

Work Ideologies of Juvenile Probation Officers: The Effects of Individual Characteristics

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ABSTRACT

Probation is the oldest and most widely used community-based corrections program. Research on probation primarily focuses on the experiences of justice-involved juveniles and the supervision of juveniles in the probation system. Much less is understood about the impact probation officers' perceptions have on job performance and what factors influence those perceptions. The current study aimed to examine the relationship between individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, level of education, tenure, political party affiliation, and jurisdiction) and juvenile probation officers' perceptions about their work ideology. Data for the study came from a sample of juvenile probation officers in nine states. Participants were asked questions about sanctioning, disposition, and role orientation. The study's findings show that few individual characteristics are significantly associated with attitudes/perceptions about work ideology. Probation officers' race was the only predictor significantly associated with several outcomes. Implications and future directions for research are discussed.

KEYWORDS: juvenile probation officers, work ideologies, individual characteristics

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INTRODUCTION

Probation is the oldest, most widely used community-based corrections program, and it plays a pivotal role in the juvenile justice system. Every year, nearly half a million youths are given some form of probation (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). The juvenile justice system was founded on an orientation of rehabilitation, and presumably, most people working in the field favored rehabilitation and acted accordingly toward juvenile

offenders. Today, juvenile justice system staff members are tasked with punitive and rehabilitation obligations. The need to study the predictors of rehabilitation and punishment orientations among juvenile probation officers is two-fold. First is the widespread use of discretion in decision-making: probation practices vary widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, officer to officer (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018; Farnworth et al., 1988), which has the potential for negative impact not only to the lives of juvenile offenders; short-term and long-term

outcomes, but also on their families, and the community. Second is the continual fluctuation between rehabilitation and punishment in juvenile justice policy (Bernard, 1992; Bolin & Applegate, 2018; Ward & Kupchik, 2010).

Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of this paper was to add to the existing literature on rehabilitation and punishment by exploring the perceptions (influenced by individual characteristics) of juvenile probation officers on work ideology (rehabilitation vs. punishment). This study had both a general and a specific purpose. Generally, it sought to examine the perceptions of juvenile probation officers regarding whether the primary goal of the juvenile justice system was still rehabilitation and if they perceived that their presentencing recommendations were considered at adjudication. Specifically, this study sought to examine the relationship between individual characteristics of juvenile probation officers and their perceptions regarding their work ideology (rehabilitation vs. punishment).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Juvenile probation has been called the cornerstone (Kurlycheck et al., 1999; Stahl et al., 1999), the heart (Hsieh et al., 2016), and the workhorse (Torbert, 1997) of the juvenile justice system. Juvenile probation officers across the United States screen cases, determine how cases are processed, make detention decisions, prepare investigation reports, and provide supervision and aftercare services. Juvenile probation plays a central role in the administration of juvenile justice in the United States (Bolin & Applegate, 2018; Mohammad & Azman, 2018; Soung, 2022; Torbet, 1997). The policies and programs advanced by juvenile probation departments define the nation's response to juvenile crime (Kurlycheck et al., 1999).

ABBREVIATIONS

PSI: Presentence Investigation Reports
RE/D: Racial, Ethnic Disparities
ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences

The influence of juvenile probation officers on dispositional outcomes has received attention in the literature. For example, research (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Carter, 1966; Carter & Wilkins, 1967; Frazier et al., 1983; Leifker, 2009; Norman & Wadman, 2000; Petersilia, 1997; Rosecrance, 1987; Rush & Robertson, 1987; Stinchcomb & Hippenstell, 2001) found that probation officers' sentencing recommendations in Presentence Investigation Reports (PSI) correlate to the actual sentence the offender receives. Similarly, there has been research on the influence of juvenile probation officers' individual characteristics on work ideologies: rehabilitation vs. punishment. Mack and Rhineberger-Dunn (2021) explored individual factors: age, gender, race, educational level, tenure, job position, contact, job perceptions, and organizational characteristics that predict rehabilitation and punishment orientations among juvenile detention and probation officers. They found that individual characteristics had a greater impact on both rehabilitation and punishment than either job perceptions or organizational factors. Finally, Reese et al. (1998) looked at individual characteristics: age, gender, education, and family structure, and found that the individual characteristics were directly associated with the inconsistencies found in the dispositional recommendations for juvenile offenders.

Theoretical Background

In 1934, LaPierre's study of hotel and restaurant personnel brought attitudinal theory to the forefront. Attitudinal theory has several assertions. First, individuals' perceptions are shaped by their beliefs and values. Two, individuals with positive perceptions should behave positively toward the attitude object. Three, perceptions are learned and differ according to an individual's life experiences and cultural environment. Finally, it is these perceptions then that give rise to an individual's intentions and determine an individual's behavior (Atkins, 1974; Atkins & Green, 1976; Atkins & Zavonia, 1974; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Brigham & Wrightsman, 1982; Curtis, 1991; D'Angelo, 2000, 2007a; 2007b; Feld, 1991; Gibson, 1978; Pennington, 1986).

