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Characteristics of Recidivism Among Regular and Intensive Probationers

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Criminal Justice and Criminology

by
Jennifer Joseph
May 2001

John T. Whitehead, Chair
Michael C. Braswell
Larry S. Miller

Keywords: Probation, Recidivism, Intensive Supervision, Drug Abuse, Education

ABSTRACT

Characteristics of Recidivism Among Regular and Intensive Probationers

by

Jennifer Joseph

This study examined characteristics of 100 intensive probationers and 100 regular probationers to have a better understanding of why some probationers recidivate and others do not. Logistic analysis was used to analyze the following variables: age, race, gender, employment status, level of education, convicted offense, prior misdemeanor arrests, prior felony arrests, history of drug abuse, and type of probation. It was discovered that age, prior misdemeanor arrests, and offender category were significant variables correlated to recidivism. These findings are consistent with prior research and provide information that can be helpful to probation and parole officers in their supervision of offenders as well as to the criminal justice system when placing offenders on probation or parole.

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to the following:

To my family who gave me the strength and encouragement needed to complete this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank God because without Him I could not have completed or even attempted this paper.

My sincere appreciation to my committee members.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

John Augustus is credited as being the first probation officer. Probation began as a temporary suspension of sentence to help an offender gain employment and be rehabilitated back into the community. Probation was an alternative given to those offenders who were thought to be capable of rehabilitation. Today rehabilitation is no longer the main issue when placing an offender on probation. This type of alternative sentencing is mainly used as a tool to reduce prison and jail overcrowding. Probation (regular and intensive) provides for community based supervision of an offender in which he or she must obey rules set forth by the court and/or probation department, such as maintaining employment, submitting to random drug testing, and counseling.

Statement of the Problem

State corrections administrators in the United States report that 775 prisons are operating at over-capacity – 47% of them at 120% in excess of capacity (Sims & Jones, 1997). This overcrowding does not appear to be slowing down. Probation and other alternatives to incarceration are generally created in hopes that overcrowding will be reduced. Probation is the alternative that is used most. There are 3,773,600 adults on probation (United States Department of Justice Press Release 7/2000). One of the missions of most probation departments is to maintain public safety. Because of the increase in probation caseloads it is important to have an understanding of which individuals will be best suited for supervision in the community. Identifying this target population is a problem that can be helped through research. Research

indicates that some variables are correlated with probation recidivism. Unemployment, substance abuse, criminal history, and seriousness of convicted offense are a few examples of variables that have been found to be correlated with probation failure (Jones, 1995; Schmidt & Witte, 1988; Whitehead, 1991).

More research is needed in the criminal justice system to decide who is more likely to succeed on probation. Criminal justice officials need to decide which individuals are at highest and lowest risks for succeeding or failing on probation in order to maintain public safety. For example, if it is found that those individuals with a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse recidivate more than those without these problems, then the criminal justice system can turn its attention to rehabilitation programs for substance abusing individuals. Such research results may provide these programs the evidence they need to obtain funding. Thus, not only do criminal justice officials have a better idea of which offenders are best suited for probation (regular, ISP, or neither), but they may also have a better idea of what probation itself needs to be successful. These are two important factors in addressing prison overcrowding.

Purpose of the Research

This research sought to reveal variables that are related to probation success and failure so that there would be a better understanding of what may help reduce recidivism. The variables that were analyzed are age, race, gender, employment status, level of education, convicted offense, prior misdemeanor arrests, prior felony arrests, and history of drug abuse. Whether the probationer was on regular or intensive supervision was also analyzed. For the purpose of this study recidivism is defined as a new felony conviction and/or a technical violation.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses that will be tested in this study are as follows:

1. Age is negatively correlated with probation recidivism.
2. Race is correlated with probation recidivism (minorities are more likely to recidivate).
3. Gender is correlated with probation recidivism (men are more likely to recidivate).
4. Employment status is negatively correlated with probation recidivism.
5. Level of education is negatively correlated with probation recidivism.
6. Convicted offense is correlated with probation recidivism (violent offenders are less likely to recidivate).
7. Number of prior misdemeanor arrests is positively correlated with probation recidivism.
8. Number of prior felony arrests is positively correlated with probation recidivism.
9. History of drug abuse is positively correlated with probation recidivism.
10. Category of offender is correlated with probation recidivism (regular probationers are more likely to have a new felony conviction and intensive probationers are more likely to have a technical violation).

Limitations of the Study

Because the data were collected from cases assigned in Sullivan County, Tennessee between January 1994 and December 1997, it was limited to probationers in a northeast section of Tennessee. Thus, the data may not represent other states or other areas of the state of Tennessee. The information was gathered from Tennessee Department of Correction files and from the Tennessee Offender Management System (TOMIS) and, therefore, relies on data that

were obtained from a source other than the probationer. The follow-up information on arrests were limited to felony offenses in the state of Tennessee only. Any misdemeanor arrests that may have occurred (whether in the state of Tennessee or another state) or any other felony arrests that may have occurred in another state were not available.

Definitions of Terms

Incarceration: The offender serving a sentence in jail or prison.

Intensive Supervision Probation: An offender's release into the community under a specialized program that provides close monitoring and imposes rigorous conditions on the offender. It is used as an alternative to incarceration.

Offender: An individual who has been convicted of a crime.

Parole: The release of an offender from incarceration after he/she has been sentenced, placing him in the community under the supervision of a parole officer.

Parole Officer: An individual that monitors an offender who has been released from incarceration and placed on parole.

Probation: An alternative to incarceration in which an offender is placed under the supervision of a probation officer.

Probation Officer: An individual who monitors an offender who is released into the community and placed on probation.

Regular Probation: An offender's release into the community under the supervision of a probation officer. It is used as an alternative to incarceration.

Recidivism: A new arrest, new conviction, or technical violation while on probation.

Technical Violation: A violation of an offender's rules of probation that is not considered a new arrest or new conviction.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prisons and jails in the United States are overcrowded. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that at midyear of 1999 there were 1,860,520 persons incarcerated in the nation's prisons and jails (Beck, 2000). Most states have been turning to alternative sentencing to alleviate this problem. This has resulted in approximately 79% of all offenders living in the community. Of these, nearly two thirds are on probation (Sims & Jones, 1997). Other types of alternatives to incarceration programs are intensive supervision probation (ISP), halfway houses, shock incarceration, house arrest, residential treatment facilities, and day reporting centers (Koehler, 1992).

