

ANALYSIS OF VARIABLES  
INFLUENCING PROBATION OUTCOME

by

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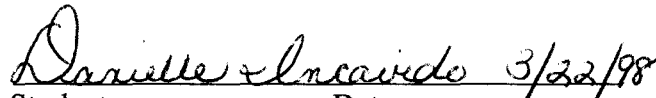
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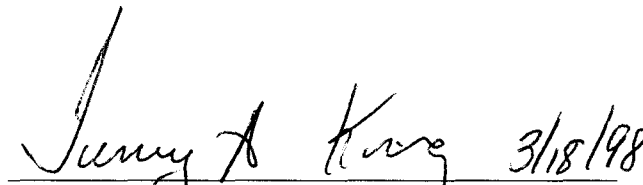
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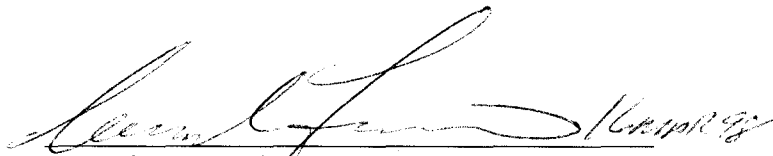
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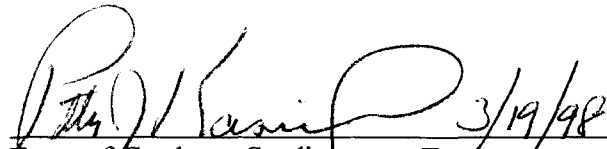
  
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## ABSTRACT

An analysis of variables that affect probation outcome was undertaken to assess the differences between successful and unsuccessful probationers. Data was collected at an adult probation department in Pennsylvania that yielded a sample of 199 probationers whose cases were terminated prior to June of 1996.

An extensive literature review revealed several studies that focused on probation outcome measured by success or failure. The literature review also examined the criticisms regarding the use of recidivism as an outcome measure.

Probation outcome was measured based on established criteria for definitions of success and failure. Data analysis consisted of chi-square significance testing for all independent variables against the dependent measure probation outcome (success or failure). Eight of twenty variables differentiated success from failure in assessing probation outcome. The findings enabled successful and unsuccessful probationers to be characterized by factors that can be used by correctional professionals in determining selection, treatment, and supervision levels of probationers.

Limitations of the study (methodological shortcomings, researcher bias), implications for correctional professionals (prediction, risk factors), and recommendations for future research (better collection methods, focus on female probationers) were discussed.

Overall, the emphasis is on the difference between successful and unsuccessful probationers. Probationers with a history of

juvenile offenses and disadvantaged circumstances (lower education level, unemployment, no support system) were more likely to fail on probation. On the other hand, probationers who have invested in conventional norms (marriage, employment, education) are more apt to succeed on probation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT . . . . .	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	vi
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	viii
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	2
Importance of the Problem . . . . .	4
Definitions . . . . .	6
Factors Associated With Probation Outcome	7
Overview of Thesis . . . . .	8
 CHAPTER	
II. LITERATURE REVIEW . . . . .	10
General Overview . . . . .	11
Research-Based Literature before 1990 .	12
Research-Based Literature in the 1990s .	16
Summary of the Literature Review . . . .	20
 CHAPTER	
III. METHODS AND DESIGN . . . . .	23
Sample . . . . .	24
Instrumentation . . . . .	24
Summary . . . . .	26
 CHAPTER	
IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS . . . . .	28
Descriptive Analysis of the Sample . . .	29

Results . . . . .	35
Age at first arrest . . . . .	36
Marital status . . . . .	36
Educational attainment . . . . .	37
Employment . . . . .	37
Drug or alcohol history . . . . .	39
Present offense . . . . .	39
Family history . . . . .	40
Findings . . . . .	41
Summary . . . . .	46
CHAPTER	
V. DISCUSSION . . . . .	47
Limitations of the Study . . . . .	47
Implications . . . . .	49
Recommendations for Future Research . . . . .	50
Conclusions . . . . .	52
APPENDIX A . . . . .	54
APPENDIX B . . . . .	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	67

LIST OF TABLES

		PAGE
Table 1.	Descriptive Statistics of Probationers in Study . . . . .	31
Table 2.	Male and Female Characteristics of the Sample . . . . .	34
Table 3.	Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures According to Age at First Arrest . . . . .	36
Table 4.	Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures According to Marital Status . . . . .	37
Table 5.	Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures According to Educational Attainment . . . . .	38
Table 6.	Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures According to Employment History . . . . .	38
Table 7.	Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures According to Drug and Alcohol History . . . . .	39
Table 8.	Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures According to Present Offense . . . . .	40
Table 9.	Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures According to Family History . . . . .	41
Table 10.	Differences Between Those Who Successfully Complete Probation And Those Who Do Not. . . . .	44



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Probation is a sentencing alternative to incarceration which permits the offender to remain in the community under certain conditions (Ellsworth, 1996, p. 4). Violation of conditions or the commission of a new crime can result in a revocation of probation resulting in the probationer serving the remainder of the original sentence in prison or jail. However, it should be noted that not all offenders are suitable candidates for probation. This thesis attempted to assess individual differences between probationers that succeed and those who fail the completion of their probation sentence.

There are several studies that focus on probation outcome. These studies vary greatly on several issues. These differences include: the selection of samples used to measure probation outcome, measures of success and failure, and follow-up periods that vary widely across studies. Further, these studies primarily focus on the offense and subsequent probation violations committed by probationers. It was therefore an important endeavor to assess probation outcome by examining the significant factors related to the success and failure of probation. These findings can provide insight regarding factors that contribute to probation effectiveness.

By using an analysis of multiple variable statistics, a technique which statistically examines the relationship between a set of independent variables and the outcome measure, this research attempted to answer the following questions:

- (1) Are age, race, gender, level of education, number of prior convictions, substance abuse diagnosis, and other determined variables predictors for the completion of probation?
- (2) To what extent do the characteristics of the offense and the characteristics of the probationer predict success or failure?
- (3) What factors are directly related to the success and failure of probation?

In order to assess the influence of demographic, sociological, psychological, and situational variables on probation outcome, this study investigates probation terminations of 199 adult probationers whose cases were terminated before June 1996. Probation outcome, the dependent variable was measured as a dichotomy. Probationers either succeed or fail. Significant relationships between identified variables were tested for statistical significance and strength.

#### Statement of the Problem

Probation has generally been accepted as an effective technique in the treatment of crime. The success of probation depends not only on proper supervision by well trained probation officers, but also on the characteristics of those who are granted probation. Probation and other correctional programs and reforms depend on the "reasonable predictability of human behavior under given circumstances" for their success or efficacy (Glueck & Glueck, 1959, p. 2).

It is widely accepted in the literature (see Roundtree, Edwards, & Parker, 1984; Byrne & Pattavina, 1992; Morgan, 1994; Sims & Jones, 1997) that offenders differ from each other in numerous ways and this study examined numerous variables that will differentiate successful from unsuccessful probationers. For example, prior studies that identified employment as an indicator have several limitations. To conclude that employment is the sole cause of success is presumptuous. It is more important to identify variables which discriminate between success and failures and analyze said variables as a whole.

In 1932, Monachesi stated "it is possible to predict outcomes [of probation], based on a combination of factors in [pre-probation] life, even though no one factor was significant" (p. 65). Probation has undergone a noticeable change over the past 50 years. Consequently, the most important challenge of probation professionals in the next decade will be to respond to critics who contend that the system is ineffective in its attempts to supervise the offender and protect the community. Probation is the most common sentence for felony offenders in the United States (Petersilia & Turner, 1993). This is why we need to have a clear understanding of probation effectiveness.

Sentences to probation outnumber sentences to correctional institutions by a wide margin. Still, attention of researchers has been disproportionately focused on the nature and effects of incarceration. This anomaly can be attributed to the fact that judging the success or failure of probation is a difficult process. The fact that probation can be found at the state,

local, and federal level; the existence of municipal and county probation departments; and that probation serves both misdemeanants and felons; are some of the disparities that makes research in this area very difficult to conduct.

