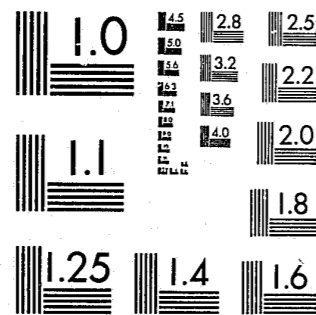


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The Improved Correctional  
Field Services Project: A  
Preliminary Evaluation  
Executive Summary

BY

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This is one of a series of reports on the Improved Correctional Field Services Project Evaluation. The series consists of these parts:

1. Abstract
2. Executive Summary by Don M. Gottfredson, James O. Finckenaer, John J. Gibbs and Stephen D. Gottfredson.
3. The Improved Correctional Field Services Project: A Case Study by James O. Finckenaer and Don M. Gottfredson.
4. Screening for Risk: An Assessment of the ICFS Project Instruments by Faye S. Taxman, Don M. Gottfredson and James O. Finckenaer.
5. Risk, Supervision, and Recidivism: The First Six Months of Recorded Experience in the Improved Correctional Field Services Project by Don M. Gottfredson, James O. Finckenaer, and Faye S. Taxman.  
  
Appendix A: ICFS Instructions for Coding.  
Appendix B: Characteristics of the Sample for the First Six Months of Experience in the ICFS Project.
6. Social Adjustment: A Preliminary Report of the Improved Correctional Field Services Project by James O. Finckenaer and Faye S. Taxman.
7. The Needs and Concerns of Probationers: A Thematic Analysis of Interviews by John J. Gibbs.
8. The Needs and Concerns of Probationers: An Analysis of Questionnaires by John J. Gibbs.
9. Additivity and Interactions in Offense Seriousness Scales by Stephen D. Gottfredson, Kathy S. Young and William S. Laufer.
10. Describing Probation Populations: Offense Seriousness by Stephen D. Gottfredson.  
  
Appendix A: Offense Seriousness Scoring System.
11. Exploring the Dimensions of Judged Offense Seriousness by Stephen D. Gottfredson.  
  
Appendix A: Offense Seriousness Study (survey form).  
Appendix B: The Question of Scale Value  
Appendix C: Replication of Factor Structures

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The Improved Correctional  
Field Services Project: A  
Preliminary Evaluation

Abstract

Three projects (in Kane County, Illinois, Suffolk County, New York, and Florida) were developed to test the effectiveness of using risk screening procedures to assign probationers to different levels of supervision. The main question was: What level of supervision is effective with what risk classification of probationers with respect to various outcomes? Subsidiary problems included an assessment of the risk screening methods used and the development of measures of offense seriousness, of the social adjustment of probationers, and of probationer needs and concerns.

The reports discuss the project development, the evaluation results for the first probationers in the program, and the measurement development work.

The project plans changed markedly over the original design, development, implementation and evaluation phases. Analyses of the initial experience show that the integrity of the design could not be maintained, although supervision contacts did vary according to assigned supervision levels. Despite flaws in the development of the risk screening measures, they had some validity in each site. Neither risk class, nor supervision level, nor their interaction had statistically significant outcome effects, although in general the patterns observed were consistent with the project hypotheses.

Recommendations address aspects of planning of such programs and needs for further study.

The Improved Correctional Field  
Services Project: A Preliminary  
Evaluation

Executive Summary

Three correctional field services (probation) projects -- in Kane County, Illinois, Suffolk County, New York, and Florida -- were developed and funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in 1978. The main objective of the Improved Correctional Field Services Project (ICFS) was to determine the effectiveness of using risk screening procedures to assign probationers to different levels of supervision. The general research question for the evaluation was: What level of supervision is effective with what risk classification of probationers with respect to various probation outcomes?

Some of the major subsidiary research questions included:

- Do increased levels of supervision increase the success of higher risk probationers?
- Can probation agencies develop risk screening mechanisms that accurately predict a probationer's performance?
- Is the seriousness of any new offenses affected by the risk classification and differential supervision?
- How can the seriousness of offenses best be measured?
- Can social adjustment be used as a measure of probation outcome?
- How can social adjustment of probationers be measured?
- How does the probationer perceive probation supervision?
- How can probationer perceptions of probation be measured?

The study is fully described in a series of reports. Some discuss the development of the projects and the evaluation results based on the first probationers in the program for whom outcomes could be measured. Others describe the measurement development work, the results of which may be applied in later evaluations of the ICFS project or in other assessments of the effectiveness of criminal justice programs.