Probation has been the main alternative used to help relieve overcrowding. It began with John Augustus in 1841. He is credited as being the first probation officer. John Augustus created a service in which he provided bail for men (and later women and juveniles) for temporary suspension of their sentence. During this postponement of sentence he helped the offender get a job, find a home, and counseled them. If the offender did well during this period he would be charged with only a fine and/or court costs (Sieh, 1993).

John Augustus was involved in the temperance society of that time and was, thus, interested in "saving" the offenders. He was concerned only with those individuals he believed could be rehabilitated and who were more likely to refrain from further criminal activity. It is interesting to note that alcohol abuse was considered to be related to crime as far back as the time of Augustus (Sieh, 1993).

Probation was eventually taken over by the state. Funding was created to help pay officers who eventually replaced volunteers. In 1878 a statewide probation law went into effect in Massachusetts and eventually cities and towns were authorized to employ probation officers. The first paid probation officers were police officers who were put under the supervision of the chief of police. This was soon found to be a mistake and by 1891 no probation officer could be an active police officer (Sieh, 1993).

During the 1960s and 1970s community corrections emphasized rehabilitation. The focus was on the offender's needs and problems and the probation officer was seen as a "probation counselor" whose role was to rehabilitate. Probation has been criticized, however, for failing to be successful in rehabilitating most offenders (Clear & Shaperio, 1986; Petersilia & Turner, 1993). A problem in probation has been a failure to follow ideal goals. For example, even at the turn of the century caseloads were supposed to be low to allow for closer and individualized supervision of offenders. The reality, however, was high and unmanageable caseloads (Rothman, 1980).

Today the severe overcrowding in correctional facilities has created larger caseloads for probation officers with offenders who are more dangerous. These changes have resulted in a restructuring of the role of a probation officer. The current emphasis of probation is to protect society (Lawrence, 1991).

No longer are judges sentencing only misdemeanants to probation, but felons are also being placed on probation in large numbers. Because of the heavy reliance on probation, this alternative to incarceration has created some concern for safety among society and politicians. As a result, a substantial amount of research has focused on just how well probation works by looking at recidivism rates among offenders (Sims & Jones, 1997).

The RAND study looked at 1,672 California felony probationers to measure recidivism. The study tracked the probationers for a 40-month follow-up period and found that 65% were rearrested, 51% were convicted of new crimes, and 34% were incarcerated. These results caused some researchers to suggest that the role of probation be reconceptualized (Sims & Jones, 1997).

Although the RAND study supplies information that recidivism rates are high for two counties in California, this may not be so for other jurisdictions. Thus, the study has been criticized by many researchers. Whitehead's (1991) criticisms are that the two counties used were selected because the officials there were cooperating with the study offering good follow-up data and that the two California counties were not necessarily representative of the United States, or other California counties. In his own study, he found that only 36% of New Jersey felony probationers were rearrested and only 31% reconvicted after a 36-month period.

Vito (1986) studied felony probationers in Kentucky for a 36-month period and found that only 22% were rearrested. In addition to this finding McGaha, Fichter, and Hirschburg (1987) followed a sample of felony probationers in Missouri and also found that only 22% were rearrested. Research conducted by the Bureau of Justice in 1992 found that of approximately 79,000 felons sentenced to probation, 43% were rearrested within three years of sentencing. Similar results were found regarding parole in a study conducted by the Attorney General's Office for the state of Hawaii. Researchers found that of 366 parolees, 46% were rearrested before their term expired (Geerken & Hayes, 1993).

Thus, there are conflicting reports on how well probation is performing. Some studies reflect alarming recidivism rates, whereas other studies report much lower rates. One conclusion in examining this research is that some jurisdictions are much better at probation success than others. A second conclusion is that perhaps not enough resources have been directed toward

probation. For example, perhaps more attention needs to be directed towards the needs of probationers. The threat to society varies.

Previous research has also focused on correlates of recidivism. This research is important because it gives a better understanding of why some individuals do not perform well on probation and can suggest courses of action for probation officers. For example, if unemployment is correlated with recidivism, probation officers can make efforts toward helping probationers obtain employment. This in turn could help reduce recidivism and the threat to public safety.

When doing research on recidivism rates concerning probation one must consider variables that are correlated with probation outcome. Morgan (1994) gives nine variables that have been found in prior research to be consistently correlate with probation outcome: (1) gender, (2) age, (3), marital status, (4) education level, (5) race, (6) employment, (7) prior criminal history, (8) being a property offender, and (9) sentence length.

Morgan (1994) looked at the relationship between these variables and probation success or failure for 266 felony probationers located in Tennessee. She found all of the variables, with the exception of age and race, to be statistically significantly related to probation success or failure. Females, married probationers, and those with a higher education were found to have greater success on probation, whereas those individuals who had prior felonies, prior probation, and prior institutional commitments were more likely to fail probation. She found that the best predictors of probation outcome in her study were gender, marital status, work status, prior felonies, and conviction offense.

Sims and Jones (1997) examined several of these variables identified by Morgan (1994) by looking at 2,850 felony probationers in North Carolina who were removed from probation for

either committing a new crime or for technical violations. Only 13% were revoked due to commission of a new crime. Significant findings in this research were: (1) as age increased the likelihood of violating probation decreased, (2) being African American increased the probability of failing on probation, (3) as sentence length increased so did the probability of failing probation, (4) unstable employment, marital status, and number of past convictions were all significant predictors of success or failure on probation.

Whitehead (1991) examined the effectiveness of probation for a sample of burglars, robbers, and controlled substance offenders placed on probation in 1976-1977. When looking at a 4-year follow-up, 40% of the probationers were rearrested, 35% reconvicted, 17% incarcerated, 11% were imprisoned, and 15% were jailed. It was found that prior convictions, type of offense, age, race, use of heroin, and employment were all statistically significant correlates of recidivism.

Waller (1979) conducted a study on 423 men who were released from prison in Ontario, Canada in 1968. Of these ex-prisoners, 65% of those discharged without supervision and 44% of those placed on parole were arrested at least once within 24-months from their release. Waller concludes from his study that parole leads to a lower re-arrest rate. Other findings in the study are that age and criminal record in combination make the best predictor of post-release arrest and conviction.

Intensive Supervision Probation

In addition to regular probation, some states offer an Intensive Supervision Program (ISP). This probation consists of smaller caseloads that allow for closer supervision of each probationer. Intensive probation helps solve the problem of prison overcrowding and allows for

a “get tough” surveillance oriented probation. This appeases both politicians and the community.