#### Importance of the Problem

Given the extensive use of probation as an alternative sanction to incarceration, there is not nearly enough research to assess its effectiveness. Further, while recidivism should remain a measure of probation effectiveness, the need to measure additional outcome indicators should be considered. While success rates of probation may not seem important to those who argue that the real goal is reduced recidivism, it should be noted that persons who successfully complete probation are significantly less likely to be recidivists than those who failed on probation.

There was a tremendous growth in the community corrections population during the 1980s. At the start of the decade there were 1.4 million and by the end of the decade there were 3.2 million. As of June 1994, there were close to one million offenders incarcerated in state correctional institutions and over 400,000 persons incarcerated in local jails in the United States (Morgan, Morgan, & Quinto, 1995).

To provide relief from severe prison overcrowding approximately 79 percent of all Americans under sentence for criminal convictions are in the community with two-thirds of them on probation (Byrne, 1990). In 1983, the ratio of adults on probation in the United States was 897 per 100,000 residents. In

1993, the ratio was 1,490 per 100,000 residents (Maguire & Pastore, 1995). Petersilia (1985) estimates that between 60 percent and 80 percent of all convicted criminals are sentenced to probation (p. 350). Therefore, the need to closely examine the effectiveness of probation is especially important to assure public safety.

The purpose of this thesis is to identify significant factors related to success and failure of probation. A more complete understanding of such factors by correctional authorities would make probation a more effective procedure in the treatment of crime. In addition, the identification of certain variables associated with successful probation outcome would make possible a more accurate selection of persons who might succeed on probation.

Over the years, probation has developed as a procedure that focuses on the rehabilitation and reintegration of the offender. Screening, classification, and prediction are key to the aims of probation outcome. Studies that examine variables related to probation outcome can provide important data that can be used in the aforementioned screening, classification, and prediction of offenders to be considered for probation.

According to Petersilia (1993), "... [a] major difficulty - is that community [alternatives] has, by and large, never been able to show that it 'works'" (p. 315). She questions the outcome measures of numerous research studies, and claims that recidivism should not be the primary measure of a probationers performance.

The American Probation and Parole Association (1992) has

recommended including other outcomes in evaluation such as, rates of employment and drug use. The association argues that "programs do affect offender behavior, and that the effects would be shown if these mediating outcomes were measured" (as cited in Petersilia, 1993, p. 316).

Probation must be studied in terms of evaluative research that investigates the overall effectiveness of the concept of probation. Outcome evaluation is concerned with results. Since rehabilitation of the offender is a primary concern, the number of offenders who successfully complete their terms of probation is a good indicator of the effectiveness of probation.

#### Definitions

Jay Albanese and his colleagues (1981) caution that the interpretation of research depends upon clearly defined terms. They summarize:

1. There is a wide disparity in the definition of revocation and recidivism;
2. Revocation/recidivism rates without a standardized definition have little comparative value;
3. A criterion (or criteria) of probation 'effectiveness' is not well defined;
4. There is confusion over outcome and impact (the significance of outcome) (p. 51).

There are significant disparities among jurisdictions, judges and probation departments, regarding definitions of success, failure,

recidivism, revocation, and other terms used to measure probation outcome. For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used:

1. Probation
  - a. a sentence of conditional and revocable release under the supervision of a probation officer.
  - b. a community sanction.
2. Success (Effectiveness)
  - a. completion of the probation term.
  - b. expiration of the probation sentence.
3. Failure (Recidivism)
  - a. revocation of probation due to violation of conditions.
  - b. conviction of a new offense.
  - c. rearrest.
  - d. termination due to absconding.
  - e. termination due to unsatisfactory compliance.

In addition, since probation success is defined as completion of the probation term, those probationers who have had referrals to the court but were not revoked may be deemed successful.

#### Factors Associated with Probation Outcome

The general purpose of this thesis is to study the differences in outcome for different types of offenders on probation. The consideration of factors relating to personality, behavior, and social situations is of particular importance

because courts are expected to take these factors into account when placing an offender on probation. While it is true that the most emphasis is placed on the offense behavior, that is, the actual offense which has been committed, it is the main aim of probation to prevent the probationer from committing further offenses. Therefore, it was important to consider the personality of the offender and assess whether inadequacies or psychological disturbances may have contributed to their offense.

As stated previously, it is widely accepted that offenders differ considerably from each other in numerous ways. This study takes into account those individual differences. An understanding of such factors that contribute to probation outcome could make probation a more effective procedure in the treatment of crime. While such correlates will not allow conclusions regarding causation, they can lead to an increased understanding of possible predictive variables.

#### Overview of Thesis

As the need for alternatives to incarceration has grown, corrections has relied upon probation. Since such a large number of correctional clients are on probation, it is necessary to assess which factors contribute to probation effectiveness. The aim of this thesis was to determine whether probation is fulfilling its objectives and to identify for whom probation works best.

A literature review is presented in the next chapter which addresses studies that measure probation outcome. There are four



sections in Chapter Two which discuss both research based and general literature focusing on probation outcome. In addition, limitations in the current research and suggestions for future research are offered.

Chapter Three discusses the design of the study, which specifies the sample and the methodology.

Chapter Four provides the analysis and findings with focus placed upon patterns that identify successful or unsuccessful probationers.

Finally, Chapter Five presents conclusions, limitations of the study, implications for criminal justice professionals, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A large number of correctional clients are under probation supervision. It is estimated that 58 percent of all adults under correctional supervision are on probation, a total of approximately 3 million probationers (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996). Therefore, it was important to assess past research that has provided insight to issues related to probation outcome.

The purpose of this literature review, the following is provided to distinguish the subsequent types or categories of literature to be discussed. An overview of the general literature related to probation effectiveness will be discussed. Literature related to probation outcome is examined with an emphasis on research-based literature. Studies reporting probation outcome in terms of recidivism were briefly reviewed. The major focus is on studies that identify factors that contribute to probation outcome. In addition, the literature review identifies limitations in the current research and suggest areas where further research might be conducted.

Key terms selected and used to obtain published materials for this review of the literature include the following: probation outcome, probation evaluation, probation effectiveness, probation success, probation failure, probation factors, probation rates, and probation completion. Manual indexes, electronic databases, and the National Criminal Justice Reference Service Document Database on CD-ROM were utilized using the above noted key words

to search for the literature that comprises this review.

### General Overview

The first attempts to assess probation outcome were almost exclusively conceived in terms of recidivism. The shift in assessment of probation outcome in terms of identifying factors that influence probation effectiveness is evident during the early 1980's. Studies began citing factors as age, gender, employment, education, and marital stability as related to probation success and failure (Bartell & Thomas, 1977; Scott & Carey, 1983; McCarthy & Langworthy, 1987). Other studies identified the length of the probation sentence or types of probation conditions as predictors of probation outcome (Allen, Carlson & Parks, 1979; Petersilia, 1985; Langan & Cuniff, 1992). In addition, several studies found prior criminal record to be the most significant predictor of probation outcome (Morgan, 1994; Sims & Jones, 1997).

Byrne and Pattavina (1992) discuss the effectiveness issue of probation to the general population. They argue that the view of a report on probation effectiveness is "simply incorrect" (p. 283). The report states:

As the gap between prison space and inmate population widens, a massive class of criminals - roughly 1 in 75 adult Americans - is now being handled outside the walls under 'supervision.' In principle, they are being monitored by authorities. In practice, that is a farce. Most roam the

streets with impunity, many committing new crimes or violating release conditions (p. 283).

The authors concede that too many offenders are placed on probation but they hold that "overall probation is effective" (p. 283). They state "the vast majority (more than 80% nationwide) of the offenders placed on probation complete their terms successfully with no new criminal arrests or convictions" (p. 283).

Another important aspect discussed by Byrne and Pattavina (1992) calls for an identification of subgroups of probationers with characteristics that identify them as high risk. Some of these identified characteristics included: drug dependence, unemployment, family problems, and extensive prior offenses.

The general literature indicates that criticisms about probation involves several issues including: caseloads too large, inadequate funding, understaffed and underpaid probation departments, and the failure of probation to rehabilitate or deter future crime.

#### Research-Based Literature Before 1990s

Several studies reported probation outcome in terms of success or failure rates. The General Accounting Office (1976) studied probation outcome in four counties in the United States: Maricopa County, Arizona; Multnomah County, Oregon; Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania; and King County, Washington. The results reported probation outcome in terms of failure rates. The study revealed that only four or five out of every ten probationers

complete their probation without arrest, conviction, or revocation (Ellsworth, 1996, p. 329).