Numerous studies have been conducted since the 1930s using attitudinal theory to show that individuals' behaviors can be predicted based on their perceptions, which are driven by individual characteristics. This is extremely important because individual characteristics are the critical component in developing a complete understanding of an individual's work ideology. For example, several studies (Atkins, 1974; Atkins & Green, 1976; Atkins & Zavonia, 1974; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Brigham & Wrightsman, 1982; Gibson, 1978; Goldman, 1975; Howard, 1981; Keenan, 2021; Keenan et al., 2015; Pennington, 1986; Schubert, 1974; Spaeth, 1963; Tanenhaus, 1966) have been conducted using attitudinal theory to predict (using individual characteristics) judges' work ideologies. However, this research primarily focuses on the Federal Court System and Federal Court judges. There are a few studies that have examined how individual characteristics of adult criminal court judges (D'Angelo, 2000, 2007a; 2007b; Myers, 1988; Schwartz et al., 1993) and juvenile court judges (Keenan, 2021; Keenan et al., 2015) affect their work ideologies; however, a review of the literature reveals a dated, limited, and somewhat jumbled picture of the

influence of individual characteristics of probation officers and their work ideologies.

Individual Factors

Several studies have examined the influence of juvenile probation officers' individual characteristics on work ideologies. Individual characteristics: age, gender, race, education, family structure, tenure, political party affiliation, and jurisdiction, have been suggested to affect an individual's work ideology. For this study, we focused on the individual characteristics of age, gender, race, level of education, tenure, political party affiliation, and jurisdiction.

Age

Attitudinal theory asserts that as individuals age, they accumulate life experiences. It is these life experiences that shape their perceptions and behaviors. Therefore, younger (i.e., newer) juvenile probation officers would maintain different work ideologies than older ones. As an individual grows older, he/she may adopt a more cynical attitude toward juvenile offenders (Schwartz et al., 2017). The literature reveals a jumbled picture of the influence of age on juvenile probation officer work ideologies. Some research found that age had an effect, while others found that age was not a significant predictor. For example, Bazemore et al. (2007) and Ward and Kupchik (2010) found that punitiveness increased with age. Sluder and Reddington (1993) found that age affected the personal views of the juvenile probation officer regarding work ideologies; the more time the officer spent in direct contact with the probationer, the more likely they were to support law enforcement strategies. In contrast, Bazemore et al. (1994) found that older juvenile probation officers were less likely to favor a punitive orientation. Finally, three studies (Gordon, 1999; Leiber et al., 2002; Lopez & Russell, 2008) found that age did not significantly predict rehabilitation or punishment ideologies for juvenile probation officers.

Gender

Attitudinal theory asserts that males have different life experiences than females and that these differences shape their perceptions, behaviors, and work ideologies. For example, research (Erikson & Luttbeg, 1973; Gruhl et al., 1981; Kritzer & Uhlman, 1977) has shown that women are more liberal in their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. The literature on juvenile probation officers reveals a muddled picture of the influence of gender on work ideology. Significant research (Bazemore et al., 1994; Donnellan & Moore, 1979; Gordon, 1999; Sluder & Reddington, 1993; Ward & Kupchik, 2010) has found gender to be a significant predictor of work ideology in juvenile probation officers; female officers were more likely to stress rehabilitation, and male officers were more likely to embrace control/punishment ideals. Contradictory, three studies (Blevins et al., 2007; Leiber et al., 2002; Mack & Rhineberger-Dunn, 2021) found gender failed to demonstrate a significant predictor of attitude towards either punishment or rehabilitation orientation.

Race

Attitudinal theory asserts that Whites would have different life experiences than minorities that shape their perceptions and behaviors; Whites and minorities would maintain different work ideologies. For example, Welch et al. (1988) found that African Americans tended to hold more liberal views and were more lenient than Whites. The literature on juvenile probation officers reveals an untidy view of the influence of race on work ideology. Sluder and Reddington (1993) and Cullen et al. (1989) found that minorities are more likely than Whites to support rehabilitation. Bazemore et al. (1994), Blevins et al. (2007), and Gordon (1999) all found that race did not have a significant effect on either punishment or rehabilitation orientation/ideology.

Level of education

Attitudinal theory asserts that individuals with post-secondary education would have different life experiences that shape their perception and behaviors than those without, thus, maintaining different work ideologies. The literature on juvenile probation officers reveals a disjointed picture of the influence of education level on work ideology. For example, Donnellan and Moore (1979) found that the level of education completed by the juvenile probation officer influenced the perception of the role that the officer played, which ultimately affects how the offender is treated; juvenile probation officers with higher levels of education viewed rehabilitation/service as the main focus of their job, while juvenile probation officers with less education perceived the law enforcement/ punishment the most essential role. These findings are repeated in the research through the decades (Anderson & Spanier, 1980; Farnworth et al., 1988; Sluder & Reddington, 1993) and confirmed in more recent research. For example, Mack and Rhineberger-Dunn (2021) found that officers with higher degree attainment were more likely to support rehabilitation than officers with less education. Officers who reported lower degree attainment were more likely than those who reported higher levels of education to support a punishment orientation.