The National Institute of Justice and the RAND corporation evaluated a demonstration project sponsored by the Bureau of Justice. It was intended to answer the question of how intensive supervision probation (ISP) relates to recidivism. The study involved about 2,000 offenders, 14 programs in 9 states, and ran from 1986-1991. Each state involved was asked to design an ISP program. All but two designed enhanced probation or parole programs for more serious offenders (Petersilia & Turner, 1993).

The demonstration found that ISP programs were not very successful in reducing recidivism (new arrests and technical violations). It was found that 65% of the ISP group committed technical violations compared to 38% for the control group. In regard to new arrests, at the end of a 1-year period approximately the same proportion of ISP offenders had new arrests as the control group (37% for ISP and 33% for control – not statistically significant) (Petersilia & Turner, 1993).

ISP programs were found to be effective in surveillance and as intermediate programs. In every site there were more personal contacts and monitoring than regular probation/parole. This resulted in a more stringent punishment than would normally be given for nominal supervision (Petersilia & Turner, 1993).

In regard to treatment and service components, it was found that ISP offenders paid more restitution, participated more in counseling programs, and maintained employment more often than those in the control group. Participation in community service work varied from each site, but it was not found that ISP offenders participated significantly more than those under regular supervision (Petersilia & Turner, 1993).

There are two factors that must be considered when trying to find the reason why some alternative programs do not stop recidivism. One very important factor is that probation officers are often overworked. They are asked to monitor too many probationers at one time. For example, Petersilia states that in 1994 one officer was expected to monitor 285 probationers. This contrasts with what some consider to be an ideal caseload of 30 (Petersilia, 1997). Even when new programs such as ISP are initiated, caseload guidelines and limits may not be followed. How can an officer effectively do his or her job of rehabilitating and surveillance? This could also result in the desire to “get rid of” some of his/her caseload.

Another important factor that must be looked at is that those individuals on programs such as ISP supervision are under close surveillance and may be caught in an enforcement net. Those on regular supervision may be committing the same number of crimes and technical violations but are not caught because they are not under such strict surveillance by the probation officer and/or the police. Also, ISP offenders are a higher risk. This makes them more prone to commit technical violations, such as positive drug tests. Thus, the officially recorded recidivism rate may not be an accurate indicator of an offender’s criminality. It is also important to distinguish between misdemeanants and felons because misdemeanants have a lower recidivism rate than felons (Petersilia, 1997).

Unemployment

Unemployment is a factor that must be considered when examining recidivism rates in probation. Jones (1995) analyzed a sample of 307 offenders and found unemployment to be one of the strongest predictors of probation failure. Other studies have shown employment/unemployment to be a significant factor in probation success or failure (Mackenzie,

Shaw, & Souryal, 1992; Morgan, 1994; Sims & Jones, 1997; Waller, 1979). In his study of 423 ex-prisoners Waller (1979) found that one-third reported some aspect of employment or money as the primary reason why they committed their offense. If a probationer is unemployed he/she would have a difficult time meeting probation obligations such as probation fees, court costs, etc., thus leading to violation of probation.

Some unemployed offenders may be more motivated to seek income through illegal means resulting in higher recidivism for this group of offenders. In Morgan's (1994) study it was found that those individuals who were unemployed had little commitment to conformity. These offenders may conclude that they have little to lose in committing a new crime.

Many offenders have very poor job skills or scant employment history to offer when searching for employment. Waller (1979) found in his study of ex-prisoners that before going to prison 80% of the jobs held were in the unskilled or semi-skilled categories. Committing a new offense may result in more money than what many offenders would make in one month's wages in a legitimate job. Also, their criminal status will negatively influence their ability to obtain or retain better employment opportunities. Two thirds of the ex-prisoners believed that they had to lie about why there was a gap in their employment history.

Substance Abuse

It has been found that alcohol and drugs play an important role in criminal activity. Many offenders have been found to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or both during the commission of their crime/s. This is obvious when looking at Driving Under the Influence, Driving While Intoxicated, and Boating While Intoxicated cases. Nearly half of the 423 ex-prisoners in Waller's (1979) study were defined as having a problem with alcohol. The Bureau

of Justice Statistics reports that in 1995 nearly two thirds of probationers reported driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Mumola & Bonczar, 1998).

The National Institute of Justice (2000) reports a study that was conducted on more than 30,000 male arrestees in 34 sites and more than 10,000 female arrestees in 32 sites. It was found that in 27 of the 34 sites and in 22 of the 32 sites more than 60% of adult male and female arrestees tested positive for at least one of the following drugs: cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, opiates, or PCP. Marijuana was found to be the most frequent drug used by males and cocaine was found to be the most frequent drug used by females.

In 1998 the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse reported that 76% of state inmates had regular drug use in the month preceding arrest. In a study conducted by Teplin, Abrams, and McClelland in 1997 (as cited in Latessa & Allen, 1999) on jail inmates it was found that 1 in 4 of those individuals who stated they had used drugs in the month prior to their convicted offense had committed the crime to get money for drugs.

Pallone (1990) suggests three ways that drugs are related to criminal behavior:

1. Drugs function as an engine in that drug abuse induces a person to commit an act that he/she would not likely commit sober. A calm individual ingests a drug and suddenly becomes dangerous, a thief, etc. The drug alters the individual's mind and he/she becomes someone they are not.
2. Drugs function as a lubricant by bringing out a predisposition to criminality. An example of this would be a sex offender. This individual may be able to control himself except when under the influence of a drug.
3. Drugs function as a motive in that crime becomes the source of income needed to buy drugs. Many offenders burglarize so that they can sell the items for drug money.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics conducted a survey in 1995 on the substance abuse of probationers. It was discovered that about two-thirds of probationers may be characterized as alcohol- or drug-involved offenders. Seventy percent reported past drug use and 47% were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of their offense. However, probationers reported lower levels of drug use than those reported by local jail and state prison inmates. For instance, 79% of local jail inmates reported past drug use and 82% of state prisoners reported past drug use (Mumola & Bonczar, 1998).

Many offenders who are involved with drug activity and placed on probation or parole continue this activity/use while under supervision. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that in 1991, 156,000 parolees during their average 13 month stay on parole committed twenty-four thousand drug offenses. Thirty thousand drug offenses were committed by the nearly 162,000 probation violators during an average 17 month supervision period (Cohen, 1995).

Abuse of illegal drugs and/or alcohol does not appear to have a positive effect on offenders. Offenders who are under the influence have a skewed view of reality. Drug addiction and/or alcoholism are two characteristics of an individual who is most likely to return to prison (Schmidt & Witte, 1988). The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that two thirds of probationers can be characterized as alcohol-or-drug involved offenders and less than a fifth of those tested for drugs are treated (Mumola & Bonczar, 1998).