Bartell and Thomas (1977) studied sentencing impacts and found that age was the best predictor of failure. Offenders age 28 and older were the lowest risks for recidivism. Holland et al. (1982) studied probation outcome and concluded that violence is not a good predictor of future criminality.

Scott and Carey (1983) found probation failure to be highly correlated with unemployment, prior incarcerations, and whether or not there was serious physical injury in the previous offense. Age, race, and prior convictions had no significant effect on outcome of probation.

McCarthy and Langworthy (1987) compared probationers aged 50 and older with younger probationers. They concluded that older (over 60), married, and employed probationers with no drug use contributed to a higher success rate for older offenders (p. 19). Numerous studies have found that younger offenders have greater difficulty succeeding on probation than do older offenders (Cockerhill, 1975; Monahan, 1981). The McCarthy and Langworthy study (1978) also addressed female offenders as they compared to older offenders. They state "both groups of offenders suffer from a kind of 'second class citizenship' among convicted offenders" (p. 24).

The following two studies represent large scale efforts regarding probation outcome assessment. In 1979, the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (NILECJ) reported the results of a review of the probation evaluation

literature (Allen, Carlson & Parks, 1979).

Three categories of studies were reviewed in the NILECJ study:

- (1) studies that compared the effectiveness of probation with that of alternative sentencing options;
- (2) studies that measured probation outcome without any form of comparison; and
- (3) studies that attempted to isolate the factors that enhance the likelihood of probation success (p. 117).

McCarthy (1984) criticizes the NILECJ study citing "the studies examined diverse groups of offenders and employed varying definitions of success and follow-up periods" (p. 118). Of the ten studies reviewed in the NILECJ study, over 50 percent produced significant correlations between outcome and the following factors: previous criminal history, youth, status other than married (divorced, single), unemployment, low income, education below fourth grade, abuse of alcohol and drugs, and property offender (p. 118).

The Rand study is referred to as "the most important criminological research to be reported since World War II" (Conrad, 1985, p. 71). It constitutes the first large scale analysis of felony probation. The Rand Corporation published its report in 1985 which presented data on over 16,000 felons convicted in California superior courts during 1980 who were tracked for a 40 month follow-up period. Results of the study

reported 65 percent were rearrested, 51 percent were convicted of new crimes, and 34 percent were incarcerated (Petersilia, 1985). Petersilia (1985) has reported that a significant number of offenders placed on probation for felony offenses were rearrested and reconvicted for offenses such as burglary/theft, robbery, or other violent crimes. Other studies examining felony probation have not reproduced the dramatic findings of the Rand study (Whitehead, 1991; McGaha, 1987; Vito, 1987).

The following two studies report probation outcome in terms of factors related to success and failure. In 1981, Albanese et al. authored *Is Probation Working?* which represents the first major attempt to evaluate probation outcome in terms of factors related to success and failure.

The authors refer to recidivism statistics as merely unreliable "headcounts" with no identified determinants of probation effectiveness. They argue that recidivism outcome answers "how much" whereas, probation outcome studies that identify variables related to effectiveness can answer "why" (p. 7). The authors reviewed eleven studies that assess probation effectiveness and the review serves as an excellent base for summarizing and analyzing research conducted from 1950 to 1980 regarding probation outcome.

Roundtree, Edwards, and Parker (1984) conducted a study that examined personal characteristics of probationers. They found a significant relationship between failure and school grade completed, prior criminal record, age at first arrest, number of prior arrests, offense classification, and length of probation

sentence. On the other hand, factors not related to success or failure were race, sex, age left school, marital status, employed at the time of offense, age at the time of present offense, and type of offense (p. 53).

The final study reviewed prior to 1990 involved Intensive Supervision Probation (ISP), "a form of release into the community that emphasizes close monitoring of convicted offenders and imposes rigorous conditions on that release" (Petersilia & Turner, 1993, p. 349). In 1986, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funded an Intensive Supervision Probation Demonstration Project that addressed how outcomes for ISP and routine probation compare. The technical violation rates for ISP probationers were significantly higher than the violation and arrest rates for those probationers on routine probation. However, there were no statistical differences between the ISP and routine probationers in the percent arrested.

#### Research-Based Literature in the 1990s

As we examine the 1990's, a study focusing on the first-time offender attempted to develop an empirically based method of facilitating decisionmaking regarding the likelihood that first-time offenders would succeed on probation (Liberton, Silverman, & Blount, 1992). Since the most common predictor cited in the literature (prior offense history) could not be used for first-time offenders, other variables were utilized. The most significant predictor of probation outcome was that younger offenders have greater difficulty adhering to probation conditions



than do older offenders. They conclude, "the younger offender has not yet acquired a stable support system resulting from marriage, having children, or consistent employment" (p. 343).

In another study, Langan and Cuniff (1992) conducted a review of felony probation that utilized a large sample (79,000) and long term follow-up (3 years). Findings of this study revealed an overall failure rate of 43 percent. However, 10 percent of the sample was designated "high risk" and 56 percent of those probationers failed. In addition, the authors reported that the "high risk" felony probationers were more likely to have had prior convictions and drug abuse problems.

Petersilia and Turner (1993) conducted a nationwide study evaluating intensive supervision probation (ISP) and parole. The demonstration project sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) involved nine states and assessed the effectiveness of ISP and traditional probation. The most significant finding of this study was the identification of behavioral change, not recidivism, as the most appropriate outcome measure of probation success (Ellsworth, 1996, p. 369).

Morgan (1994) in "Factors Associated with Probation Outcome" identified nine variables that are consistently associated with probation outcome:

- (1) gender (females more successful than males),
- (2) age (positively correlated with success),
- (3) marital status (married probationers more successful than unmarried probationers),
- (4) education level (positively correlated with

- success),
- (5) race (negatively correlated with success),
- (6) employment (positively correlated with success),
- (7) prior criminal history (negatively correlated with success),
- (8) being a property offender (negatively associated with success), and
- (9) sentence length (higher likelihood of failure for sentences of more than five years) (p. 316).

Morgan (1994) studied the relationship between the above stated variables and success or failure on probation for 266 Tennessee felony probationers whose cases had been terminated between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 1989. The majority of relationships were in the expected direction as found by Morgan in 1994. Race and age were determined not to be statistically significant. Morgan (1994) concluded that gender, work status, marital status, prior felonies, and conviction offense were statistically significant and were the most consistent predictors of success or failure (p. 316).

Morgan (1993) identified three types of studies that focus on probation outcome. The three types of studies and cites offered by Morgan are as follows:

- (1) studies that report probation failure rates only;
- (2) studies that report failure rates but also indicate significant factors correlated with that failure;
- and
- (3) studies that discuss factors influencing probation

outcome only.

The present literature review was restricted by the availability of actually obtaining many of the studies referred to by Morgan as they included numerous unpublished papers, dissertations, and unpublished studies conducted by probation departments and various agencies.

The most recent study was conducted by Sims and Jones (1997) which examined the factors associated with success or failure of felony probationers. The factors examined were based on Morgan's identified variables. Probationers were profiled on various characteristics. This study represents a methodologically sound example of probation outcome. First, it uses only one type of offender (felony). Second, it tracked offenders only up to their completion date. Third, it identified background characteristics that are correlated with success or failure. The study concluded that age, race, gender, crime category, supervision level, sentence length, and number of months elapsed before supervision ended were statistically significant (p. 320).

The findings of the Sims and Jones study support past research that has identified factors associated with success on probation. Further, an interesting implication for public policy is revealed in this study. A total of 26 percent of the felony probationers were revoked because of technical violations such as testing positive for drugs. In addition, the Petersilia and Turner (1990) study revealed that 50 percent of probationers were identified as needing drug treatment, yet very few receive it and 30 percent of new arrests were for drug-related offenses.

Consequently, less punitive measures for dealing with probationers who fail drug tests could be implemented.