One study (Blevins et al., 2007) found that support for rehabilitation declined as education level increased; support for punishment increased with increased education levels. And two studies (Gordon, 1999; Lopez & Russell, 2008) that failed to demonstrate a significant relationship between educational levels and rehabilitation or punishment orientation/ideology.

Tenure

Attitudinal theory asserts that as individuals age, they accumulate life experiences. It is these life experiences that shape their perceptions and behav-

iors. Therefore, newer juvenile probation officers would have different levels of experience than those on the job longer, thus, maintaining different work ideologies. The literature on juvenile probation officers reveals a bipolar picture of the influence of tenure on work ideology. For example, Sluder and Reddington (1993) found that length of employment affected the individual views of the juvenile probation officer regarding their role. Findings revealed that the more time officers spend in direct contact with probationers, the more likely they are to support law enforcement strategies. Cullen et al. (1989) and Whitehead & Lindquist (1989) found that seniority was positively associated with control orientation and negatively related to rehabilitation orientation. Bazemore et al. (2009) found that tenure was a significant predictor of punishment. However, some research (Belvins et al., 2007; Gordon, 1999; Lopez & Russell, 2008; Miles, 1965; Ward & Kupchik, 2010) found that job tenure was not a significant predictor of rehabilitation or punishment ideology. Finally, Philliber (1987) has noted the risks of confounding the effects of experience (time on the job/tenure) and officers' ages if these two variables are not controlled for.

Political party affiliation

Attitudinal theory suggests that individuals who are conservative and liberal maintain different perceptions, behaviors, and work ideologies. For example, considerable research (Curtis, 1991; Smith & Wright, 1992; Taylor, 1989) found that individuals who identify as conservative tend to be more punitive than those who identify as liberal. Furthermore, scholars (Gibson, 1978; Nagel, 1961) suggest that those who identify as democrat tend to be more working class-oriented in their perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviors than their Republican peers; democrat are more sympathetic to the plight of the lower and working class resulting in more lenient sentences.

There is consensus in the literature on the effects of political party affiliation on juvenile probation officers' work ideology. Dembo (1972) found that juvenile probation officers with liberal political orientations support rehabilitation, while conservatives tend to favor offender control. Cullen & Cullen (1987) reiterated these findings in their study. Sluder & Reddington (1993) found that probation officers who are more liberal are more likely to support resource brokerage caseload management strategies, and officers who are more politically conservative are more likely to embrace offender-control ideologies. Finally, research (Benekos, 1990; Lindner, 1994; Steiner et al., 2004) also showed that political ideology was a determinant of a juvenile probation officer's decision to embrace a particular work orientation.

Jurisdiction

Attitudinal theory suggests that individuals from different cultural environments: rural, suburban, and urban, would maintain different perceptions and behaviors, thus, work ideologies. In other words, the beliefs that shape an individual's perceptions differ according to where he/she resides. When applying attitudinal theory to an agency setting, we might find that smaller agency, which tends to be less bureaucratically entrenched, place greater emphasis on the human element of their work; larger agencies emphasize the mechanical elements of probation, thus, focusing more on offender control. Jurisdiction is another place consensus in the literature is found. For example, Colley et al. (1986) found rural officers to be more "oriented towards people" to "use resources wisely" and have a better "knowledge of community resources" than urban officers. In contrast, urban officers perceived the task of "recognizing the true criminal" to be of greater importance. Sluder & Reddington (1993) found that smaller agencies were more likely to support rehabilitation, and officers working in larger probation agencies were likelier than others to support offender control strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study sought to examine the relationship between individual characteristics of juvenile probation officers and their work ideologies: rehabilitation and punishment. In determining these relationships, the analysis sought to answer the following questions.

1. Is there a difference in juvenile probation officers' perceptions about whether the primary goal of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation based on their individual characteristics (age, gender, race, level of education, tenure, political party affiliation, and jurisdiction)?

2. Is there a difference in juvenile probation officers' perceptions about whether or not their presentencing recommendations were considered at adjudication based on individual characteristics (age, gender, race, level of education, tenure, political party affiliation, and jurisdiction)?

