIulio, 2000). It is unclear, however, if this new role is an addition to the responsibilities of the PPO or a reconceptualization of it intended to supersede the treatment-reintegration model (Domurad, 2000).

Related to the issue of new versus old penology is the question of how agency policies, organizational environment, and officer priorities interact to create job behaviors. Some assume that administrative orientation of an agency can determine employee priorities (Beto et al., 2000; Kingsnorth et al., 1999). However, the results obtained by Fulton, Stichman, Travis, and Latessa (1997) imply that new policy directives cannot overcome countervailing pressures. These authors imply that PPO orientation is the result of processes endemic to the structure of the job role. Socialization to a particular job role, partly a product of longevity in the role, may also be a factor in predicting the effect of administrative trends. Walker (2001) has long asserted that work groups cling to familiar norms in an effort to "ride out" changing administrative climates and maintain a comfortable status quo. In any case, the effect of the new penology on PPO priorities has not been clarified despite its political and administrative popularity.

A third view of PPO orientation and priorities asserts that departments (and implicitly officers, supervisors, etc.) respond to complex environmental and case-specific forces rather than being driven by broad ideological trends or personal traits and beliefs (Simmons, Cochran, & Blount, 1997). A New York survey found significant variation in supervision preferences across local departments but noted that these preferences were unaffected by variables such as PPO age or political leanings, the local unemployment rate, or the punitiveness of local judges. Racial diversity had only a small effect, the import of which is largely dismissed by these researchers (Sweeney, Rivera, Duffee, & Roscoe, 2000). These results seem to imply the existence of divergent normative systems among local work groups that evolve for reasons yet to be explained.

PRIVATIZATION OF TREATMENT AND THE EXTRA-AGENCY ENVIRONMENT

Accompanying the development of the new penology, and driven by similar ideological forces, is the privatization of government services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment services. Under the leadership of then-Governor George W. Bush Jr. during the 1990s, Texas attempted to increase the number of people provided with mental health and substance abuse services while cutting waiting time and costs ("MHMR Options Examined," 1994; "State Senate Committee," 1994). Although the number

of people served increased as a result, the quality, length, and availability of services have come under substantial criticism (Housewright, 2000a,b; Reedy, 2001). The transition to privatized services had largely been accomplished at the time of the study, but the effects of those changes have only recently come under public scrutiny (Dennis, 2001; Housewright, 2001a,b). Although the services of mental health and substance abuse treatment providers are critical to the operation of community corrections, there is a paucity of literature on the effect of the privatization of these agencies on probation/parole. These data do not directly address the effect of privatization but explore the priorities of parole officers in a state where these services are largely under the control of private, managed-care providers. Our results may therefore be of heuristic value to those concerned with this trend.

Privatization and the new penology spring from similar ideological roots and have been present for some time in American corrections. However, their effect on the needs of community supervision officers has not been ascertained. Many states have dramatically reduced treatment services for offenders in both institutions and the community while emphasizing the punitive and control aspects of community supervision.

SHIFTS IN AGENCY PRIORITIES

During the period immediately prior to the administration of the surveys analyzed here, the Parole Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice increased its monthly officer-offender contact requirements. Although maintaining its stated goals of control and reintegration, these new contact requirements were designed to augment control and accountability rather than treatment and were introduced while the availability of treatment providers was declining. These changes, over such a prolonged period, could be expected to have an effect on the priorities or "felt-needs" of officers. These priorities are conceived as the product of both the officer's personal role definition and the demands of the job as defined by the agency. Borrowing from the police literature, one could refer to the officer's personal definition of their job priorities as a "preferred role" and the agency's as the "mandated role" (Roberg & Kuykendall, 1993; Walker, 1983). The literature describing the roles of PPOs has not yet clearly ascertained the variables that determine why officers prioritize treatment or control. This study uses the self-reported needs of PPOs as indicators of their role orientation in the context of changing agency priorities and pressures from the extraorganizational environment.

OFFICERS' ORIENTATIONS TO THEIR JOB ROLE

In 1972, Dembo identified two subgroups of PPOs: a liberal, urban treatment oriented group and a conservative, rural group concerned mainly with protection of the social order and revocation (Dembo, 1972). The notion of discrete officer ideologies was further developed by Allen, Carson, and Parks (1979) for the federal government and by Strong (1981) in Texas. The latter typology focuses directly on the control-assistance continuum, whereas the former is based on concern with the offender versus concern with the community. Both envision differential stress on the rehabilitative and law enforcement functions of community corrections, although the ideal officer blends these orientations in a "paternal" role.