#### Summary of the Literature Review

No correctional strategy is easy to evaluate and probation is no exception. In the studies reviewed there were several limitations noted: (1) most probation outcome studies are measured by recidivism which is defined in diverse ways. Violations, rearrests, revocations, and absconding can all be considered in recidivism statistics; (2) there was little uniformity in the definition of successes and failures; (3) study populations were dissimilar (some studies focused on ISP, some used only felony probationers or only misdemeanants probationers, while others used both); (4) studies of post-probation outcome used different follow-up periods ranging from six months to 12 years. In addition, federal probationers comprised the population in some studies, while others used probationers supervised by state probation agencies. In sum, the methodological rigor varies considerably across studies.

The above noted differences in studies prevent adequate assessment of probation outcome to be determined by looking at all the literature regarding probation outcome as a whole. It is important to remember that probation outcome is affected by external conditions such as unemployment, poverty, and discrimination. Further, no studies of probation outcome measured success in terms of the type of treatment received by the probationer. This is an important area to be undertaken by future

researchers.

Prior offense history was the most significant predictor of probation outcome cited in the literature. However, not generally noted in the literature was the length of pretrial commitment. The offender who is incarcerated while awaiting sentencing may have a negative effect on probation outcome.

Lacking in the research are studies that address the effectiveness of probation for subgroups of offenders. Studies did not analyze whether probation is more effective for offenders with certain types of problems. In other words, probation may work for many offenders. Consequently, the present study analyzes the characteristics of offenders most likely to succeed on probation in an attempt to identify subgroups of probationers most likely to succeed or fail on probation.

A major underlying theme of past research has been whether probation is fulfilling its objectives. It was found that many of the studies reviewed reported indicators of success and failure of probation in an attempt to combine said indicators into predictive measures. Other studies called for more research that would use the findings of probation outcome studies to develop predictive tools.

Some consistency does seem to emerge from the literature. First, none of the studies have indicated a lasting effect of probation beyond the period of supervision. Second, the research seems to indicate an effectiveness of probation that is at least as effective as incarceration. Third, during the past decade, an increase in the research literature on probation outcome has

viewed success in terms other than recidivism. Finally, it was revealed that probation completion can be a viable measure of success and less of a tax burden on citizens.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND DESIGN

The evaluation of correctional alternatives such as probation, is plagued with constraints. As defined by Rossi and Wright (1977) evaluation research is "any scientific based activity undertaken to assess the operation and impact to implement these policies" (p. 5). The authors contend that ideally, outcome evaluation consists of four steps that can be applied to the present study:

1. formulation of the programs objective;
2. identification of the proper criteria to be used in measuring success;
3. determination and explanation of the degree of success; and
4. recommendations for future program activity.

(Price & Baunach, 1980, p. 103).

The methodology for this study involves identifying variables through analysis of probation statistics on those probationers that successfully completed probation and those probationers that did not successfully complete probation. Hypotheses predicting significant relationships between such key variables as race, gender, prior criminal history, marital status, and employment were tested for statistical significance and strength at the .05 level.

The data analysis consisted of chi-square significance testing for all independent variables against the dependent measure, probation outcome (success or failure). All data was

then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-PC+).

### Sample

The sample was selected by examining the records of 200 adults who have been granted probation by the Lackawanna County Court prior to June of 1996. Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania has a population of approximately 850,000 residents. The city of Scranton is the county seat and the state capital of Pennsylvania is Harrisburg.

From the population of 8,000 closed cases in the files of this adult probation department, 200 cases (a 2.5% sample) were selected for review using every twentieth case selection. Information was gathered from probation intake forms, admission summaries, presentence investigations, and local and Federal Bureau of Investigation record checks. See Appendix A for the coding sheet used to assimilate the information. After data collection, coding review, and editing, an analysis sample of 199 was obtained.

### Instrumentation

Evaluative research methods were used to assess probation effectiveness (ratio of success units to failure units), based on descriptive statistics and inferences about probation outcome. These procedures are justified because the sample can be divided up according to such attributes as sex, marital status, race, employment history, and other descriptive variables.



Data analysis sought to examine the interrelationships between two or more characteristics to determine not merely whether a statistical relationship exists, but also to assess what the strength of that relationship is. This is important because those interrelationships tend to provide greater explanatory value.

Chi-square was deemed to be the appropriate test because this study is examining differences in nominal data. Chi-square analysis can determine if there is a relationship between two or among more than two nominal level variables. According to Champion (1993), three assumptions can be made regarding the proper application of the chi-square test: (1) randomness, (2) the nominal level of measurement, and (3) a sample size equal to 25 or larger (p. 445). In fact, the best sample size for this statistical test has been determined to be from 25 to 250. The present study meets these parameters.

The chi-square analysis determines if relationships between the dependent variable, probation outcome, which is measured by success or failure, and the independent variables are statistically significant at the .05 probability level.

Hypotheses predicting significant relationships between key variables such as race, sex, prior criminal record, marital status, and employment statistics were tested for statistical significance and strength. All data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-PC+).

Once significance levels were identified and calculated it was the aim of this study to arrive at variables that explain

similarities and differences that could provide answers as to why probation was successful or unsuccessful. Determining what personality characteristics and situational factors singly or in combination best predict probation performance can lead to an increased understanding of probation effectiveness. Chapter 4 reports the findings by applying the above described methodologies.

#### Summary

In the present study several variables were identified and correlated with success or failure of probation. Knowledge of the characteristics that have an impact on probation effectiveness can be utilized by professionals in the selection of future probationers. The following data, which is generally available in all case files, was collected:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics: gender; race; age; marital status; educational attainment, including school grade completed and age left school; employment, including type of employment and employment history;
2. Prior criminal history variables: prior criminal record, including number of convictions and age at first arrest;
3. Offender characteristics: offender's classification; type of offense;
4. Situational variables: drug or alcohol history; mental health history; family history;

5. Probation sentence variables: length of probation sentence; level of supervision; gender of probation officer; and
6. Probation outcome variables: whether probation was completed successfully or how probation was terminated.

Appendix B presents the value and label of the above named variables.

The goal of this thesis was to isolate certain social or psychological factors with the strongest relationship to success or failure on probation for 199 adult probationers whose cases have been closed due to completion of probation, revocation, sentencing for a new offense, or absconding.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study was to submit a method to facilitate decisions regarding the likelihood that certain offenders would succeed or fail on probation. With few exceptions, the variables that emerged as predictors are consistent with those reported in the literature.

To facilitate the examination of the data, the findings are organized and reviewed categorically. First, a descriptive analysis of the sample is presented. These descriptive statistics supply information such as the number of cases that fall into each category of the variables. Also, the composition of the sample in terms of male and female probationers is discussed.

Second, the results are analyzed using chi-square statistics. The chi-square analysis provides basic distributional characteristics that examine relationships between the variables. Also, statistical significance to establish the importance of the difference or association is provided. These categorical divisions provide a meaningful way of examining the data.

The following variables are identified as being significantly related to probation outcome: (1) age at first arrest, (2) marital status, (3) educational attainment, (4) employment history, (5) history of drug or alcohol abuse, (6) prior juvenile history, (7) present offense, and (8) family history.

### Descriptive Analysis of the Sample

Table 1 indicates that the subjects in the study are an average age of 30 years and 6 months (sd = 9.0) with 72.4 percent (n = 144) between the ages of 18 and 34. There were 163 males (81%) and 36 females (18%). The educational mean level was 8.4 (sd = 2.8) pre-high school. Thirty-four percent did not from graduate high school, 32 percent were high school graduates, 13 percent had a GED diploma, 11 percent had technical school, 3 percent had an associate degree, and 2.5 percent were college graduates.

The ethnic composition of this sample was 93 percent white (n = 185), 6.5 percent black (n = 13), and .5 percent other (n = 1). In regard to marital status, 58.3 percent of the sample were single, 20.1 percent were married, and 21.1 percent were divorced or separated.

Forty-nine percent were employed and 51 percent were unemployed. Types of employment were classified as skilled labor, unskilled labor, and self-employed. Skilled workers comprised 16 percent (n = 33), unskilled workers 35 percent (n = 72), and self-employed workers were 3.5 percent of the sample (n = 7). Drug or alcohol history of the probationers was also examined. In the sample, 6 percent have a drug problem, 10 percent have an alcohol problem, and 28 percent have both a drug and alcohol problem.

Seventy-five percent of those probationers in the sample served prior probation terms and 25 percent were on probation for the first time. Juvenile history recorded as follows: one

adjudication (12%), two adjudications (7%), three adjudications (3%), and more than three adjudications (9%). Fifty-five percent of the subjects in this study were on probation for drug offenses, 18.6 percent for property offenses, 14.1 percent for crimes against person and 10 percent for public order crimes such as prostitution.