3. Whether individual characteristics (age, gender, race, level of education, tenure, political party affiliation, and jurisdiction) are significantly related to the probation officers' perceptions about their role as a juvenile probation officer, juvenile probation practice, and their day-to-day activities.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of juvenile probation officers in eleven states: Arizona (46) (R), Colorado (191) (D), Delaware (15) (D), District of Columbia (7) (D), Illinois (743) (D), Minnesota (1521) (D), New York (395) (D), Pennsylvania (208) (R), Tennessee (150) (R), Texas (1893) (R), and Utah (125) (R). A sampling frame was established (N= 5,294) and determined to be manageable enough for a census. The eleven states were selected based on regions (West, Central, North East, and South East) and political party affliction (Republican and Democratic) from the 2016 presidential election to

ensure representation of the target population. The names and contact information for the sampling frame were obtained by accessing public state directories, county, and state websites, and phone calls.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument for this study was constructed in consultation with prior research (D'Angelo, 2000, 2007a; 2007b; Griffin & Torbet, 2002; Keenan, 2021; Keenan et al., 2015). The instrument consisted of four sections: court information, sanctioning and disposition issues, demographic information, and qualitative strategy questions. This study was quantitative; used forced-choice questions. The survey was disseminated three times to ensure the maximum response rate: the initial and two follow-ups.

Procedures

Between August and October 2020, the authors conducted a web-based survey to measure how juvenile probation officers' individual characteristics influenced their perceptions regarding their sentencing recommendations, role, practice, and day-to-day activities (i.e., work ideology). With cost, time, and access concerns in mind, a web-based survey design was utilized. All of the participants had access to email, thus, access to the web-based survey. Computer skills no greater than those needed for composing and sending an email were required. The survey instrument was disseminated using Survey Monkey. All survey responses were considered confidential, and no individual identifiers were used. The survey was accompanied by an email of explanation and an information sheet for consent to participate in the study. Participants were allowed to receive, via email, a copy of the executive summary by responding to the email provided in the email of explanation. There were three survey dissemination

through Survey Monkey; the initial and two follow-ups.

Analytical Procedure

Dependent variables

There are five dependent variables: (1) the primary goal of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation. (2) juvenile court judges consider the recommendations of the probation officer in their decision, (3) role as a juvenile probation officer, (4) probation practices, and (5) day-to-day activities. Primary goal measured respondents' level of agreement with the statement "the primary goal of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation" and was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (0: Strongly disagree, 1: Disagree, 2: No opinion, 3: Agree, 4: Strongly agree). Judge considers sentencing recommendation measured respondents' level of agreement to the statement "juvenile court judges consider the recommendation of the probation officer" and is also measured on a 5-point Likert scale (0: Strongly disagree, 1: Disagree, 2: No opinion, 3: Agree, 4: Strongly agree). Role as a juvenile probation officer measured respondents' self-reported primary role as a probation officer (0: Law enforcer/Control-oriented, 1: Therapeutic or Social Services, 2: Synthetic or Combined approach, 3: Other. Probation practices measured respondents' self-reported orientation as probation officers. According to the Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation Practices (Giffin & Torbet, 2002), juvenile probation practice is mission-driven, performance-based, and outcome-focused. There were five response categories: 0: Mission-driven, 1: Outcome-focused, 2: Performance-Based, 3: Other, and 4: All of the above. The last category (all of the above) was not included in multivariate analyses because of the low sample size ($n = 11$), which resulted in model convergence issues. Finally, day-to-day activities measured the three activities the respondents

believed to be the most important. The variable was coded 0: Intake, screening, assessment, 1: Presentencing investigations, 3: Supervision.

Independent variables

There were seven independent variables: (1) age, (2) gender, (3) race, (4) level of education, (5) tenure, (6) political party affiliation, and (7) jurisdiction. Age was assessed in years. Gender was dichotomized: male and female; however, several respondents self-reported "other." The "other" category was omitted from analyses because of the low sample size ($n = 4$). Race measured respondents' self-reported race/ethnicity. The original variable had five categories: American Indian or Alaska Native, Black/African American, not Hispanic, Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and White, not Hispanic. Several racial/ethnic categories had fewer than 10 cases and were combined for analysis. The final variable consists of four final categories: 0: White, not Hispanic, 1: Black, not Hispanic, 2: Hispanic/Latinx, and 3: Other (which combines the other ethnic groups). Level of education measures the highest level of education achieved by each respondent. The variables originally included four categories: High school (HS) diploma, 2-year degree, 4-degree, and graduate degree. Less than 4% of the sample had an HS diploma or a 2-year degree. These categories were combined for analysis. Tenure was assessed in years. Political party affiliation was coded 0: Democrat, 1: Republican, 2: Independent, and 3: Other. Finally, jurisdiction describes the jurisdiction in which the respondent worked. The variable was coded 0: Urban, 1: Suburban, 2: Rural, and 3: Other. Some respondents indicated 'other' if they served more than one jurisdiction; or a combination of jurisdictions. The 'other' category was omitted from analyses because we could not identify the specific type of jurisdiction being captured in this category.