More recent studies have not refuted these typologies but instead have focused on explaining PPO orientation to treatment or punishment. Whitehead and Lindquist (1992) found that orientation to rehabilitation was rather high among Alabama PPOs. Punitiveness was inversely related to amount of client contact and directly predicted by size of caseloads. Another study found considerable support for rehabilitation even among probation officers given reduced caseloads in a program designed to stress control and surveillance rather than the provision of services (Fulton et al., 1997).

On the other hand, the idea that a cynical, control-oriented attitude is endemic to the PPO role was supported by Rush's (1992) work in Alabama. This study identified such an attitude in 30% of an Alabama sample at levels that exceeded that of police or correctional officers and was unrelated to seniority, gender, or age. These more recent studies have not directly examined the principle variables used in the earlier literature, however (Fulton et al., 1997; Rush, 1992; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1992). Nor do they consistently describe the intra- or extraorganizational context and trends that were salient to their subjects at the time the data were collected. In addition, time with agency has not been extensively examined, although its effects seem germane at least to Rush's claims about the effects of the PPO role on cynicism and punitive orientation. Indeed, there is some paucity of data on the traits of PPOs and especially on the effects of longevity in the role. Gender has also largely been neglected in analyses of PPOs' attitudes and behaviors, despite the fact that studies of prison guards suggest a correlation between femininity and a persuasive (i.e., "treatment") approach to supervision (e.g., Zimmer, 1989).

What is clear from all of these studies is the existence of a continuum between treatment and control along which agencies and officers can be

placed. The reasons for officers to adopt such orientations are unclear, however. Dembo (1972) suggests that urban-rural location combines with individual political ideology to create such tendencies with urban officers being more liberal and treatment oriented. Allen et al. (1979) and Strong (1981) conceive PPO roles as determined by personal preference and ideology. Rush (1992) claims control orientation and cynicism to be endemic to the PPO role, whereas Fulton et al. (1997) suggest the presence of a general treatment orientation in community corrections. Whitehead and Lindquist (1992) advise that client contact and caseload size are the predictors of PPO orientation. This article tests the relative power of each of these alternatives using confirmatory factor analysis of variables describing political ideology, length of service, type of job role, size of caseload, education, gender, race, and city size.

DATA AND METHOD

This article uses data collected from Texas parole officers to address the issue of officer orientation in a state that bases its response to crime primarily on deterrence and incapacitation. Data were collected from parole officers, supervisors, and midlevel managers in 28 of the 66 field offices (46.7%) of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Parole Division. These offices made up a saturation sample of offices served by a community council, as the research dealt, in part, with the effect of these councils on officer perceptions (Quinn, Gould, & Holloway, 2001). Although this nonrandom selection creates a slight and inadvertent bias toward offices in large cities, it provides a reasonably generalizable cross-section of the state's regions and includes many small cities serving mainly rural areas. Much of the data collected about the officers' needs are directly relevant to the issues of how community corrections officers perceive their roles and needs with regard to the treatment-punishment continuum. The sample is made up of 354 line officers (63.3%) and 57 supervisors and administrators (10.2%). An additional 148 persons (26.5%) completed at least part of the questionnaire but did not provide their job titles.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The survey included open-ended, Likert-type, and other fixed choice responses along with a series of items describing the respondents' demographic traits and position in the agency. Respondents sealed their completed survey in an unmarked envelope and returned it to the contact person at their

office who placed these envelopes in larger ones for return to the researcher. Five hundred fifty-nine usable surveys were returned, out of a saturation sample of 1,056 personnel in these offices, creating a response rate of 52.7%.

Although many statistical tools were available to analyze these data, factor analysis was chosen for several compelling reasons. Factor analysis assumes that the observed variables are linear combinations of some underlying (i.e., hypothetical or unobservable) factors. Based on knowledge of the literature, we presume that some factors are common to two or more variables and some are also assumed to be unique to each variable. The unique factors are then (at least in exploratory factor analysis) assumed to be orthogonal to each other. Hence, the unique factors do not contribute to covariation between variables. In other words, only common factors (which are assumed to be fewer in number than the number of observed variables) contribute to the covariation among the observed variables.