The supervision level was classified as maximum, medium, or minimum. A clear majority of the offenders were supervised at the medium level. Seventy-three percent of probationers were supervised at the medium level, (met with probation officer once a month); 22 percent were supervised at the maximum level, (met with probation officer once a week); and 3 percent were supervised at the minimum level, (met with probation officer once every two months). The gender of the probation officer in the cases that comprise this sample were 64 percent male probation officers and 36 percent female probation officers.

The following additional data was collected to describe the sample. As to supervision, of the 129 male probation officers, 85 percent (n = 108) supervised males and 15 percent (n = 21) supervised female probationers. The female probation officers supervised 74 percent (n = 53) males and 26 percent (n = 17) supervised female probationers. The number receiving mental health services was very small, only 11 percent received mental health services in an institutional setting. Ten percent of the sample had some form of physical disability.

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics of Probationers in Study

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>sd</u>
<u>Age</u>		30.6	9.0
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	82%		
Female	18%		
<u>Race</u>			
White	93%		
Black	7%		
<u>Marital status</u>			
Married	20%		
Single	58%		
Divorced/separated	21%		
Widowed	1%		
<u>Average Grade in school</u>		8.4	2.8
<u>Education</u>			
Did not graduate high school	38%		
High school graduate	32%		
GED diploma	13%		
Associate degree	3%		
College graduate	3%		
Technical school	11%		
<u>Employment status</u>			
Employed	49%		
Unemployed	51%		
<u>Drug or alcohol history</u>			
Drug problem	6%		
Alcohol problem	10%		
Drug and alcohol problem	28%		
<u>Juvenile history</u>			
One adjudication	12%		
Two adjudications	7%		
Three adjudications	3%		
More than three adjudications	9%		
<u>Prior probation</u>			
None	25%		
Prior probation	75%		
<u>Conviction offense</u>			
Crimes against person	16%		
Property offense	19%		
Public order crimes	10%		
Drug-related offense	55%		
<u>Supervision level</u>			
Maximum (once a week)	22%		
Medium (once a month)	73%		
Minimum (once every two months)	5%		
<u>Gender of probation officer</u>			
Male	64%		
Female	36%		

Data on the make-up of the nuclear family prior to the offender's 18th birthday indicated that 38.2 percent of the sample had a positive upbringing, that is, living in a two-parent household with no abuse. Four percent of the sample were raised by a single parent and 8 percent experienced the divorce of parents. Only 1 percent (n = 2) had a family member who was incarcerated.

In terms of disposition, the average length of the probation sentence was 9 months (sd = 1.1). Of the offenders, 14 percent were sentenced to 24 months probation supervision, 8 percent were sentenced to more than 24 months of probation supervision, and 48 percent served less than 12 months of probation supervision.

The most frequent reason for termination of supervision was expiration of the sentence. Only 11 percent (n = 22) of probationers were terminated and rearrested because of new crimes. While only 11 percent of the probationers in the present study failed on probation due to rearrest, 32 percent of the probationers failed to meet all conditions.

Sixty-seven percent of the probationers that comprised the sample succeeded on probation. However, according to the criteria established for the present study regarding definitions for success and failure that were stated in Chapter 1, the sample consists of 89 percent (n = 177) successes and 11 percent (n = 22) failures.

Table 2 represents a profile of the 199 probationers according to gender. In general female probationers did not differ significantly from male probationers. When the female



probationers were compared to the male probationers only a few statistically significant differences appeared. Female offenders were less likely to be employed and less likely to have a juvenile record. Overall, males and females did not tend to differ significantly. As to the juvenile record ( $\chi^2 = .146$ ,  $df = 1$ ) and the employment history ( $\chi^2 = .223$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

However, of the four females in the failure category, all had less than a high school education, were unemployed, single, had a history of drug or alcohol abuse, and were rearrested for a drug-related offense. Two of these four females were over 30 years of age and only one of the four had any prior convictions.

The family background of the four females in the failure category included: alcoholic parents, severe physical abuse, and sexual abuse. The mental health data on these four females included: depression, anxiety, and sexual dysfunction. Finally, it should be noted that three of the four females received welfare and the fourth lived with her parents.

An understanding of the differences of male and female probationers appears to be important. Unfortunately, the small number of females comprising this sample renders any findings unclear. In Chapter 5 discussion is presented about the limitations of this study with regard to the female composition of the sample and also offers recommendations for future research that focuses on females.

Table 2  
Male and Female Characteristics of the Sample

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>Race</u>		
White	149 (91%)	33 (92%)
Black	14 ( 9%)	3 ( 8%)
<u>Age</u>		
18-24	51 (31%)	9 (25%)
25-35	68 (42%)	21 (58%)
36+	44 (27%)	6 (17%)
<u>Highest grade completed</u>		
0-11	53 (32%)	14 (39%)
12	76 (47%)	16 (44%)
13+	16 (10%)	1 ( 3%)
no information	18 (11%)	5 (14%)
<u>Marital status</u>		
Married	33 (20%)	7 (19%)
Never Married	97 (60%)	19 (53%)
Divorced/Separated	32 (20%)	10 (28%)
<u>Currently employed</u>		
Yes	84 (52%)	13 (36%)
No	79 (48%)	23 (64%)
<u>Employment history</u>		
Sporadic	68 (42%)	9 (25%)
Steady	59 (36%)	7 (19%)
No work history	28 (17%)	19 (53%)
Disability	6 ( 4%)	1 ( 3%)
no information	2 ( 1%)	0 ( 0%)
<u>Type of offense</u>		
Felony	14 ( 9%)	3 ( 8%)
Misdemeanor	143 (88%)	32 (89%)
Combination	6 ( 3%)	1 ( 3%)
<u>Age at first arrest</u>		
11-17	40 (25%)	6 (17%)
18-24	63 (39%)	8 (22%)
25-40	46 (28%)	18 (50%)
41-61	14 ( 8%)	3 ( 8%)
<u>Under the influence during crime</u>		
Yes	108 (66%)	19 (53%)
No	55 (34%)	17 (47%)
<u>Juvenile history</u>		
None	116 (71%)	14 (39%)
One	21 (13%)	4 (11%)
Two	11 ( 7%)	4 (11%)
3+	15 ( 9%)	0 ( 0%)
<u>Probation outcome</u>		
Successful	145 (89%)	32 (89%)
Failure	18 (11%)	4 (11%)

## Results

Of the 199 cases in the total sample of probationers, 11 percent (n = 22) failed to complete their probation terms because of the commission of a new offense that resulted in rearrest. The data analysis consisted of chi-square significance testing for all independent variables against the dependent variable, probation outcome.

Examination of the results indicated that eight of the twenty variables differentiated successes from failures in assessing probation outcome and were statistically significant at the .05 level. Each of the eight variables were dummy coded and a chi-square analysis was performed in order to examine the relationship between the variables and probation outcome.

Significant relationships existed between the following eight variables: (1) age at first offense, (2) marital status, (3) educational attainment, (4) employment history, (5) history of drug or alcohol abuse, (6) juvenile history, (7) present offense, (8) family history, and the dependent variable probation outcome.

Some of the variables that were not significantly related to probation outcome. For these variables, the null hypothesis could not be rejected as there was no significant difference between those who succeeded and those who failed on probation for the variables gender, race, current age, supervision level, and gender of probation officer.

It is important to note, this study found age at first arrest to be significant at the .05 level and age at the time of present offense (current age) not to be significant at the .05 level. One

possible reason for this is that age at first arrest included juvenile adjudications which is indicative of an early orientation to criminal involvement.

Age at first arrest

The age at first arrest variable was divided into four categories: (1) age 11 through 17, (2) age 18 through 24, (3) age 25 through 40, and (4) age 41 through 61. Table 3 shows that only 24 percent of the sample were age 11 through 17 at the time of first arrest. Age 18 through 24 contained 36 percent of the sample and age 25 through 40 contained 31 percent of the sample. Nine percent of the sample were age 41 through 61 at the time of their first arrest. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between those who succeeded and those who failed on probation as to age at first arrest.