Treatment for these individuals needs to be taken into consideration. Benedict, Huff-Corzine, and Corzine (1998) found that drug treatment helps reduce further criminal activity among male, felony probationers who have committed property crimes. In 1997 only 15% of state inmates and only 8.4% of federal inmates reported participation in treatment programs while on probation or parole (Beck, 2000). In a 1997 survey of state and federal inmates, 83% of

state prisoners reported past drug use and 57% reported using drugs in the month before their offense. Only 10% of these offenders reported receiving drug treatment since their admission. These reported levels of drug treatment are lower than those reported in 1991 (only 25%) (Mumola, 1997).

Criminal History

Research consistently shows that an offender's criminal history/prior record is significantly related to recidivism (Albonetti & Hepburn, 1997; Morgan, 1994; Roundtree et al., 1984; Sims & Jones, 1997; Whitehead, 1991). Visser, Lattimore, and Linster (1991) used a hazards model and found in their study of youthful offenders that criminal history yielded the largest effect on the hazards function. In 1991 the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 27% of probation violators had been on probation three or more times and 43% of parole violators reported three or more previous incarcerations in jail (Cohen, 1995). Jones (1995) found that the number of prior misdemeanor convictions was one of the strongest predictors of probation failure.

The significance of criminal history/prior record on recidivism makes the correctional system appear to be a revolving door. Provisions have been made over the years to try to remedy this problem such as "three strikes you're out" and "standard offender" laws when sentencing. According to Petersilia (1987) the greater the number of juvenile and adult convictions an offender has, the more likely he/she will recidivate. With more and more criminals entering the prison system this area of research needs to be taken into consideration when sentencing so that more space can be made available for those individuals who appear to be career criminals.

Seriousness of Offense

Many studies have shown that type of offense can have differential effects on recidivism. Whitehead (1991) made comparisons between probationers convicted of robbery, burglary, and offenses containing controlled dangerous substances (CDS offenses). He found that robbers and burglars had nearly the same recidivism rate in that about half were rearrested, whereas only one third of CDS offenders were rearrested. Robbers and burglars were also found to commit more crimes after the original charge/s than that of CDS offenders. Of the three, burglars were more likely to recidivate.

Petersilia, Turner, Kahan, and Peterson (1985) found in the RAND study that type of offense was one of four variables that best explained recidivism among probationers. They found offenders convicted of property offenses to be more likely to recidivate than robbers or drug offenders and be rearrested faster. An interesting finding in the study was that these individuals were more likely to commit offenses that were similar to their original conviction/s. Vito (1986) found similar results in Kentucky in that 55.6% of the burglars in his study were charged with another property crime.

Morgan (1994) found type of convicted offense to be one of the best predictors of probation outcome. Property offenders were discovered to be more likely to fail, but this relationship was not found to be statistically significant. Vito (1986) and McGaha et al. (1987) both found property offenders to be more likely to recidivate. Violent offenders were less likely to recidivate. Holland et al. (1982) studied probation outcome for 198 male offenders and found that nonviolent offenders were more likely to recidivate than those who were violent.

It seems apparent from these studies that property offenders are most likely to recidivate. Violence is not a good predictor of recidivism because it can be a transitory psychological state.

Persistent nonviolent criminality appears to more likely lead to continued criminality. These findings must be taken into consideration when granting probation or parole. Society, however, would more than likely not agree with violent offenders being placed on community supervision rather than property offenders (Morgan, 1993).

Age, Education, and Gender

Many studies have shown that age, education, and gender are significant in regard to probation success or failure. After analyzing data on 617 probationers in Arizona, Albonetti and Hepburn (1997) found that male offenders who did not complete high school and who had a prior arrest record had an increased risk of probation revocation. They also concluded that an offender's age, gender, and ethnicity are not significantly related to failure time during the first two years of probation. However, it was discovered that this last finding was significant for only those individuals who were the most socially disadvantaged.

Harrison and Gfroerer (1992) found in their analysis of a 1991 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse that age was the strongest predictor of involvement in violent and property crime. School dropouts were more likely to report involvement in violent crime. Rhodes (1986) looked at the effect of offender characteristics on time to rearrest. He found that the average time to recidivism is shorter for younger offenders and those less educated.

Roundtree (1984) looked at 100 probation cases closed during the years of 1975 and 1978. Fourteen percent were found to be revoked and 86% successfully completed probation. Level of education, prior record, age at first arrest, number of prior arrests, offender classification, and length of probation were all found to be significant in relation to recidivism.

Other studies have also found age to be a factor in probation success or failure (Caldwell, 1951; Davis, 1964; England, 1955).

A Department of Justice press release reports that in 1999 women made up 22% of the probation population and 12% of the parole population. Only about 6.5% made up the prison population that same year (Beck, 2000). The gender difference in the criminal justice system has been a widely studied topic. One explanation for why there are more men incarcerated than women is that women's roles are viewed as incompatible with criminality. Women are viewed by many in the criminal justice system as caregivers. Judicial reluctance to incarcerate women tends to be related to the traditional roles women are viewed as having. Because they are needed at home by their children and/or spouse, women are less likely to be sent to jail or prison (Norland & Mann, 1984).

Because women make up a low percentage of the probation/parole population, it appears that revocations for women would also be lower. This is supported in Norland and Mann's 1984 study on probationers. They analyzed violation reports submitted on 322 males and 17 females in the southeast and found that violation reports were more likely to be filed on males than females. Reports on females tended to be for technical violations while those for males were more likely for felony charges.

Race

According to Pratt (1998), there are 1,471 black inmates in prisons and jails per 100,000 black United States residents. This is compared to 207 white inmates in prisons and jails per 100,000 white United States residents. The National Institute of Justice (2000) reports that of those individuals on probation 35% are black and 63% are white; of those on parole, 44% are

black and 55% are white. The disproportionate number of African Americans in the criminal justice system has been a controversial topic over the years.

Many studies have looked at race as a variable affecting recidivism among offenders and have found it to be significant. In Alarid, Burton, and Cullen's (2000) study of 1,153 incarcerated felons, age and race/ethnicity were the variables that were the most consistent and strongest predictors for rates of offending. It was found that Caucasian men and women were more likely than non-white men and women to have been involved in a drug crime and Caucasian men were more likely to commit a property offense than non-white men.