The linear system assumed in factor analysis allows identification of the resulting covariance structure without error if the underlying factor loadings are known. However, ascertaining the underlying common factor structure from the observed covariance structure is always problematic. These basic uncertainties have nothing to do with statistical estimation and must be resolved on the basis of extrastatistical postulates—the postulate of factorial causation and the postulate of parsimony. In other words, do the selected variables hang together or have sufficient commonality in clusters that are meaningful from a theoretical point of view? In this case, statistical and conceptual insights converge because the factor groupings are congruent with what was expected based on the theoretical and empirical literature.

RESULTS

At least partial background data were provided by 497 of the 559 respondents (95.6%). The respondents were almost evenly divided between males and females, with a slight majority being women. Most were African American (42.9%, $N = 225$), but a significant percentage were White (35.6%, $N = 187$) or Hispanic (17.5%, $N = 92$). Twenty respondents (4%) checked the “other” option suggesting that they were of Asian or Native American descent. Mean length of service with the agency was 5.8 years but the range was from 0 to 25. The distribution was trimodal with peaks at 1, 2, and 8 years of service. More than half the sample (52%) had less than 5 years of service with parole. Most respondents (59.7%, $N = 334$) had only the required college degree, but nearly 15% ($N = 79$) held an advanced degree, and another 23.2% ($N = 125$) had acquired some credits toward such a degree. Most

described their political ideology as moderate (43.8%, $N = 233$) or conservative (38.7%, $N = 206$), but liberals were also represented (17.5%, $N = 93$).

An open-ended item at the very beginning of the survey asked respondents to list the things they needed to be more effective in their jobs. Responses to this item are described in the upper half of Table 1. Only 2% of the respondents sought new laws or expansion of their control powers ($N = 10$). The vast majority specified treatment services, help getting good jobs, or basic educational programs. The lower part of Table 2 describes responses to an item placed later in the instrument asking what assistance from the community was desired by officers. Again, stricter laws and policies were mentioned by only 10% ($N = 56$), whereas public knowledge of the PPO role, respect for PPOs, services for releasees, and tolerance for releasees were the modal responses. Given the distribution of the respondents' self-reported political ideologies, these results were surprising and suggest that pressures external to the officers may have motivated responses to these open-ended items.

A principle component factor analysis was used to identify the clusters of officer traits. Table 2 shows that each of the variables selected for inclusion in the study had a moderate to high extraction score when communalities are examined prior to the main analysis. Gender had the weakest extraction value whereas type of job, education, and race (White) had the strongest.

Four clear factors emerged from the component analysis. In the first, years and job type loaded directly, whereas size of caseload was slightly weaker and had a negative loading. This indicates that supervisory/administrative respondents with high levels of seniority and normal managerial spans of control (as opposed to a typical officer's caseload) were most sensitive to the need for treatment resources. Given the magnitude of these loadings and the distribution of the sample across types of job assignments, it is probable that many senior line officers concurred with their superiors in responding to the independent variable.

The second factor encompasses race, city size, and perception of the priority given to rehabilitation by the agency. Loadings show that treatment needs were most often mentioned by White respondents located in large cities who did not feel that the agency had increased its orientation to rehabilitation in the preceding year. Whereas agency orientation had a moderate to strong loading value, race and city size had the weakest loadings of any variable used in the analysis.

Gender and political identification made up the third factor. Gender was a dummy variable, with females coded as 1 because it was suspected a priori that they would make up the majority of respondents. The positive loading thus indicates that women are more likely to cite a need for treatment resources than are men. Political identification was coded with conservatives

TABLE 1: Self-Reported Needs of Parole Officers

Need to be effective in job		
Treatment	373	66.7%
Employment assistance	297	53.1%
Education	188	33.6%
Basic services	87	15.6%
Releasee traits	52	9.3%
Role/rules	10	2%
Other	6	1.1%
Need from community		
Public education/knowledge	447	80.0%
Respect/understanding for officers	222	39.7%
Tolerance for releasees	175	31.3%
Services for releasees	157	28.1%
Stricter policies/laws	56	10%
Other	12	2.1%

TABLE 2: Communalities of the Factor Analysis

	<i>Initial</i>	<i>Extraction</i>
Years with agency	1.000	.626
Size of caseload	1.000	.545
Type of job	1.000	.754
Job more rehab oriented	1.000	.515
White	1.000	.713
Large city	1.000	.452
Political identification	1.000	.526
Gender	1.000	.479
Education	1.000	.736

as 1, moderates as 2, and liberals as 3. This positive loading shows that treatment orientation is linked to political ideology in the expected direction. The fact that these two variables loaded together on the same factor shows a statistical commonality between them, whereas our knowledge of these data and the extant literature suggests that the commonality is substantive (see Table 3).