Table 3  
Significant Difference Between Successes and Failures  
According to Age at First Arrest

Variable	Successes	Failures	Total
Ages 11-17	17%	7%	24%
Ages 18-24	33%	3%	36%
Ages 25-40	30%	1%	31%
Ages 41-61	9%	0%	9%
Row Totals	n = 177 89%	n = 22 11%	n = 199 100%
$\chi^2 = 22.640, p \leq .05, df = 3$			

Marital Status

More than half of the probationers in the sample (58%), had never been married, 20 percent were married, and 21 percent were

divorced or separated. These three categories were used to reject the null hypothesis and determine that there was a significant difference between successes and failures as to marital status as shown in Table 4.

Table 4  
Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures  
According to Marital Status

Variable	Successes	Failures	Total
Single	49%	9%	58%
Married	20%	0%	20%
Divorced/ Separated	20%	1%	21%
Row Totals	n = 177 89%	n = 22 11%	n = 199 100%
$\chi^2 = 6.048, p \leq .05, df = 2$			

Educational attainment

The education variable was divided into three categories: (1) grade 5 through 11, (2) high school degree or GED, and (3) associate or college degree. Table 5 depicts the following: 35 percent did not graduate high school while 45 percent of the sample did have a high school degree or GED equivalent. Only 8 percent of the sample had above a high school education. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between those who succeeded on probation and those who failed on probation as to the variable educational attainment.

Employment

At the time of being placed on probation, 53 percent of the probationers were coded as being unemployed. As shown in Table 6, of those probationers employed there were 11 percent coded as

skilled workers, 20 percent coded as unskilled workers, and 16

Table 5  
Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures  
According to Educational Attainment

Variable	Successes	Failures	Total
Grade 5-11	27%	8%	35%
High school GED	43%	2%	45%
Associate / college	8%	0%	8%
No Info	12%	0%	12%
Row Totals	n = 177 89%	n = 22 11%	n = 199 100%
$\chi^2 = 11.85, p \leq .05, df = 2$			

percent coded as labor workers. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between successful and unsuccessful probationers as to employment.

Table 6  
Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures  
According to Employment History

Variable	Successes	Failures	Total
Not employed	45%	8%	53%
Employed / Skilled	11%	0%	11%
Employed / Unskilled	18%	2%	20%
Employed / Laborer	16%	0%	16%
Row Totals	n = 177 89%	n = 22 11%	n = 199 100%
$\chi^2 = 13.768, p \leq .05, df = 3$			

Drug or alcohol history

The history of drug or alcohol variable was coded in three categories: (1) yes, a history of drug or alcohol, (2) no history of drug or alcohol, and (3) parents and/or spouse had a history of drug or alcohol abuse. Of the 199 in the total sample, 59 percent had a history of drug or alcohol abuse. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between successes and failures as to a history of drug and alcohol abuse as shown in Table 7.

Table 7  
Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures  
According to Drug or Alcohol History

Variable	Successes	Failures	Total
History of Drug/Alcohol	43%	9%	52%
No History of Drug/Alcohol	30%	1%	31%
Parents had Drug/Alcohol History	10%	1%	11%
No info	6%	0%	6%
Row Totals	n = 177 89%	n = 22 11%	n = 199 100%
$\chi^2 = 7.497, p \leq .05, df = 2$			

Present offense

The variable for present offense was coded as either a non-drug offense or a drug-related offense (see Table 8). Of the total sample, 78 percent were from the drug-related offense

category. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between successes and failures as to present offense.

Table 8  
Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures  
According to Present Offense

Variable	Successes	Failures	Total
Non-drug offense	16%	2%	18%
Drug-related offense	72%	6%	78%
No info	1%	3%	4%
Row Totals	n = 177 89%	n = 22 11%	n = 199 100%
$\chi^2 = 28.04, p \leq .05, df = 1$			

Family history

This variable was categorized as follows: (1) stable family background, (2) unstable family background, and (3) dysfunctional family background. Of the total sample, 61 percent reported an unstable or dysfunctional family background with 39 percent reporting a stable family history. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between those who succeeded and those who failed as to family history as represented in Table 9.



Table 9  
Significant Differences Between Successes and Failures  
According to Family History

Variable	Successes	Failures	Total
Stable Family History	17%	7%	24%
Unstable Family History	33%	3%	36%
Dysfunctional Family History	30%	1%	31%
Row Totals	n = 177 89%	n = 22 11%	n = 199 100%
$\chi^2 = 7.049, p \leq .05, df = 2$			

Findings

Analysis of the data showed the following characteristics (in order of importance) to be associated with successful probation outcome:

- (1) present offense was not drug related.
- (2) first arrest was after age of 18.
- (3) employed in a skilled job.
- (4) high school graduate.
- (5) absence of a juvenile record.
- (6) no history of drug or alcohol abuse.
- (7) stable family background.
- (8) married.

The following characteristics (in order of importance) were associated with failure on probation:

- (1) present offense was drug-related.
- (2) first arrest was prior to age 18.
- (3) unemployed.
- (4) high school dropout.
- (5) prior juvenile record of more than two offenses.
- (6) history of drug or alcohol abuse.
- (7) unstable or dysfunctional family history.
- (8) single, divorced, or separated.

It is important to note that while certain variables were not statistically significant when the group of failures is examined several interesting trends emerge. First, as sentence length increased, the likelihood of failure increased. Second, those probationers under maximum supervision failed more often which can be attributed to the longer time on probation the greater the likelihood of failure. Third, younger probationers may have a more difficult time adhering to probation conditions because of the lack of stable support systems that result from marriage and having children. Fourth, the relationship between previous offenses and the likelihood of failure which has been noted in previous studies was not confirmed. Although the failure rate rises sharply when two or more offenses were recorded the null hypothesis was not rejected ( $\chi^2 = 1.06$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

Analysis of the data related to the 22 failures in the sample revealed the following:

- (1) all were white
- (2) 18 were male and 4 were female
- (3) 18 were single, 3 were divorced or separated, and

- 1 was married
- (4) 16 had less than a high school education
- (5) 16 were unemployed
- (6) 20 were rearrested for drug-related offenses
- (7) 12 came from an unstable family background and  
4 came from a dysfunctional family background
- (8) 14 had a juvenile history with 7 having 3 or more  
juvenile offense

Table 10 represents the differences between those that completed probation successfully and those that failed to complete their probation according to the criteria set for this study.

The failures are characterized by a greater degree of instability. Overall, they were more likely to be young males who had not graduated from high school, unemployed, single, and raised in unstable families. All of these factors can be attributed to the likelihood of failure on probation.

Those probationers who were not married had higher failure rates than those who were married (82% versus 18%) indicating that stability and commitment could be related to success. Also, those probationers who were unemployed (72%), failed to complete high school (72%), or had a history of drug or alcohol abuse (82%) had higher failure rates. These findings support the theory that when individuals have more to lose (marriage, employment, family ties) the likelihood of failure decreases.

Present offense which was found to be significantly related to probation outcome had confounding results. The general consensus that felony probationers tend to be more prone to

Table 10  
Differences Between Those Who Successfully Completed Probation  
and Those Who Did Not

Variable	Success	Failure
<u>Age</u>		
18-24	49 (28%)	11 (50%)
25-35	83 (47%)	6 (27%)
36+	45 (25%)	5 (23%)
<u>Race</u>		
White male	131 (74%)	18 (82%)
White female	29 (16%)	4 (18%)
Black male	14 ( 8%)	0 ( 0%)
Black female	3 ( 2%)	0 ( 0%)
<u>Marital status*</u>		
Married	40 (23%)	1 ( 5%)
Divorced/separated	39 (22%)	3 (13%)
Single	98 (55%)	18 (82%)
<u>Employed*</u>		
Yes	87 (49%)	6 (27%)
No	90 (51%)	16 (73%)
<u>Highest grade completed*</u>		
0-11	53 (30%)	16 (73%)
12	85 (48%)	5 (23%)
13+	16 ( 9%)	1 ( 4%)
no information	23 (13%)	0 ( 0%)
<u>Type of offense*</u>		
Felony	32 (18%)	5 (23%)
Misdemeanor	143 (81%)	12 (54%)
Combination	2 ( 1%)	5 (23%)
<u>Age at first arrest*</u>		
11-17	34 (19%)	14 (64%)
18-24	65 (37%)	6 (27%)
25-40	60 (34%)	2 ( 9%)
41-61	18 (10%)	0 ( 0%)
<u>History of drug/alcohol*</u>		
Yes	99 (56%)	18 (82%)
No	59 (33%)	2 ( 9%)
Parents/spouse had history	19 (11%)	2 ( 9%)
<u>Under the influence during crime</u>		
Yes	116 (66%)	20 (91%)
No	61 (34%)	2 ( 9%)

\* Variables significant at less than or equal to the .05 level

failure because of longer sentences and more time to commit further offenses was not true for the present study. Of the 22 failures, only 23 percent were felony probationers.