Analyses

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the factors associated with role performance. This analysis is best suited because the DVs are on a 5-point scale and are not summed to form an additive measure that would be considered interval/ratio. Additionally, after checking assumptions of OLS, the model violates several assumptions including homoskedasticity and normality of residuals (skew for the standardized residuals = 12.31) (Fields, 2013; Hosmer et al., 2013).

The first model uses ordinal logistic regression, a generalized linear model (GLM) variant that incorporates ordinal dependent variables. The assumption of proportional odds was met ($\chi^2(48) = 55.290$, $p = 0.219$). Models 3, 4, and 5 were conducted using multinomial logistic regression, a GLM variant that incorporates nominal outcome variables with more than two categories. The sample is nested within states, which violates the independence of observations assumption of linear regression. Thus, robust standard errors were produced to account for the clustering of observations within clusters. The quantitative properties of the variables were examined, and the two continuous measures (age and tenure) were found to be normally distributed. All analyses were conducted in Stata 17 (StataCorp, 2021).

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the sample. The average age of the sample was 46.5 years. The majority were female (54.59%) and white (77.56%). Most of the respondents had a 4-year degree (60.34%), followed by a graduate degree (36.25%) and a high school diploma or 2-year degree (3.41%). The average tenure on the job was 16.26 years. About a third of the respondents self-identified as Republican, followed by about 28% as Democrat, 22% as Independent, and 16% other political affiliations. About half of the sample worked in a rural jurisdiction (49.62%), followed by suburban (25.19%) and urban (20.64%).

The majority of the respondents strongly agreed (38.66%) or agree (49.54%) with the statement "juvenile court judges consider the recommendation of the probation officer in their decision." About 43% of the respondents viewed their role as a juvenile probation officer as a synthetic/combined approach, followed by therapeutic/social services (31.87%), other (14.09%), and law enforcer/control-oriented (10.85%). Most of the respondents reported an outcome-focused orientation (56.35%) followed by mission-driven (18.71%), performance-based (14.32%), and other (8.08%). When asked which day-to-day activities were the most important, about 44% reported supervision, about 30% reported intake, and about 26% reported pre-sentencing investigations as the most important.

RESULTS

Descriptive

Of the total population ($N = 5,294$), 553 juvenile probation officers returned questionnaires for an overall response rate of 10% (10.44%). Of the 553 returned questionnaires, 119 completed only the demographic section and were removed from the analysis. The final sample includes 434 observations with data available in all sections before listwise deletion.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Individual Characteristics	% (N)/ M(SD)	Min-Max
Sex		
Female	54.59% (226)	0-1
Male	44.44% (184)	
Race		
White	77.56% (318)	0-3
Black	8.54% (35)	
Hispanic	10.24% (42)	
Other	3.66% (15)	
Political Affiliation		
Democrat	28.17% (111)	0-3
Republic	33.50% (132)	
Independent	22.08% (87)	
Other	16.24% (64)	
Education		
HS Diploma or 2-year Degree	3.41% (14)	0-2
4-year degree	60.34% (258)	
Graduate Degree	36.25% (149)	
Judges Consider		
Strongly disagree	3.01% (13)	0-4
Disagree	4.63% (20)	
No Opinion	4.17% (18)	
Agree	49.54% (214)	
Strongly agree	38.66% (167)	
PO Role		
Law Enforcer/Control-Oriented	10.85% (47)	0-2
Therapeutic or Social Services	31.87% (138)	
Synthetic or Combined Approach	43.19% (187)	
Other	14.09% (61)	
PO Orientation		
Mission-Driven	18.71% (81)	0-3
Outcome Focused	56.35% (244)	
Performance Based	14.32% (62)	
Other	8.08% (35)	
PO Jurisdiction		
Urban	20.64% (109)	0-2
Suburban	25.19% (133)	
Rural	49.62% (262)	
Day-to-Day Activities		
Intake, screening, assessment	29.69% (125)	0-2
Pre-sentencing investigations	25.89% (109)	
Supervision	44.42% (187)	
Age (in years)	46.50 (9.93)	20 - 70
Tenure (in years)	16.26 (9.69)	0 - 42

Multivariate Results

Model 1 in Table 2 presents the results of the ordinal logistic regression predicting the level of agreement with the statement, "Juvenile court judges consider the recommendation of the probation officer in their decision" Only race was significant. Compared to white respondents, those who are Black or other had lower odds of being in a higher level of agreement.

Table 3 presents the multinomial logistic regression predicting the primary role reported by probation officers. There are several significant covariates in Model 1 (control-oriented versus combined). Compared to White respondents, Black respondents were significantly more likely to endorse the role of control-oriented than a combined role. Similarly, compared to those with a 4-year degree, those with a graduate degree are more likely to endorse the control-oriented role than the combined role. As age increases, the relative risk of endorsing a control-oriented role versus a combined role increases. Conversely, as tenure increases, the likelihood of endorsing the control-oriented role versus a combined role decreases. There were no significant predictors in Model 2.