Benedict and Huff-Corzine (1997) analyzed a survey of 12,369 male, felony offenders who were on probation for property offenses to determine influences on recidivism. The recidivism rates for minorities were higher than that for whites – 39.8% for Hispanics, 35.8% for blacks, and 25.0% for whites. History of drug abuse for Hispanics and whites was the only variable that was found to be significant at the .05 level. Other important findings were that age is significant for blacks and supervision level is significant for whites at the .10 level. White offenders who were on a more intensive type of supervision and older black males were more likely to be rearrested than their counterparts.

Albonetti and Hepburn (1997) found in their study of 617 probationers that an offender's minority status was significant in regard to probation revocation, but only for those individuals with less than a high school education and no prior arrests. Mackenzie, Shaw, and Souryal (1992) performed two studies comparing successful adjustment to supervision among parolees, probationers, shock participants, and shock dropouts. In both studies it was discovered that white offenders and older offenders were found to adjust better during community supervision.

Though race has been found to be a significant factor in regard to recidivism, it is not a variable that can be used by the courts when granting probation or by the parole board when granting parole. Findings may reveal this to be an important variable, but there is really no way of knowing if it is race alone that is influencing recidivism among offenders. One possibility, for example, is that class affects both race and recidivism. If the criminal justice system based whether or not to grant an offender probation or parole on one's race, it would be unethical and discriminatory. Also, there may be discrimination against minorities at the arrest level, prosecution level, or sentencing level that makes it appear to be a significant variable at the postrelease level.

Pratt (1998) argues that there are three general theoretical perspectives that one can support in regard to why this difference exists at the sentencing level:

1. The differential involvement perspective
2. The direct impact perspective
3. The interactionist perspective

The differential involvement perspective suggests that blacks are given harsher sentences than whites because they are involved in the commission of more crimes or more serious crimes. Thus, blacks will receive longer sentences than whites because the crimes they commit are more serious or their prior record is lengthier, resulting in harsher sentences.

The direct-impact perspective takes on a neo-Marxian analysis. It states that differences in sentencing between the races exist because minorities are deprived groups discriminated against by elite individuals who control the criminal justice system. Thus, this perspective would argue that even after controlling for severity and prior record, race would be a significant factor in sentencing disparity.

The interactionist perspective states that race is significant in regard to sentencing only through its interaction with other variables and/or conditions such as method of disposition, prior record, seriousness of the offense, type of offense, type of attorney, etc. For example, after analyzing 1,379 drug felony cases in California, Barnes and Kingsnorth (1996) found that blacks were more likely than Latinos and Latinos more likely than whites to receive longer prison sentences – or to even receive prison at all. They conclude that this is not because of race but because of the type of drug members of these races choose to use.

The penal code is structured so that charges involving certain types of drugs, such as crack cocaine, result in harsher sentences. The drug/s of choice for each member of race is/are different, thus, resulting in sentencing disparity. Barnes and Kingsnorth (1996) also concluded that the law provides harsher punishments for those charged with possession for sale and sale than for those charged with simple possession. The authors argue that these types of offenses are characteristic of certain races.

Research regarding the influence of race on sentencing is mixed. Zatz (1984) found that whites are treated harsher in regard to homicide, while blacks and Chicanos are treated harsher in regard to rape. Property crimes revealed no significant difference between these races. Kramer and Ulmer (1996) found that race appears to be one variable involved in differences between dispositional departures among defendants (sentences other than incarceration). However, Pratt (1998) found in his research that race was not a significant influence on sentencing. More research needs to be conducted on the influence of race throughout the criminal justice process.

Summary

Because of the overcrowding in prisons and jails in the United States there needs to be an alternative to incarceration for criminals. Probation/parole is one alternative that has come about. It began with John Augustus in 1841 and has evolved to 3,773,600 adults on probation and 712,700 adults on parole (United States Department of Justice Press Release, 7/2000).

Because of the large number of individuals placed under community supervision, researchers have focused on whether or not these alternatives are working. The results are mixed: the RAND study found that 65% of felony probationers were rearrested; Whitehead (1991) found that only 36% of the felony probationers in his study were rearrested; and Vito (1986) found an even lower percentage of 22% to be rearrested in his study of Kentucky felony probationers.

Some variables that have been analyzed to be significant factors in probation success or failure are unemployment, seriousness of the current offense, substance abuse, criminal history, age, education, gender, and race. Those individuals who are unemployed have been found to be more likely to fail probation. There is a consistent finding in research that property offenders are more likely to recidivate than violent or drug offenders. Offenders who have had a history of drug abuse as well as those with a prior record and who are younger have also been found to be more likely to recidivate. Education level and gender have also been found to be related to probation success or failure. Lastly, recidivism rates for minorities have been found to be higher than that of white individuals.

Probation and parole continue to appear to be an appropriate alternative to incarceration. Though there is recidivism among many of these individuals, research continues to pinpoint variables that are related to probation failure. With continued research in this area, information

could be provided to the court system and the parole boards to assist them regarding who is more likely to succeed on probation and parole. Also, greater efforts should be expended on those probationers who have characteristics associated with recidivism. For example, probation officers should go to greater lengths to ensure that drug offenders get the treatment they need. Any success in dealing with the correlates of recidivism should result in more positive recidivism outcomes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to reveal variables that are associated with probation recidivism. A logistic regression analysis was conducted on data involving 100 regular probation cases and 100 intensive probation cases that were obtained from another researcher. These cases were selected from a random list that were assigned in Sullivan County, Tennessee between January 1994 and December 1997. Every fifth case of 509 intensive supervision cases and every eighteenth case of 1800 regular supervision cases are represented in the sample.

The Tennessee Offender Management Information System (TOMIS) was used to retrieve information regarding each offender's current offense, prior record, demographics, social characteristics, technical violations, and new arrests. TOMIS is a computer database used by the Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole and the Tennessee Department of Correction to enter offender information. In some instances this information was received from individual pre-sentence and/or post-sentence reports. The information obtained was coded into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a comprehensive computer program system for analyzing data.

The purpose of this study was to determine what offender variables are correlated with probation recidivism. Recidivism was determined by a follow-up of the cases through December 1998 by the probation officer who gathered the initial data. The information used to determine recidivism consisted of new felony convictions, new felony arrests (if the defendant was still on probation at the time of the new charge) that occurred in the state of Tennessee, and technical violations. New arrests or convictions that may have occurred in another may not have been

available. Any information on the offender after his/her discharge may not have been available. For this study new felony convictions and technical violations were the only forms of recidivism measured. Any new felony arrests were discarded.