Three reports address the developmental history of the project. They discuss its aims, assess the construction and validity of the risk screening instruments used, and examine probationer outcomes for the first six months of experience in the project.

Two reports deal with problems of assessing the needs and concerns of probationers: first, by an analysis of questionnaires completed by probationers, and second by an analysis of probationer interviews. Those two reports are derived from a study of a separate sample of New Jersey probationers. The intent was to develop indicators of the quality of probation supervision as perceived by its recipients.

Another report describes the development and use of an instrument for probation officer ratings of probationer social adjustment at the start of probation supervision and during its course. Finally, three reports and their related Appendices describe progress toward an improved measurement of offense seriousness.

What follows is a brief summary of the major findings, limitations, and some implications and recommendations from the various parts of the study. The individual reports are annotated by abstracts appended to this summary.

#### Major Findings

- The nature of ICFS, as it moved through its various phases of design, development, implementation and evaluation, changed dramatically.
- Ultimately, the program design did not require a control or comparison situation; thus, there

was little chance of determining whether risk assessment and differential supervision influenced probation outcomes in ways different from and better than normal or regular probation.

- The integrity of the original ICFS plan could not be maintained. Two sites did not validate their risk measures before operational use; and in no site did the actual level of supervision (face-to-face contacts) reach the intended levels.
- Actual supervision, as measured by the number of face-to-face contacts, did vary according to the assigned minimum, medium or intensive supervision levels.
- The procedures used to develop the risk screening instruments had serious flaws.
- The risk scores used to assign probationers to supervision levels, however, did have some validity in each site.
- Neither risk class, nor supervision level, nor the interaction of risk and supervision had a significant effect on probation outcomes (technical violations, rearrests, and reconvictions during the first six months of supervision) in any site. In Florida, however, the number of face-to-face contacts did have a significant effect on outcomes.
- Probationers generally are primarily concerned with having flexible regulations and requirements; with receiving understanding, empathy and warmth; and, with being able to remain in control of one's life while on probation. There are wide individual differences in supervision preferences.
- Probationers whose needs are congruent with their perception of their probation officer are more satisfied with their supervision than those whose needs are not well matched to their supervising officer type.

- A set of variables has been defined as a measure of the social adjustment of probationers. An empirically-derived social adjustment score has been developed; and, there is reason to believe that social adjustment can be used to evaluate probation outcomes.
- Although earlier measures of offense seriousness have been based on the assumption that judgments may be measured adequately on a single scale, six dimensions appear to underlie such judgments. These dimensions, which are reliable and replicable, may be measured using the instrument and scoring method described.
- The ICFS probation populations have quite different "profiles" of offense behaviors on the six seriousness dimensions; and there is reason to believe that the offense seriousness measures developed may have a wide applicability in program evaluations and other criminal justice research.

#### Major Limitations

- Sufficient time has elapsed since the start of the project that only a short "on-probation" follow up study of fairly small samples of the first probationers in the projects was possible for this report.
- It has not yet been possible to apply the new instruments developed (to measure social adjustment, probation perceptions, and offense seriousness) to the ICFS project evaluation.
- Additional limitations to generalizations from the study are noted in the separate reports.

#### Major Implications and Recommendations

- The initial planning and development of test programs such as ICFS should be centralized as now has been done in the National Institute of Justice. This should reduce fragmentation and confusion, perhaps enhance accountability and responsibility, and facilitate program evaluations.

- There is need for close collaboration among program planners and developers, program implementors, and program evaluators if the full value of test programs is to be realized.
- Pilot feasibility studies should be used whenever possible with projects such as ICFS for greater efficiency and economy.
- The original ICFS project hypotheses should be pursued further. Because of the severe validity problems which arose in the implementation of ICFS, its underlying theory and associated hypotheses have not been tested adequately and thus they cannot be accepted or rejected.
- Further study of the risk assessment instruments used in ICFS - with larger samples, longer follow-up and possible revision for improved validity - is needed for a more definitive evaluation.
- The instruments and methods developed to assess social adjustment, probationer perceptions, and offense seriousness should be further tested and utilized.

The abstracts appended more fully describe each of the ICFS substudies. The interested reader is referred to the individual reports for the complete studies.

Abstracts of Reports of  
The Improved Correctional  
Field Services Project

The Improved Correctional Field Services Project:  
A Case Study.