However, when categorized as to drug-related offenses versus nondrug-related offenses several interesting trends appear. Fifty-five percent of probationers under 25 years of age had a history of drug use and a drug-related offense compared with 30 percent of probationers age 25 through 35, and 15 percent of those probationers age 36 and older. These findings indicate a decrease in drug use by probationers as they age. This decrease could be attributed to maturity, avoidance of arrest, or fear of incarceration.

The results and findings show that the indicators for the probability of succeeding on probation are the following: (1) present offense, (2) age at first offense, (3) employment history, (4) prior juvenile history, (5) educational attainment, (6) history of drug or alcohol abuse, (7) family history, and (8) marital status.

Consequently, probationers with a low probability of success can be characterized as possessing one or more of the following traits: (1) single, divorced, or separated, (2) unemployed, (3) drug or alcohol abuser, (4) high school dropout, (5) prior juvenile offender, (6) unstable or dysfunctional family history, (7) convicted of a drug-related offense.

These indicators could be useful in determining which offenders are amenable to the probation determination process and also in placing probationers into treatment or vocational programs.

### Summary

Some consistency seems to emerge from this research. The research indicates that both the personal predispositions of the probationers and the situational constraints they find themselves under combine to determine performance outcome. The variables discussed in this study can be used to develop a prediction instrument that could enable better selection of individuals who might succeed on probation.

The emphasis of these findings have been on the significant differences between the successes and the failures as related to probation outcome. The greatest differences were as might be expected. Probationers with a history of juvenile offenses, substance abuse and disadvantaged circumstances (lower educational level, unemployment, no support systems) were more likely to fail on probation. On the other hand, probationers who have invested in conventional norms (marriage, employment, education) are more likely to succeed on probation.

Overall, the data on probation outcome are generally mixed. However, when weighed in their entirety, the evidence of effectiveness of probation outcome would lead a reasonable person to conclude that probation is effective, is considerably less expensive, has less criminological impact on clients, and is more humane.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate probation outcome. One hundred and ninety-nine cases were analyzed according to several variables as they related to success and failure on probation. Applications of the methods described in this study frequently encountered complications due to several factors discussed in the following sections.

All of the findings were consistent with the findings of previous studies regarding probation outcome. This study, as did the other reviewed studies, seems to suggest that probationers who make some investment in conventional society norms are less likely to fail on probation.

Each of the variables associated with success appear to be indicators of stability and some sort of support system. The successful probationers had stability in terms of home life and employment. This can best be explained by reasoning that probationers with tangible reasons to avoid incarceration are more likely to succeed on probation. A single study cannot provide definitive answers. However, the analysis can clarify certain factors associated with probation outcome.

#### Limitations of the Study

Since all research is impeded by limitations, most of the limitations encountered in this study are common to other research studies. According to Price and Baunach (1980) common obstacles to research include "measurement problems and the associated

difficulties of operationalizing variables and outcome measures, and the condition of the information itself and gaining access to it" (p. 104).

The findings of this study were limited by several factors. A major limitation was the level of analysis undertaken by this researcher. In short, this thesis could have been subject to more rigorous testing.

Another limitation of this study involved researcher bias. Researcher bias always presents limitations in the interpretation of results. A second researcher could use the same data and report different findings and interpretation of the results due to dissimilar variable groupings and different criteria set for definitions of success and failure.

The above described methodological shortcomings and researcher bias regarding the criteria established for the outcome measures (success and failure) could be cause for deliberation of the accuracy of the findings. Therefore, all interpretation of the findings should be made accordingly.

In the discussion of limitations, it is important to remember that probation outcome is affected by external conditions such as unemployment rates and poverty. A limitation of the current study is that it examined an atypical sample of probationers. In fact, this study used a sample that was disproportionately white and more urban than can be expected in most probation samples.

There are several factors that may affect probation outcome that are mutually exclusive to specific regions. Other factors that can affect probation outcome are (1) the quality of the



probation department, (2) court procedures, and (3) policies. These factors are generally not assessed in studies examining probation outcome.

### Implications

Probation caseloads will probably continue to grow as prisons become more overcrowded. The need to assess how probation is meeting its goals is imperative. These goals include the following: (1) lessening the demand for incarceration, (2) reducing criminal activity, (3) protecting the public, and (4) saving the tax payer money.

Findings that assess which characteristics of probationers indicate success or failure certainly have implications for the correctional professionals. These indicators could be useful in placing probationers in treatment programs, counseling, or special drug and alcohol programs while on probation. How successfully the probationer completes such programs could be used in the process of terminating the probation sentence.

Further, while probation cannot be granted to everyone, those most suited offenders should be granted probation. Judges need to be informed of risk factors and prediction indicators in order to base their decisions regarding granting offenders probation. Studies that provide analysis of which characteristics are predictive of success and failure can aid this process. Unfortunately, judges do not always value the importance of these elements of sentencing. Having the court order conditions of probation which are indicative of successful outcome would aid

probation officers in monitoring probationers.

The most important implication for correctional professionals involves the drug problem. In the present study many of those identified as needing drug treatment did not receive it. Consequently, most of those who failed to complete probation were rearrested for drug-related offenses. Less punitive measures of dealing with probationers who fail drug tests and treatment as a condition of probation could be implemented. It is possible that many probationers might succeed if they received effective drug treatment. The issue of adequate drug treatment and monitoring cannot be ignored.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

A replication of this study with stricter criteria and a higher level of ambition could further clarify the generalizations of these findings. Reserved for future review are the many issues surrounding the limitations of this study. However, the findings of this study should help refine the focus of future research.

A major issue for future research is determining whether probation might be structured and implemented differently to produce better results. There is an urgent need for more extensive research exploring the use of probation as an alternative to incarceration.

The determination of what information correctional officials can most usefully record on the background, attributes, experiences, and performance of probationers with whom they deal is important. Research is needed to determine the most effective

methods for recording and retrieving such data. Presentence investigation reports focusing on report preparation, report content, and report impact should be analyzed and researched.

McCarthy and McCarthy (1984) suggest the following in regard to recommendations for future research:

1. The development of theories of probation and probation models based upon studies of the activities of probation agencies and an assessment of what probation ought to be;
2. The establishment of information systems and data bases for both management and research purposes; and
3. The execution of policy-level research on the costs of probation strategies, administrative alternatives, offender classification needs, and efficient uses of the presentence investigation, and special program needs of female offenders (p. 123).

In light of the above recommendations that reflect what the literature regards as important to future research, it is important to note that even though it is possible to establish a correlation between variables and outcome, causal relationships are difficult to establish due to the possible existence of other mediating factors not identified. However, these variables are important to consider because they may assist in the identification of high-risk probationers.

A final limitation to this study and one that is generally

not noted in other studies involves the number of days an individual was incarcerated before trial. This would be an important variable to consider in future research. Future research should focus on uncovering factors indicative of good adjustment and positive treatment potential.

### Conclusions

Over the past 50 years probation has become a major issue gaining the attention of researchers. The aim of this thesis was to assess probation outcome. The results suggested that stability and a strong support system were the best indicators of succeeding on probation. These findings should be interpreted carefully and improved upon. Hopefully, the number of studies assessing probation outcome will continue to increase over the next few years.

This research draws a profile of those characteristics which are most important in distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful probationers. These findings can be utilized in two ways. First, probation can service only those offenders most likely to succeed. Second, probation can implement programs to assist those who are likely to fail.

It is unlikely that any set of variables will ever predict human behavior with significant accuracy. Sims and Jones (1997) state:

despite heavy criticism directed at probation, community-based supervision continues to be used extensively. State corrections commissioners

report that 775 of their prisons are operating over 120 percent of capacity, states can ill afford to curtail the use of probation (p. 326).