The variables that were used in the study are consistent with variables that have been used in previous research regarding probation recidivism (Morgan, 1994; Sims & Jones, 1997; Whitehead, 1991). The frequencies for each variable were analyzed through SPSS by using logistic regression analysis. This allowed for a determination of significant relationships between the variables and probation recidivism.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

This study's focus was on the analysis of recidivism among probationers. To understand why some probationers recidivate and others do not, variables such as age, race, employment history, level of education, gender, convicted offense, prior arrests, and history of drug abuse were analyzed. In this study recidivism was measured by new felony convictions or technical violations. Two hundred probationers were examined. One hundred were regular probationers and 100 were intensive probationers. Logistic regression was used to compare the two groups.

The two dependant variables in the study were new felony convictions and technical violations. The independent variables were age, race, gender, employment history, level of education, convicted offense, prior misdemeanor arrests, prior felony arrests, and history of drug use. When both types of offenders were analyzed together type of probation (offender category) was added as an additional independent variable.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample of probationers consisted of both intensive and regular probationers. These two groups were almost identical in age and gender, as seen in table 1. Approximately 90% of the regular probationers and approximately 95% of the intensive probationers were white. This is consistent with the population distribution in the county that this sample was taken from. Males made up approximately 78% for both regular and intensive probationers. The mean age for regular probationers was 31.6 whereas it was 26.7 for intensive probationers, as shown in Table 2. Those individuals on regular probation had a slightly higher level of education of 10.4 years of school compared to 9.9 years for intensive probationers.

History of drug abuse was another variable examined in this study. This variable was high among both groups of probationers. The percentage of regular probationers reporting a history of drug abuse was 51.6%. Over sixty percent (61.2%) of the intensive probationers had a history of drug abuse.

In this study, convicted offense was also analyzed. Six different types of offenses were provided in the data: violent, property, drug offenses, sex offenses, habitual traffic offenders, and other, as shown in Table 3. Property offenders made up 36% of the offenders (24.7% regular and 47% intensive) and was the largest of the categories. Thirteen percent (13.4%) of the regular probationers and 15% of the intensive probationers were violent offenders. There were slightly more drug offenders on regular probation (24%) than on intensive probation (21%). Sex offenders made up only a small portion of the sample at only 8.6% (11.3% regular and 6% intensive). Habitual traffic offenders (HTO) made up a much larger portion of the regular probationers (21.6%) than the intensive probationers (9%). The smallest category of offenders was other. This comprised only 4.1% of the regular probationers and only 2% of the intensive probationers. For this analysis the offenses were combined into two categories of violent and other. One category consisted of the violent offenses and the other category consisted of all the other offenses.

TABLE 1
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROBATIONERS

Variable	Regular		Intensive		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Race						
White	89	89%	94	94%	183	91.5%
Black	10	10%	6	6%	16	8.0%
Total	99	99%	100	100%	199	99.5%
Gender						
Male	78	78%	77	77%	155	77.5%
Female	22	22%	23	23%	45	22.5%
Total	100	100%	100	100%	200	100%
Age						
Mean	31.6		26.7			
Education						
Mean	10.4		9.9			
History of drug abuse	51.6	51.6%	61.2	61.2%	112.8	59.1%

TABLE 2

A COMPARISON OF CATEGORY OF OFFENDER AND CONVICTED OFFENSE

Conviction	Regular		Intensive		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Property	24	24.7%	47	47%	71	36%
Violent	13	13.4%	15	15%	28	14.2%
Drug	24	24.7%	21	21%	45	22.8%
Sex Offense	11	11.3%	6	6%	17	8.6%
HTO	21	21.6%	9	9%	30	15.2%
Other	4	4.1%	2	2%	6	3%
Total	97	100%	100	100%	197	100%

Logistic Regression Findings:

Dependant Variable Is New Felony Conviction

When the variables were analyzed among regular probationers with new felony conviction as the dependant variable, only age and prior misdemeanor arrests were found to be significant at the .05 level, as indicated by Table 3. These findings support hypothesis number one, stating that age is negatively correlated with probation recidivism, and hypothesis number seven, which states that the number of prior misdemeanor arrests is positively correlated to probation recidivism.

Age had an actual significance of .0113 and the r was -.2215. This negative correlation indicates that older probationers are less likely to have a new felony conviction. The actual significance for the variable prior misdemeanor arrests was .0088 and the r was .2326. This indicates a positive correlation in which a regular probationer with more prior misdemeanor arrests is more likely to have a new felony conviction.

These findings provide significant information regarding the release of offenders onto probation. According to these findings an older probationer and/or a probationer with few prior misdemeanors would be less likely to have a new felony conviction while on regular probation. Thus, these individuals are the ones on whom the criminal justice system should focus when placing individuals on regular probation.

TABLE 3
 LOGISTIC ANALYSIS FOR REGULAR PROBATIONERS WITH NEW FELONY
 CONVICTION AS THE DEPENDANT VARIABLE

Variable	B	Sig.	R
Employment	-.2702	.6703	.0000
Race	-.5850	.5708	.0000
Sex	-.1065	.8938	.0000
Convicted Offense	.5655	.3367	.0000
Level of Education	-.2010	.2762	.0000
Age	-.1192	.0113	-.2215
Prior Felony Conviction/s	-.0390	.5894	.0000
Prior Misdemeanor Conviction/s	.0861	.0088	.2326
History of Drug Abuse	-.6665	.2854	.0000

When analyzing intensive probationers and the dependant variable of new felony conviction, no variable was found to be significant at the .05 level, as shown in Table 4. The variables level of education and prior misdemeanor arrests were found to be significant at the .10 level.

Level of education had a significance of .0719 and r was -.1520. This negative correlation between level of education and the dependant variable new felony conviction indicates that those individuals who have a higher level of education are less likely to have a new felony conviction. At this less restrictive significance level, the finding supports hypothesis

number five, which states that there is a negative correlation between level of education and probation recidivism.

The independent variable of prior misdemeanor arrests was also found to be significant at the .10 level. The actual significance was .0504 and r was .1846. This indicates a weak relationship, but one in which those intensive probationers with more prior misdemeanor arrests are more likely to have a new felony conviction. Thus, at the .10 level, hypothesis number seven cannot be rejected.

These findings can be implemented when deciding who is placed on intensive probation. Though a .10 level of significance is less restrictive, it does indicate a likelihood that those individuals with a lower level of education or those with more prior misdemeanor arrests would be more likely to have a new felony conviction.

