

COST Action IS1106 Offender Supervision in Europe

Working group 1: Experiencing Supervision

Experiencing Offender Supervision in Scotland

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Introduction

1. In this brief report, I aim to offer a summary of research to date in Scotland about the experience of offender supervision. Though there is a significant history of relevant evaluation research in Scotland, there is less research directly addressing how supervision is experienced by those subject to it, and how it is perceived by others affected by it (e.g. families, victims and communities). My focus here is on how 'offenders' experience supervision. As will become apparent, most of the available research is based on interviews with offenders and/or questionnaires completed by them, rather than on more observational or more fully ethnographic methods.

Scottish probation

2. Though probation and criminal justice social work practices have been studied a number of times in Scotland in recent years, there has been very little work directly focused on understanding the cultures and practise of criminal justice social work, and on how supervision is experienced by those subject to it. A recent oral history of Scottish probation in the 1960s (McNeill, 2009, 2010) involving interviews both with ex-probation officers and with ex-probationers suggests that the probation services from which criminal justice social work emerged were themselves complex and contested organisations. Probation officers' accounts of their pathways into probation work reveal a little about the ideologies and values that shaped these services. Their accounts stress not only the significance of the types of religious and political values that one might expect to find associated with humanitarian endeavour, but also of more mundane needs in the post-war years to find meaningful work that carried a degree of social status. Their accounts of their selection and recruitment suggest a preoccupation (amongst the selectors) with the creation of a workforce capable of engaging with people in adversity but unlikely to disrupt established hierarchies within the criminal justice system. Probation officers were often ambivalent about the power and status of courts and judges; though they sometimes experienced this as marginalising and even oppressive, they were also attracted to the associated status lent them as officers of the court.
3. Although they recollected their formal training to varying degrees, probation officers learned the job principally from their peers – a recurring finding in probation research. Such processes of professional socialisation may have had an enduring and conservative effect on Scottish probation's cultures, ensuring continuities with earlier eras and diminishing the practical impact of new strategies and techniques. Perhaps partly for this reason, the approaches to

practice that the officers described were much less imbued with theories of 'social casework' than might be expected from a reading of official and academic sources of the time (see McNeill 2005, McNeill and Whyte, 2007). Routine practice, most of it with young people, was focused principally on diversion and containment, with casework or 'treatment' approaches reserved for the small number of adults on probation, particularly those with mental health problems. In the course of their work, Scottish probation officers were also highly conscious of their engagements with local communities, working in a patch-based system to build ties to informal sources of social control and support (families, churches, employers, youth organisations, former probationers). They actively used such ties to try to bind probationers; 'binding' them sometimes in the sense of healing but also often in the sense of restraining. This engagement with and utilisation of community resources perhaps reflected Scottish probation's distinctively local character; Scottish services were always aligned to local council areas rather than to courts, despite occasional criticisms of this model (see Morison, 1962).

4. McNeill (2009) provides some evidence about how these cultures and practices impacted on those subject to supervision. He analysed oral history narratives of 12 people subject to probation in the 1960s (11 men and one woman) who were recruited through newspaper adverts. Their recollections of probation were highly variable, ranging from experiences of physical and sexual abuse to life-transforming positive experiences. McNeill (2009) characterises 1960s probation as an experience that could involve 'helping, hurting and holding'. The 'hurting' aspect was not just the consequence of a small number of abusive practitioners but also referred to the 'pains of supervision' itself – often felt keenly where officers were judged to have betrayed probationers' trust or to have enforced orders unjustly (see McNeill and Robinson, 2012). The 'holding' aspect refers to the constraints of supervision and the experience of being subject to surveillance (not just directly from the officer but by family members, police officers and church leaders with whom officers liaised). Surveillance could be experienced simultaneously as being both burdensome and supportive. The 'helping' aspect refers to those positive experiences of supervision characterised by the kind concern and attention of officers doing all in their power to assist those subject to supervision to improve their lives. Although some probationers felt that officers had few resources at their disposal, their use of themselves and the sorts of virtues and qualities that they modelled to probationers were not without impact. In several cases, this sort of kindness combined with practical assistance had profound and positive consequences that altered life trajectories and not just offending careers. A striking number of those with positive experiences of probation had gone on to work or volunteer in caring roles themselves.
5. Unfortunately, there has been no study to date of how the cultures, practices and experiences of the various social work agencies and workers came together in the forging of the generic social work departments in the 1970s (see McNeill and Whyte, 2007). What does seem clear is that probation work somehow moved from being a higher-status form of social work to being a lower profile and lower status activity within those departments, perhaps largely because of the

gendering of and gender dynamics within these new organisations. Many men probation officers quickly became managers of the generic social work teams, and their interests in probation may have been diminished by their recognition of the need to develop other services.