Model 3 presents the multinomial logistic regression results predicting the relative risk of endorsing the social services role versus the combined role. None of the covariates were significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. There are several significant predictors. Compared to White respondents, Black and those in the Other category had a higher likelihood of endorsing the other category compared to the combined role. As age increases, so does the likelihood of endorsing the other role compared to the combined role. Compared to Democrats, Republican respondents were more likely to endorse the other role compared to the combined role.

Individual Characteristics	Model 1: Judges Consider	
	OR (RSE)	p-value
Gender (ref = Female)		
Male	0.83 (0.14)	0.279
Race/Ethnicity (ref = White)		
Black/ African American	0.31 (0.10)***	0.000
Hispanic/Latinx	0.61 (0.17)	0.073
Other	0.34 (0.10)***	0.000
Education (ref = 4-year Degree)		
HS diploma or 2-year Degree	1.44 (0.42)	0.216
Graduate Degree	0.97 (0.29)	0.921
Age (years)	1.00 (0.02)	0.822
Tenure (years)	1.01 (0.01)	0.471
Political Affiliation (ref = Democrat)		
Republicans	0.90 (0.24)	0.703
Independent	0.89 (0.30)	0.751
Other	1.04 (0.52)	0.938
Jurisdiction (ref = Urban)		
Suburban	1.68 (0.63)	0.16
Rural	1.49 (0.55)	0.285
N		345

Note. *** $p < .001$, OR = Odds Ratio, RSE = Robust Standard Errors

Table 3

Multinomial Logistic Regression

Individual Characteristics	PO Roles					
	(1) Control-Oriented vs. Combined		(2) Social Service vs. Combined		(3) Other vs. Combined	
	RRR (RSE)	p-value	RRR (RSE)	p-value	RRR (RSE)	p-value
Gender (ref = Female)						
Male	1.31 (0.58)	0.546	0.88 (0.24)	0.644	0.59 (0.23)	0.174
Race (ref = White)						
Black	7.04 (4.94)**	0.005	0.78 (0.46)	0.673	5.89 (3.71)**	0.005
Hispanic	0.40 (0.44)	0.407	1.19 (0.52)	0.692	3.15 (1.86)	0.052
Other	8.15 (10.49)	0.103	1.60 (1.37)	0.584	6.03 (5.40)*	0.044
Education (ref = 4-year Degree)						
Graduate Degree	9.26 (6.46)**	0.001	0.91 (0.26)	0.749	0.77 (0.31)	0.509
Age (years)	1.11 (0.03)***	0.000	1.03 (0.02)	0.098	1.06 (0.03)*	0.029
Tenure (years)	0.90 (0.03)***	0.000	0.97 (0.20)	0.068	0.97 (0.02)	0.298
Political Affiliation (ref = Democrat)						
Republicans	1.94 (1.10)	0.242	1.30 (0.44)	0.435	3.78 (1.99)*	0.011
Independent	0.22 (0.17)	0.054	0.67 (0.26)	0.301	2.11 (1.14)	0.167
Other	1.52 (0.99)	0.521	1.14 (0.46)	0.748	1.19 (0.77)	0.790
Jurisdiction (ref = Urban)						
Suburban	3.27 (2.30)	0.092	1.17 (0.46)	0.688	0.90 (0.46)	0.844
Rural	1.39 (0.86)	0.594	0.86 (0.29)	0.659	0.52 (0.03)	0.157
N	350					

Note. ***p < .001, * p< .05, RRR = Relative Risk Ratio, RSE = Robust Standard Errors

Table 4
Multinomial Logistic Regression

Individual Characteristic	PO Orientation					
	(1) Mission-Driven vs. Outcome-Focused		(2) Performance-Based vs. Outcome-Focused		(3) Other vs. Outcome-Focused	
	RRR (RSE)	p-value	RRR (RSE)	p-value	RRR (RSE)	p-value
Gender (ref = Female)						
Male	0.78 (0.22)	0.367	2.69 (0.86)**	0.002	0.31 (0.12)**	0.003
Race (ref = White)						
Black	1.26 (0.62)	0.633	1.99 (1.27)	0.279	1.60 (1.32)	0.565
Hispanic	1.13 (0.57)	0.806	2.89 (1.75)	0.079	1.69 (1.52)	0.560
Other	2.25 (2.18)	0.405	2.13 (2.73)	0.555	1.88 (0.84)**	0.002
Education (ref = 4-year Degree)						
HS diploma or 2-year Degree	0.86 (0.28)	0.647	1.34 (0.37)	0.285	1.52 (0.91)	0.484
Graduate Degree	0.70 (0.23)	0.268	2.12 (0.36)***	0.000	0.81 (0.30)	0.569
Age (years)	0.98 (0.02)	0.358	0.99 (0.01)	0.380	0.97 (0.02)	0.291
Tenure (years)	0.99 (0.02)	0.424	1.02 (0.02)	0.416	1.06 (0.02)**	0.007
Political Affiliation (ref = Democrat)						
Republicans	1.50 (0.76)	0.429	1.32 (0.42)	0.377	0.56 (0.31)	0.290
Independent	0.93 (0.27)	0.811	0.50 (0.30)	0.245	0.92 (0.29)	0.798
Other	0.47 (0.20)	0.074	0.86 (0.33)	0.705	0.77 (0.41)	0.621
Jurisdiction (ref = Urban)						
Suburban	0.52 (0.13)**	0.008	0.99 (0.53)	0.978	1.11 (0.45)	0.798
Rural	0.59 (0.16)	0.051	1.22 (0.64)	0.705	0.77 (0.51)	0.696
N	337					