The final significant factor was the only one made up of a single variable. Education had one of the most powerful loading scores but stands alone as a factor in this analysis. Its positive effects are also in the expected direction.

As shown in Table 4, factor 1, made up of seniority, caseload size, and job type, was the most powerful in explaining the desire for treatment resources, explaining more than 20% of the variance in the independent variable. The other three factors were of similar explanatory power and together these four

TABLE 3: Component Matrix of the Factor Analysis

	1	2	3	4
Years with agency	.790	3.710E-02	-3.083E-02	-6.935E-03
Size of caseload	-.623	-.290	-.198	.182
Type of job	.768	.371	.160	-8.022E-03
Job more rehab oriented	.101	-.612	.340	-.120
White	-.279	.533	5.070E-02	.591
Large city	-.284	.490	-.249	-.262
Political identification	-.260	8.597E-02	.671	5.695E-03
Gender	-.196	.184	.638	1.923E-02
Education	.312	-.278	-4.417E-02	.748

NOTE: The variables that compose each factor are in bold.

factors explained nearly 60% of the variance in the desire to see more treatment resources made available to prison releasees.

CONCLUSION

The fact that most Texas parole officers are relatively new to the role suggests that the effects of the job role may not have yet had their full effects on respondents. Further, most respondents claim to be of moderate to conservative political ideology despite the fact that they overwhelmingly prioritize treatment resources rather than new control mechanisms.

The combined effects of seniority, job type, and caseload size were the most powerful factor in predicting the prioritization of treatment resources. This tends to refute Rush's (1992) claim that the job role leads PPOs to adopt a control orientation but is congruent with Cullen et al.'s (1993) findings that wardens' orientation to treatment increased with experience. The direct relationship of seniority and treatment orientation could support the idea that junior PPOs are more oriented to the values of the new penology, but the fact that administrators are similarly desirous of these resources suggests experience to be the dominant factor. Loadings for caseload size echo those of Whitehead and Lindquist's (1992). However, the high priority given to treatment resources by administrators challenges those authors' suggestion that client contact inclines officers to treatment.

Race and city size loaded with rejection of the idea that the agency was rehabilitation oriented to create factor 2. Linkage of metropolitan location with a treatment orientation was predicted by Dembo (1972), but the effects of race are not in the expected direction in these data. It is White officers who are most likely to prioritize the need for treatment resources. The negative

TABLE 4: Total Variance Explained by Factor Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalue			Extraction Sum of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.974	21.932	21.932	1.974	21.932	21.932
2	1.240	13.775	35.707	1.240	13.775	35.707
3	1.105	12.278	47.985	1.105	12.278	47.985
4	1.025	11.389	59.374	1.025	11.389	59.374

loading of perceived agency orientation to rehabilitation on this factor may suggest that officers in large cities face organizational obstacles to procuring treatment. Alternatively, those in rural areas may simply be accustomed to a lack of treatment resources. This question should be raised in future research efforts.

The linkage of female officers with a more liberal ideology was not wholly unexpected, but the fact that these two variables form a cohesive factor is extremely interesting given the paucity of data on gender and PPOs. This relationship is one that bears further exploration. Likewise, the effect of education was not surprising, but the failure of this variable to load with either race or gender suggests that our knowledge of this variable's effect on PPO orientation to job role requires further analysis. In particular, the focus of that education (e.g., criminal justice versus counseling) may prove to be an interesting variable in future analyses.

These data portray treatment orientation to be the product of a complex of demographic, structural, and personal factors. Treatment is most desired by experienced PPOs and managers with small caseloads working in metropolitan centers when rehabilitation is not perceived as a high priority within the agency and resources are increasingly difficult to locate beyond it. It is also sought by well-educated female officers who are often more liberal than their male colleagues. It further appears that the new penology has not attained dominance among Texas parole officers despite the agency's increasing emphasis on control. These data cast doubt on the efficacy of the new penology and privatization efforts due to their failure to meet the needs of line officers. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, we determine that the reduction of available treatment resources due to the state's privatization efforts created a situation in which experienced officers and managers came to prioritize a shrinking resource. Combined with increasing stress on control via new contact requirements, this makes PPOs especially salient of their need for treatment resources. We conclude by suggesting that future research on

role orientations in criminal justice agencies take into account changes in the systems with which the agency interacts as well as the traits of the functionaries and the policies of the organization. Even when these changes defy quantification as do those reported here, discussion of their apparent effect on data is indispensable.

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