At the same time, identifying factors that can successfully predict success or failure of probation could prove helpful. These factors could be considered in terms of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of probationers.

APPENDIX A  
DATA COLLECTION FORM

SEX: MALE \_\_\_ FEMALE \_\_\_

RACE: WHITE \_\_\_ BLACK \_\_\_ HISPANIC \_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

MARITAL STATUS: MARRIED \_\_\_ SINGLE \_\_\_ DIVORCED \_\_\_

DEPENDENTS: (AGE, GENDER, BIOLOGICAL, FOSTER, STEP  
LEGALLY SEPARATED) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS: \_\_\_ FELONY \_\_\_ MISD \_\_\_

TOTAL NUMBER OF JUVENILE CONVICTIONS: \_\_\_

STATUS \_\_\_ FELONY \_\_\_ MISD \_\_\_

TOTAL NUMBER OF ADULT CONVICTIONS: \_\_\_

FELONY \_\_\_ MISD \_\_\_

OFFENSE-OFFENSES COMMITTED-JUVENILE: SENTENCE IMPOSED AND

TIME SERVED: (SPECIFY AGE AND PLEA)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

OFFENSE-OFFENSES COMMITTED-ADULT: SENTENCE IMPOSED AND TIME  
SERVED: (SPECIFY AGE AND PLEA)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

COUNSEL: PRIVATE \_\_\_\_\_ PUBLIC \_\_\_\_\_

MANDATORY CONDITIONS GIVEN- PROBATION-PAROLE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CONDITIONS NOT MET BY CLIENT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ON ANY TYPE OF MEDICATION: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL DURING COMMISSION  
OF CRIME? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



OTHER FACTORS THAT MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMISSION  
OF CRIME:

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---

HISTORY OF DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE - FAMILY/SPOUSE?

---

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---

---

WHAT TREATMENT WAS PROVIDED?

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---

---

WAS THE TREATMENT SUCCESSFUL?

---

---

---

OTHER FACTORS THAT MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMISSION  
OF CRIME:

---

---

---

---

HISTORY OF DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE - FAMILY/SPOUSE?

---

---

---

---

WHAT TREATMENT WAS PROVIDED?

---

---

---

---

WAS THE TREATMENT SUCCESSFUL?

---

---

---

NUMBER OF TIMES ON PROBATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF TIMES ON PAROLE: \_\_\_\_\_

IF TIME SERVED HOW LONG: \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE WAS TIME SERVED: \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED: YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT:

(SKILLED, UNSKILLED, LABORER) \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

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REASON FOR UNEMPLOYMENT:

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FAMILY BACKGROUND:

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PRESENT LIVING CONDITIONS:

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HEALTH: GOOD \_\_\_ POOR \_\_\_ CONDITION \_\_\_\_\_

MENTAL HEALTH:

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EVER COMMITTED TO MENTAL INSTITUTION? YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

IF YES HOW LONG? \_\_\_\_\_

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES: YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

SPECIFY \_\_\_\_\_

---

TYPE OF DISCHARGE:

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PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION AVAILABLE? YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

WAS PRESENTENCE REPORT WAIVED TO BE SENTENCED IMMEDIATELY:

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

HOW OFTEN DID CLIENT MEET WITH PROBATION OFFICER:

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WHAT TYPE OF VISIT? (SPECIFY BY NUMBER)

PHONE \_\_\_\_ OFFICE \_\_\_\_ WRITTEN \_\_\_\_ HOME \_\_\_\_

WERE IMPROVEMENTS NOTICED? YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

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OFFICER \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
VALUES AND LABELS OF VARIABLES

VARIABLE	VALUE	LABEL
Gender	0	male
	1	female
Race	1	white
	2	black
	3	hispanic
	4	indian
Marital Status	1	married
	2	single
	3	divorced
	4	separated
	5	widowed
Type of Juvenile Offense	1	status
	2	felony
	3	misdemeanor
	4	combination
	5	combination
	6	no conviction
Type of Adult Conviction	1	felony
	2	misdemeanor
	3	combination
Nature of Offense-Adult	1	person
	2	property
	3	narcotic
	4	public order
	5	status
	6	person, property, and narcotic
Type of Counsel	1	private
	2	public
Did Offender Meet Conditions	1	yes
	2	no
Conditions Not Met	1	drug abuse
	2	alcohol abuse
	3	failed counseling
	4	failed employment
	5	all conditions met
	6	failed conditions
	7	failed meeting P.O.
	8	got arrested
	9	failed comply PSI
On any type of medication	1	yes
	2	no
	3	to get high

VARIABLE	VALUE	LABEL
Under the influence of drugs or alcohol during crime	1	no
	2	drugs
	3	alcohol
	4	combination
History of drug or alcohol	1	drug problem
	2	alcohol problem
	3	spouse problem
	4	parent problem
	5	no
	6	occasional drugs
	7	occasional alcohol
	8	drug and alcohol
	9	parents alcohol and client problem
Drug and alcohol treatment	1	yes
	2	no
Was drug and alcohol treatment successful	1	yes
	2	no
Currently employed	1	yes
	2	no
Type of employment	1	skilled
	2	unskilled
	3	laborer
	4	self employed
	5	not employed
	6	sells drugs
Employment history	1	sporadic
	2	steady
	3	no work history
	4	disability
	5	no information
Reason for unemployment	1	laid off
	2	fired
	3	due to arrest
	4	collects disability
	5	no reason given
	6	collects welfare
	7	is employed
	8	physical illness
	9	seeking treatment
	10	housewife



VARIABLE	VALUE	LABEL
Family background	1	positive
	2	parents drug abuse
	3	parent alcoholic
	4	sexually abused
	5	no family contact
	6	raised-singleparent
	7	raised-other than parent
	8	parents divorced
	9	not mentioned
	10	parents divorced-alcoholic
	11	dysfunctional-abuse
	12	poor relations
	13	child behavior
	14	family incarcerated
Presently lives with	1	parents
	2	family, brothers, sisters
	3	mother
	4	father
	5	girl-boyfriend,
	6	lives alone
	7	husband
	8	wife
	9	children
	10	incarcerated
	11	wife, children
	12	uncle
	13	prison
	14	husband, children
	15	girlfriend, child
Health	1	good
	2	poor
	3	other condition
Mental health	1	good
	2	depression
	3	schizophrenia
	4	anxiety
	5	attention deficit
	6	fair-unstable
	7	depression-anxiety
	8	depression-suicide attempts
	9	suicide attempts
	10	no remorse
	11	seeks counseling
	12	sexual dysfunction
	13	personality dysfunc

VARIABLE	VALUE	LABEL
Ever committed to mental institution	1	yes
	2	no
Physical disabilities	1	yes
	2	no
Type of discharge	1	expiration of sentence
	2	re-arrested
Was PSI available	1	yes
	2	no
	3	waived
How often met with P.O.	1	once a week
	2	once a month
	3	daily contact
	4	once every two mo.
	5	never, referred
Type of visit with P.O.	1	office
	2	phone
	3	written
	4	home
	5	home, office, phone
	6	phone, office
	7	not tracked
	8	office and phone
	9	in prison
	10	home and office
Were improvements noticed	1	yes
	2	no
	3	yes, just to complete program
Type of improvement	1	found employment
	2	counseling
	3	stayed clean
	4	no improvements
	5	counsel, employment
	6	paid all costs
	7	paid all costs and stayed clean
	8	has not been back
	9	went back prison
	10	still in rehab
	11	completed program
Sex of P.O.	1	male
	2	female

VARIABLE	VALUE	LABEL
Highest grade completed	1	5th grade
	2	6th grade
	3	7th grade
	4	8th grade
	5	9th grade
	6	10th grade
	7	11th grade
	8	high school
	9	associate degree
	10	college degree
	11	technical school
	12	no information
	13	GED
Issues contributing to crime	1	divorce
	2	chronic depression
	3	addiction
	4	physical illness
	5	little care for situation
	6	no family relations
	7	no family support
	8	good family support
	9	no initiative
	10	no remorse
	11	children taken
	12	got caught
	13	no issues
	14	loss of job
	15	bad company
	16	use and sale drugs
	17	no morals
Age	18-63	years
Age at first offense	11-61	years
Number of months served	0-72	months
Number of years served	0-6	years

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