Social work with offenders

6. Just as the 1970s and 1980s were a fallow period for probation development in Scotland, they were a fallow period for probation research. The next significant Scottish study of probation – Ford and Ditton’s ‘Probation in Scotland’ was not published until 1992 (see also Ditton and Ford, 1994), although the fieldwork was conducted between 1985 and 1989, before the introduction of the National Objectives and Standards (SWSG, 1991). This study was described as a ‘formal ethnography’ but it was based mainly on interviews with social workers, judges and probationers and on case records, rather than on observational methods. Ford and Ditton discerned differences in general approaches amongst the social workers – describing some as ‘befrienders’, some as ‘rehabilitators’ and some as ‘supervisors’ – but also noted that social workers varied their approaches to suit the nature of the case in question. They identified some variations between generalist and specialist workers and found an association between ‘court agent based approaches’ and better levels of service. For persistent offenders at least, the most positive outcomes seemed to be achieved by workers who combined a court-agent approach with a rehabilitative focus, especially where such workers were more experienced, more specialised and better supervised. Interestingly, and much in line with the oral history study referred to above, Ditton and Ford found that:

‘the ability to carry authority easily, showing firmness and control in a relaxed way... is important, as is the ability to confront the probationer in a straightforward way. ‘Pushy’ social workers, who consistently demand real effort and change, are seen as showing genuine interest and concern, helping to create and maintain the motivation of the probationer... in general, persistent offenders need persistent social workers’ (Ditton and Ford, 1994: 189).

7. Ditton and Ford (1994) studied 86 probation cases in four court areas with differing trends in the use of probation. However, they only succeeded in interviewing 43 probationers (due to refusal to participate, breach of orders, or probationers being in custody), supplementing this data from case records and interviews with social workers. Once again, the probationers had varied views about their experiences both in court and on probation. About a quarter were pleased to get access to some help and another half were relieved to avoid custody (seeing probation as an easier option). A few however, had more mixed feelings, sometimes because of adverse previous experiences of supervision, anxieties about social workers’ intrusions into family life or because of an unfulfilled preference for community service over probation. As the orders progressed, most probationers found probation to be more helpful than they had expected, often because of the officers’ flexibility and friendliness. Some found it a more challenging experience that they had expected, where officers demanded

change and were not easily misled or misdirected. A small minority were disappointed by the lack of help received.

8. Where probation was considered helpful, this was often linked to having someone to talk to (see also McCulloch, 2005) and/or to the direct provision of practical help around finances, housing or job-seeking. Some valued the advice that officers provided – and even the challenges that they issued. Where probation was deemed less helpful, probationers complained about the pointlessness of social chit-chat, with no real focused work going on, or about officers who failed to deliver the services or supports they had promised. The attitude of officers was also very important to probationers – especially (as noted above) in terms of their combination of friendliness and authority, underwritten by genuine concern, encouragement and support.
9. Summarising their findings on the impact of probation (at least as related by probationers), Ditton and Ford (1994) discerned six typical stories; ‘a cry for help’ where someone of previous good conduct receives probation as a result of a crisis situation and is ‘rescued’ by the officer; ‘a breathing space’ where the officer provides support and interest but the probationer works to directly resolve his or her own problems; ‘helpful deterrence’ where probation provides an incentive to get back on and stay on ‘the rails’; ‘a turning point’ where probation is a ‘last chance’ to make a fresh start and leave an extensive offending history behind; ‘irrelevant’, where the probationer does not accept that they have any problems, sometimes because offending and supervision are routine aspects of their lives; and ‘intrusive’ where even if problems are admitted, social work assistance is unwelcome. Broadly speaking, those with shorter criminal careers (or no previous record at all) tended to respond positively to probation, with more established offenders evidencing more mixed reactions to supervision.