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, RRR = Relative Risk Ratio, RSE = Robust Standard Errors

Table 4 presents the multinomial logistic regression predicting the orientation reported by probation officers. There is one significant covariate in Model 1 (mission-driven versus outcome-focused). Compared to those in urban jurisdictions, respondents in suburban jurisdictions were less likely to endorse the mission-driven orientation compared to the outcome-focused orientation. There are several significant covariates in Model 2 (performance-based versus outcome-focused). Compared to females, males were more likely to

endorse the performance-based orientation than outcome-focused. Compared to those with a 4-year degree, those with a graduate degree were more likely to endorse the performance-based orientation.

There are several significant covariates in Model 3 (other versus outcome-focused). Males were less likely to endorse the other orientation. Compared to White respondents, those in the other category were more likely to endorse the other orientation. As job tenure increases, the likelihood of endorsing the other orientation also increases.

Table 5

Logistic Regression

Model 4: Day-to-Day activities

Individual Characteristics	Intake vs. Supervision		Pre-sentencing vs. Supervision	
	RRR (RSE)	p-value	RRR (RSE)	p-value
Gender (ref = Female)				
Male	1.06 (0.35)	0.851	0.79 (0.23)	0.425
Race/Ethnicity (ref = White)				
Black/ African American	2.61 (2.02)	0.216	0.54 (0.32)	0.298
Hispanic/Latinx	1.60 (0.53)	0.154	0.56 (0.42)	0.442
Other	2.53 (2.51)	0.348	2.11 (2.06)	0.443
Education (ref = 4-year Degree)				
HS diploma or 2-year Degree	1.06 (0.51)	0.904	0.81 (0.23)	0.454
Graduate Degree	0.58 (0.18)	0.084	0.79 (0.23)	0.404
Age (years)	1.04 (0.03)	0.105	1.02 (0.02)	0.373
Tenure (years)	0.98 (0.02)	0.280	0.99 (0.12)	0.708
Political Affiliation (ref = Democrat)				
Republicans	1.17 (0.28)	0.516	1.13 (0.31)	0.647
Independent	0.42 (0.17)*	0.029	0.72 (0.35)	0.501
Other	1.06 (0.36)	0.874	0.92 (0.33)	0.825
Jurisdiction (ref = Urban)				
Suburban	0.84 (0.29)	0.600	1.18 (0.56)	0.736
Rural	1.35 (0.40)	0.310	1.42 (0.58)	0.393
N	337			

Note. *** p < .001, **p < .01, * p < .05, RRR = Relative Risk Ratio, RSE = Robust Standard Errors

Table 5 presents the multinomial logistic regression predicting which day-to-day activities respondents find more important. There is only one significant predictor in the model. In Model 1 (Intake v supervision), the only significant association is with political affiliation, where those who identified as independent (compared to democrats) were significantly less likely to endorse intake over supervision as the most important activity.

DISCUSSION

The current study examined the relationship between individual characteristics of juvenile probation officers and their perceptions regarding their work ideology. The majority of the findings suggest that individual characteristics of juvenile probation officers do not affect their work ideologies; however, there were several notable findings.

First, when looking at the level of agreement with the statement "the primary goal of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation," almost everyone agreed; however, about 3% did not. Rehabilitation is the main goal of the juvenile justice system allowing juveniles to be treated differently than adult offenders. The juvenile justice system employs a variety of strategies, including diversion, probation, and detention to rehabilitate youthful offenders. Understanding why these juvenile probation officers disagree/strongly disagree with this statement and what strategies they employ to address juvenile crime would be of interest.

Similarly, when looking at the level of agreement with the statement "juvenile court judges consider the probation officer's recommendation in their decision," race was the only characteristic of significance. Respondents who identify as Blacks and Others were less likely to have an agreement with this statement. As mentioned earlier, the correlation between sentencing recommendations made by juvenile probation officers and the actual sentences offenders receive has been well documented; however, like other parts of the criminal justice system, the juvenile probation system is rife with racial inequalities. Most research on racial disparities in the juvenile justice system focuses on Black, Latinx, and Native American youth and not on the minority juvenile probation officers' experiences. More research is needed to

flush out this disparity in perception based on the race/ethnicity of the probation officer.