TABLE 4
 LOGISTIC ANALYSIS FOR INTENSIVE PROBATIONERS WITH NEW FELONY
 CONVICTION AS THE DEPENDANT VARIABLE

Variable	B	Sig.	R
Employment	.3634	.7134	.0000
Race	6.8139	.9265	.0000
Sex	7.2832	.8375	.0000
Convicted Offense	-.2954	.5638	.0000
Level of Education	-.5655	.0719	-.1520
Age	-.0508	.5450	.0000
Prior Felony Conviction/s	-.0484	.6867	.0000
Prior Misdemeanor Conviction/s	.1037	.0504	.1846
History of Drug Abuse	-.7643	.4504	.0000

When analyzing both types of probationers with the dependant variable of new felony conviction the independent variables level of education, age, prior misdemeanor arrests, and offender category were found to be significant at the .05 level, as shown in Table 5. No other variable was found to be significant at the .10 level.

The variable level of education had a significance of .0203 and r was -.1496. Age was calculated to be .0143 and r was -.1624. Both are weak, negative correlations and indicate that a probationer who is younger or one who is less educated is more likely to have a new felony conviction. This is consistent with the earlier findings in this study for each type of probationer and supports hypotheses number one and number five.

Two other variables that were found to be significant at the .05 level are prior misdemeanor arrests and offender category. Prior misdemeanor arrests was found to be significant with a calculation of .0009. r was .2434 indicating a moderate, positive correlation. These results are consistent with the earlier findings in this study and support hypothesis number seven.

The variable offender category was found to be significant with a calculation of .0039 and r was .2045. This is a weak to moderate correlation and indicates that those on regular probation are more likely to have a new felony conviction than those on intensive probation. With this finding, hypothesis number ten cannot be rejected.

TABLE 5

LOGISTIC ANALYSIS FOR BOTH TYPES OF PROBATIONERS WITH NEW FELONY
CONVICTION AS THE DEPENDANT VARIABLE

Variable	B	Sig.	R
Employment	-.1246	.8080	.0000
Race	-.6377	.5001	.0000
Sex	.3331	.6320	.0000
Convicted Offense	-.0501	.8809	.0000
Level of Education	-.3602	.0203	-.1496
Age	-.0953	.0143	-.1624
Prior Felony Conviction/s	-.0453	.4556	.0000
Prior Misdemeanor Conviction/s	-.0895	.0009	.2434
History of Drug Abuse	-.5123	.3013	.0000
Offender Category	1.5362	.0039	.2045

Logistic Regression Findings:

Dependant Variable Is Technical Violation

When technical violation was used as the dependant variable and only regular probationers analyzed, no variables were significant at either the .05 or the .10 level. r for all variables indicated very weak correlations, as shown in Table 6. Intensive probationers analyzed with the dependant variable technical violation resulted in only the variable age being significant at the .05 level, as shown in Table 7. The actual significance was .0169 and r was -.1854 indicating a weak, negative correlation. This finding supports hypothesis number one and shows that a younger, intensive probationer is more likely to have a technical violation.

Race, level of education, and convicted offense were all significant at the .10 level. All variables had weak correlations as indicated by r (see table 7). At this less restrictive level of significance, hypotheses five and six are supported. Hypothesis number two, however, must be rejected because white probationers were found to be more likely to recidivate than minorities. Specifically, the findings show that individuals on intensive probation who are white and less educated are more likely to have a technical violation. Also, violent offenders are less likely to recidivate than those convicted of other offenses.

TABLE 6
 LOGISTIC ANALYSIS FOR REGULAR PROBATIONERS WITH TECHNICAL
 VIOLATION AS THE DEPENDANT VARIABLE

Variable	B	Sig.	R
Employment	-.2054	.6913	.0000
Race	.4302	.6096	.0000
Sex	-.9510	.1109	-.0719
Convicted Offense	-.6006	.4250	.0000
Level of Education	.1246	.3679	.0000
Age	.0198	.5293	.0000
Prior Felony Conviction/s	-.1340	.1829	.0000
Prior Misdemeanor Conviction/s	.0156	.5497	.0000
History of Drug Abuse	-.2846	.5769	.0000

TABLE 7
 LOGISTIC ANALYSIS FOR INTENSIVE PROBATIONERS WITH TECHNICAL
 VIOLATION AS THE DEPENDANT VARIABLE

Variable	B	Sig.	R
Employment	-.5487	.3856	.0000
Race	2.2036	.0919	.0883
Sex	.0022	.9973	.0000
Convicted Offense	1.1926	.0984	.0824
Level of Education	-.3337	.0560	-.1238
Age	-.1001	.0169	-.1854
Prior Felony Conviction/s	-.0497	.3355	.0000
Prior Misdemeanor Conviction/s	.0066	.8389	.0000
History of Drug Abuse	.2731	.6371	.0000

Offender category was the only variable found to be significant at the .05 level when both intensive and regular probationers were analyzed with the dependant variable technical violation, as shown in Table 8. The actual significance was .0005. r was -.2089 indicating a moderate, negative relationship in which those on intensive probation are more likely to have a technical violation. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that intensive probationers are more likely to have technical violations.

TABLE 8

LOGISTIC ANALYSIS FOR BOTH TYPES OF PROBATIONERS WITH TECHNICAL
VIOLATION AS THE DEPENDANT VARIABLE

Variable	B	Sig.	R
Employment	-.4122	.2682	.0000
Race	.9951	.1512	.0162
Sex	-.2942	.4864	.0000
Convicted Offense	.2212	.6681	.0000
Level of Education	-.0552	.5829	.0000
Age	-.0260	.2634	.0000
Prior Felony Conviction/s	-.0673	.1707	.0000
Prior Misdemeanor Conviction/s	-.0004	.9841	.0000
History of Drug Abuse	-.0639	.8586	.0000
Offender Category	-1.2486	.0005	-.2089

The findings indicate that there are characteristics of offenders that must be regarded when examining probation recidivism. Though almost all of the variables that were found to be significant had weak to moderate correlations, there are some that must be considered. Age and prior misdemeanor arrests were found to be significant at the .05 level of significance for two of the logistic models analyzed. Offender category was also found to be significant at the .05 level when a logistic analysis was performed including both types of probation. Lastly, level of education was found to be significant in the logistic model that included the dependant variable

new felony conviction and analyzed both probation types. All of these findings allow for null hypotheses 1, 5, 7, and 10 to be rejected.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to locate characteristics of regular and intensive probationers that are correlated with recidivism. The variables that were analyzed are age, race, gender, employment status, level of education, convicted offense, prior felony arrests, prior misdemeanor arrests, and history of drug use. It has been a consistent finding in the literature that these variables are correlated with probation outcome (Morgan, 1994). The data used were gathered by another researcher and consisted of characteristics on 200 probationers (100 on regular probation and 100 on intensive probation). Logistic regression analysis was used to analyze the data. Each group of probationers was analyzed separately and together. When the two groups were looked at together an additional variable of category of offender was added to the statistical procedure.