James O. Finckenauer and Don M. Gottfredson

This case study of the Improved Correctional Field Services Project describes its pre-implementation history, encompassing a period of about five years (1974-1978). It illustrates some of the pitfalls that may confront a program developer and evaluator in a social action project. The questions addressed in the analysis include:

- Are the sources of social innovation and action important determinants of program success?
- What is the effect, if any, of different sources of action and innovation (as when the Federal government originates and funds state and local projects)?
- Does encountering obstacles and problems alter, if only to some degree, the ultimate nature of a program?
- If a program develops in a dynamic, adaptive way, what are the implications for planning and evaluation?

As a study of the development and change of concepts and objectives within a particular project, this case history provides one illustration of change as these concepts are implemented and evaluated.

Screening for Risk: An Assessment of the ICFS  
Project Instruments.

Faye Taxman, Don M. Gottfredson and James O. Finckenauer

Each agency was to employ a locally derived and validated risk screening instrument. The issue examined in this report is the validity of these risk screening devices.

Major methodological issues in the development and testing of risk screening devices are discussed. The instruments used by the participating agencies are examined in relation to these issues. Results of attempted validations of each, based on the first cohort sample of ICFS cases for the first six months of probation supervision are reported, and an exploratory study toward improvement in risk assessing is described.

Of these three sites, only one used an instrument with substantial demonstrated validity for its probationers (Suffolk County). When applied to the first ICFS sample, results for each site indicated that validity must be seriously questioned. The limitations of sample size, short follow-up, and possible confounding with treatment effects are such that further study of the ICFS risk screening procedures is needed.

Risk, Supervision, and Recidivism: The First Six  
Months of Recorded Experience in the Improved Correctional  
Field Services Project

Don M. Gottfredson, James O. Finckenauer, and  
Faye Taxman

The central question examined in this report is whether the different supervision levels have, for any risk classification, any effect on a global (combined) measure of recidivism.

An aggregate first cohort sample of 507 cases was followed for six months of probation supervision. There are 102 cases from Kane County, Illinois; 127 from Suffolk County, New York; and 278 cases from Florida. Data were collected from probationer case files. Separate analyses are reported for the aggregate data and for each site. A number of analytical methods were used, e.g., contingency tables, correlational analyses, and analyses of variance and covariance.

The general conclusion, limited by the nature of the samples and the length of follow-up and outcome variance, was that the major hypotheses providing the rationale for the project were not supported. Neither risk classification, nor the supervision level, nor the interaction of risk and supervision had much effect on six-month, on-probation global recidivism. There were problems in the strength and integrity of the ICFS treatment which undermined the validity of the experiment. There are, however, certain trends in the

data that suggest that some elements in the project may be worth pursuing further. Most notably, the general patterns observed, although not statistically significant, were generally consistent with the original project hypotheses.

Social Adjustment: A Preliminary Report of the Improved Correctional Field Services Project

James O. Finckenauer and Faye S. Taxman

Most correctional research has been focused upon offender recidivism (however defined) as the critical or even sole outcome measure of correctional programs. In an effort to depart from this narrow (albeit important) perspective, this evaluation incorporated social adjustment as an additional indicator of project outcome. Measures of social adjustment were used to examine the effects of various levels of probation supervision when combined with different risk classifications. This report thus addresses a number of research areas and questions pertaining to probation and social or probation adjustment -- as these were exemplified in the Improved Correctional Field Services Project.

The Needs and Concerns of Probationers: A Thematic Analysis of Interviews

John J. Gibbs

This report contains an analysis of recorded and transcribed interviews with 57 probationers in two New Jersey counties. The interviews were structured to elicit the probationers' perceptions of probation and to explore their concerns. Each subject was asked to describe his probation experience and to respond to an orally administered Self-Anchoring Striving Scale, a measure of satisfaction.

The themes that emerged from a content analysis of the interviews were Flexibility, Control, Assistance, Support, and Autonomy. These themes are defined and illustrated with interview excerpts in the report. Support was the most popular theme, followed by Autonomy and Flexibility. Control and Assistance were the two lowest ranking themes.

The report contains analyses of themes in conjunction with satisfaction measures, personal characteristics,

and treatment variables. Many of the relations among variables appear plausible, and tentative explanations are offered for many of the findings.