In addition, when looking at the variable "roles as a probation officer," there were several key findings. Juvenile probation officers could pick between law enforcer/control-oriented, time server, therapeutic/social services, synthetic/combined, and others. Respondents who identify as Black, had higher levels of education, were older and had longer tenure were more likely to view their role as law enforcer/control-oriented. The age and tenure findings are mostly consistent with prior literature; however, race and level of education are not.

Prior literature on the individual characteristic age and tenure and juvenile probation officer work ideologies is mixed; some research found that age and tenure did have an effect, while other research found that age and tenure was not a significant predictor. The authors believe that the finds for age and tenure could be explained by burnout or job demand-resource theory (Dir et al., 2019), "high hope" theory (Bartoo (1963), "nothing works" mentality (Martinson, 1974), or role conflict theory (Clear & Latessa, 1993; Colley et al., 1986; 1987; Fulton et al., 1997; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1989); however, more research would be needed to flush this out.

Moreover, the finding that respondents who identify as Black or had higher levels of education viewed their role as law enforcer/control-oriented breaks from prior literature. The prior research (Cullen et al., 1989; Sluder & Reddington, 1993; Welch et al., 1988) suggests that minorities tended to support more rehabilitative strategies, less punitive than their White peers. However, the majority of the literature on Racial, Ethnic Disparities (RE/D) has focused on minority youth on probation, not on minority juvenile probation officers' experiences. Clearly, more research is needed. Similarly, the findings of this study for the variable level of education does not support prior research, which

found that juvenile probation officers with higher levels of education viewed rehabilitation/service as the main focus of their job. Here too, more research is needed.

Next, when looking at the question, “as a juvenile probation officer, I am:” the officer could choose mission-driven, performance-based, outcome-focused, or other. Although none of the individual characteristics significantly influenced the likelihood of being mission-driven versus outcome-focused, gender was significantly associated with the likelihood of choosing performance-based or other versus outcome-focused. Males were more likely to choose performance-based but less likely to choose other compared to outcome-focused. Examples of others include all of the above, skill building, enforcing court orders, BARJ, following terms of probation, and providing the best services to each child on an individual basis. Although all of the juvenile probation officers should have selected all three (all of the above) to reflect the Desktop Guide’s (Griffin & Torbet, 2002) best practices of juvenile probation becoming mission-driven, performance-based, and outcome focused, only 11 did.

Finally, when respondents were asked to rank their day-to-day activities on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 - least important and 3 - most important), the only significant association was with political party affiliation. A third of the respondents self-identified as Republican, 28% as Democrat, 22% as independent, and 16% as other. Those who identified as independent were significantly more likely to rank supervision as the most important day-to-day activity. This finding is inconsistent with prior research because prior studies used a dichotomized variable; republican vs. Democrat. Clearly, more research is needed.

Limitations

Although this study adds to the literature, it has its limitations. First, the risk in assessing practitioners' perceptions is that they may be wrong

in their assessments; thus, caution must be taken in interpreting their views. Furthermore, the low response rate made more sophisticated analysis and large inference problematic. Similarly, of the 553 returned questionnaires, 119 only had the demographic section completed and thus had to be removed from the analysis. Finally, it became apparent that based on respondents' answers to a few open-ended questions, the researchers should have written them as closed-ended, forcing the answers to align with prior research and control for lack of real-time discipline knowledge: policy, practice, and language changes.

Future Research

The researchers make several suggestions for future research. First, exploring why 119 juvenile probation officers did not answer the questionnaire beyond demographic information would be interesting. Did they perceive the questionnaire was not "really" anonymous? Was it the perception of power imbalance in the workplace? Alternatively, was it the loss of faith in the whole process/system? Next, more research is needed to explore the experiences of minority juvenile probation officers. For example, the development and addition of questions aimed at getting to the experiences of minority juvenile probation officers, given that race was our most salient predictor. In addition, the researchers are also interested in a further exploration into why Black probation officers were more likely to see their role as law enforcer/control-oriented. Finally, more research is needed to assess the extent and nature of the training for juvenile probation officers in adolescent brain development, mental health, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma-informed policies, and the probation officer's role, probation practices, and day-to-day activities.

CONCLUSION

There are two competing goals of juvenile probation: law enforcement/community protection and rehabilitation and they are often in conflict. Personality traits and the backgrounds of individual juvenile probation officers have been found to affect officers' approach to doing their jobs (i.e., work ideologies). These officers' perceptions, in turn, ultimately (negatively or positively) affect how the juvenile is treated. For this reason, research on the individual characteristics, job perceptions, and organizational characteristics that predict rehabilitation and punishment orientations/ideology should continue, thus, updating and expanding the depth and breadth of the literature in this area.

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