To discover variables that are significantly correlated with probation recidivism the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Age is negatively correlated with probation recidivism.
2. Race is correlated with probation recidivism (minorities are more likely to recidivate).
3. Gender is correlated with probation recidivism (men are more likely to recidivate).
4. Employment status is negatively correlated with probation recidivism.
5. Level of education is negatively correlated with probation recidivism.
6. Convicted offense is correlated with probation recidivism (violent offenders are less likely to recidivate).

7. Number of prior misdemeanor arrests is positively correlated with probation recidivism.
8. Number of prior felony arrests is positively correlated with probation recidivism.
9. History of drug abuse is positively correlated with probation recidivism.
10. Category of offender is correlated with probation recidivism (regular probationers are more likely to have a new felony conviction and intensive probationers are more likely to have a technical violation).

Recidivism in this study was defined as any new felony conviction or a technical violation while on probation. Both were analyzed separately as the dependant variables.

Age is a variable that has been found in previous research to be a significant correlate to probation recidivism in that younger offenders are more likely to recidivate (Rhodes, 1986; Roundtree, 1984). The results of this study indicate that age plays a significant role in probation recidivism among regular and intensive probationers. It was found to be significant at the .05 level for regular probationers and when both types of probationers were analyzed together. A new felony conviction was used as the measure of probation recidivism. Thus, one could postulate that those individuals who are younger are less likely to succeed on probation. Mackenzie, Shaw, and Souryal (1992) found similar results in their study on offenders who completed a shock program. Those who succeeded on community supervision were more likely to be older. One implication for the future of probation is greater attention to younger offenders and their needs. As indicated in the present study age should be a “red flag” alerting officers that younger probationers need closer supervision.

The variable prior misdemeanor arrests was also found to be significant at the .05 level (when new felony conviction was used as the dependant variable) for regular probationers and when both regular and intensive probationers were analyzed together. This indicates that prior

criminal history plays a role in whether or not a probationer commits a new felony conviction while on probation. This finding is consistent with prior research conducted on probation recidivism (Petersilia, 1987; Visher et al., 1991).

When both intensive and regular probationers were analyzed together, the offender category was found to be significant at the .05 level for both of the dependant variables technical violation and a new felony conviction. When the dependant variable was a new felony conviction it was discovered that regular probationers were more likely to commit a new felony conviction. Technical violation as the dependant variable resulted in intensive probationers being more likely to recidivate. This is a consistent finding throughout the research.

Petersilia and Turner (1993) found in their study that 65% of ISP clients had a technical violation compared to only 38% of the controls. This could be the result of the closer monitoring of these probationers. They may not be doing anything different than regular probationers, but because of the closeness in which they are being supervised, they may be getting “caught” more.

The level of education among the sample was found to be significant at the .05 level when both probation types were analyzed with new felony conviction as the dependant variable. This finding indicates that one who is less educated is more likely to have a new felony conviction. The Bureau of Justice reports that 51.2% of probation violators in state prisons in 1991 reported having only some high school education. Eighteen percent (18.1%) reported having education of 8th grade or less (Cohen, 1995).

Implications

From the results of this study it is apparent that younger offenders, less educated offenders, and those offenders with prior misdemeanor arrests would be more likely to fail on probation. These individuals would be more likely to commit a technical violation or commit a new felony conviction while on probation. The criminal justice system should take note of these findings. They are consistent with prior research that has been conducted on probation recidivism.

It was discovered in this study that regular probationers are more likely to commit a new felony conviction. A New Jersey study found similar results in that only 12% of probationers who had completed an intensive supervision program were reconvicted at the end of two years compared to 23% of regular parolees (Pearson & Harper, 1990). If society is concerned about public safety, then perhaps these results indicate that Intensive Supervision Probation should be an option.

This study can assist the criminal justice system in three ways. First, these results allow a look at what characteristics of offenders are correlated with probation outcome. This observation allows for judges to have an idea of the likelihood that an offender will successfully complete probation. This allows for better decision making of who should be placed on regular probation or Intensive Supervision Probation. These characteristics of offenders are already provided in presentence reports given to the judge. Research in the area of probation recidivism allows for a better understanding of which characteristics are correlated with successful completion of probation.

Research such as this can also assist with the future of probation. These findings allow for probation officers to know what characteristics should be a priority in the supervision of

offenders. For example, this study indicates that those individuals with a higher level of education are more likely to succeed on probation. Education may play a role in whether the probationer is able to gain employment because many jobs require at least a high school diploma or equivalency. Regular Probation Officers or Intensive Supervision Probation Officers can play a role in assisting the probationer's needs in employment, education, and problems with substance abuse by making them go to employment workshops, attend GED classes, or undergo substance abuse counseling. Probation officials should lobby their communities for more or better programs to assist in these areas not only for probationers but also for citizens in general.

A third way that research regarding probation recidivism can assist the criminal justice system is by providing information on what types of programs are needed or should be increased to help offenders. For example, although this study did not find a significant correlation between substance abuse and probation recidivism, previous research has found a significant correlation between substance abuse and crime (Latessa & Allen 1999; Pallone, 1990; Schmidt & Witte, 1988). Substance abuse treatment should be available in all areas so that offenders can receive the help they need.

Although these findings are limited to a northeast section of Tennessee, they do provide some insight on what variables are correlated with probation recidivism and, thus, probation outcome. Probation has become a very important part of the criminal justice system. Due to the growing prison and jail populations, it is primarily used as an alternative to sentencing. This increase of community supervision has made society more concerned about safety. An understanding of who does best on probation may provide some relief to the public.

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VITA

JENNIFER JOSEPH

Personal Data: Date of Birth: December 17, 1970
 Place of Birth: Greeneville, Tennessee
 Marital Status: Single

Education: Public Schools, Greeneville, Tennessee
 East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
 Criminal Justice and Criminology, B.A., 1993
 East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
 Criminal Justice and Criminology, M.A., 2001

Professional Experience: Probation Parole Officer, Board of Probation and Parole,
 Greeneville, Tennessee, 1993-2001