The Needs and Concerns of Probationers: An Analysis of Questionnaires

John J. Gibbs

This report contains analyses of questionnaires including eight instruments administered to 125 probationers in Morris County, New Jersey. The Probationer Concern Inventory (PCI) consists of 45 comparisons by pairs intended to measure the probationer's need for Clarity, Flexibility, Assistance, Control, Support and Autonomy. A self-administered version of the Self-Anchoring Striving Scale was used to measure the subject's position relative to self-generated concerns. The Perception of Probation Officer Scale required that the subject rank order a number of phrases descriptive of his probation officer. (Descriptions contained in this instrument were intended to reflect the PCI dimensions.) The Perception of Treatment Scale presented the subject with a number of terms descriptive of the treatment he received from his probation officer. The Probation Officer Role instrument required that the subject choose from among a number of role descriptions that which best described his probation officer.

The Severity Scale instructed the subject to make a choice between a series of hypothetical dispositions. The purpose of this scale is to measure the perceived severity of probation as a disposition by comparing it with different levels of confinement and fine.

An Integrity of Treatment instrument consisting of 21 multiple choice questions was developed to measure perceived variation in the number and length of contacts during the probation period, and it includes a measure of intrusiveness.

The Characteristics of the Respondent questionnaire was designed to collect demographic, confinement, history, addiction, and treatment information. It also includes a question concerning the perceived purpose of probation.

Additivity and Interactions in Offense Seriousness Scales

Stephen D. Gottfredson, Kathy L. Young and  
William S. Laufer

An issue of concern in the practical application of offense seriousness scales (including their use in program evaluation studies) is that of the additive nature of separable components of criminal events. Recent attempts to verify the additivity assumption implicit in the most widely used scale have given mixed but damaging results. This report discusses additivity within the conceptual framework of interaction. In the first study reported, subjects judged the seriousness of five crime "types," each of which varied ten levels of monetary loss. Significant main effects for crime type and monetary value were observed, as was an interaction effect of crime type and monetary value. A second study replicates and extends the first. Implications for the assumption of additivity in seriousness scales are discussed.

Exploring the Dimensions of Offense Seriousness

Stephen D. Gottfredson

This report presents a series of studies designed to assess the ways in which the seriousness of crimes is judged. Substantial agreement within a large, heterogeneous sample of subjects can be demonstrated with respect to the judged seriousness of criminal and/or delinquent acts, but the exploration of dimensional structures for judged offense seriousness is necessary. About six dimensions underlie judgments of the seriousness of criminal and/or delinquent acts; and these dimensions are reliable and replicable. Several of these dimensions lie within the same ranges of apparent seriousness; this suggests that two or more offenses may be judged as of the same relative seriousness, but for different reasons.

The practical consequences of these fundamental measurement issues in program evaluation studies may be very important. For example, recent major reviews of the rehabilitation literature have suggested that rehabilitative or "treatment-oriented" efforts do not appear to work. It may well be the case that some rehabilitative efforts do indeed work, but that our yardsticks are simply too crude to allow us this knowledge. Thus, it is on these issues of fundamental measurement that advances in our knowledge of the system

and its capabilities must ultimately rely.

This study demonstrated that a meaningful set of scales can be developed that reflect the dimensions underlying the concept of offense seriousness. The scales are highly reliable (internally consistent) and are modestly interrelated - a finding to be expected given the method of development employed and the fact that all reflect (to some extent) the concept of seriousness.

The ways in which specified groups of people perceive these dimensions differ. Offenders' perceptions of offenses differ dramatically from those of other groups. There may be a "familiarity" effect with respect to judgments of the seriousness of crime: groups having involvement with the criminal justice system all judge offenses - of all sorts - as less serious than do persons not having criminal justice system involvement.

Appendices include: (A) the survey form used, (B) the scale values of 162 offense descriptions, based on various statistics that might be used, and (C) a demonstration that at least six clearly defined, readily interpretable dimensions appear to underlie people's judgments of crime seriousness.

Describing Probation Populations: Offense Seriousness

Stephen D. Gottfredson

The studies described in companion reports demonstrated that offense seriousness scores are not additive, a property assumed for earlier scale development, and that a multidimensional approach to scale development may be more useful - and indeed necessary for evaluating program outcomes. The development of a multidimensional offense seriousness scoring system is described in another report (Exploring the Dimensions of Judged Seriousness). In order to describe the probation caseloads of the three ICFS project sites in terms of offense seriousness, the new measure was applied to samples from each jurisdiction (as was the seriousness measure described by Sellin and Wolfgang).

Differences in the probationers of the various sites are described. The profiles of offense seriousness over six dimensions are presented and compared with the information available from the single-dimension approach.

The appendix describes the scoring system and its rationale.



**END**