Community service: a worthwhile experience?

10. Probation, of course, is not the only form of community sanction or of offender supervision. Scotland introduced community service in the late 1970s, initially in a series of experimental schemes and, after the implementation of the Community Service by Offenders (Scotland) Act 1978, as a sentencing option nationally. Gill McIvor’s (1992) seminal study ‘Sentenced to Serve’ included significant attention to the experiences of those subject to this relatively new sanction. Her research focused on all of those subject to CSOs between 1 Sept 1987 and 31 May 1988, yielding a total of 406 persons across the then twelve CS schemes. Completed questionnaires were received from 136 offenders and 28 follow-up interviews were also conducted. Case files were also analysed.
11. 87.4% of respondents regarded their experiences of CSOs as worthwhile; with 72.5% feeling they had gained something from it personally. About 9 out of 10 found the work interesting and enjoyable and would be willing to undertake CS again. Over four-fifths had been able to do the kind of work they wanted to; three-quarters had been able to make use of existing skills and two-thirds had learned new skills. About a third of those who were unemployed at the time

thought that CS may have improved their prospects of getting work. Nine out of 10 had some contact with the beneficiaries of their work and almost all thought that their work delivered real benefits for the recipients. Relationships with supervisors were good in all cases, and very good in three-quarters of cases. The importance of the quality of this relationship was widely recognised.

12. Looking beneath these very positive overall findings, McIvor (1992) discovered that securing the desired type of work was correlated with finding placements enjoyable and interesting, with making use of skills and with learning new skills. Contact with beneficiaries, and the belief that the work was of considerable benefit to recipients also significantly affected responses, being associated with more positive reactions to CS. Notably, younger offenders were less likely to get on very well with their supervisors, but were more likely to have acquired new skills.
13. McIvor (1992) noted that some people continued their community service on a voluntary basis, even after the legal order had been completed. Moreover, half of those interviewed indicated that they would have been willing to continue if the opportunity to do so had been available.
14. Interestingly, despite their positive experiences, McIvor (1992) found that three-quarters of offenders interviewed nonetheless also regarded CS as punitive; referring to the inconvenience it caused, the commitment it required and the absence of pay for the work. But while the legal framework delivered a punitive effect, the work *itself* was not seen as being punitive. A smaller number saw no aspects of CS as punitive – sometimes because they themselves had benefitted from it and sometimes because they had enjoyed it (and avoided jail).

The impact of national standards

15. An extensive research programme evaluated the impact of the introduction in 1991 of the National Objectives and Standards for Social Work Services in the Criminal Justice System (SWSG, 1991). Paterson and Tombs (1998) reported that while the reforms had ensured that the necessary organisational and managerial changes were effectively put in place, the success of the reforms also required a major shift in the professional culture, evidence of which was much more qualified. Essentially, they suggested that it would take time for social workers committed to a welfare model of practice (if indeed that is what they were) to adapt to the 'responsibility model' implicit in the national standards. In their view, the success of criminal justice social work in reducing the risk of custody and reducing the risk of reoffending – the 'new' policy objectives – depended precisely on this kind of longer-term cultural change 'from social workers as experts in welfare to the production of a new kind of social work expertise – an expertise in risk assessment to assist with the targeting of organisational resources and to indicate their potential to impact on criminal behaviour' (Paterson and Tombs, 1998: 61).
16. As part of the evaluation of the implementation of the new standards, McIvor and Barry (1998a) reviewed probationers' experiences of and views about

supervision. The process of supervision was studied in 112 cases in four different areas, with McIvor and Barry conducting 65 in-depth interviews (31 adults and 34 young people (16-20); 56 men and 9 women). In this case, the interviews involved 33 people who had completed their orders, 21 who had been breached and 11 who had been discharged early.

17. Interestingly, and in line with the new policy focus, most of the probationers recognised that one of the main purposes of supervision was to address offending behaviour. Over half thought it was also intended to provide help with problems. Most recognised that their own level of motivation and willingness to contribute mattered; three-quarters of respondents said that they have been motivated to address their problems on probation, although younger offenders were less likely to be motivated in this respect. In relation to the content of supervision, once again probationers stressed the value of having someone to talk to, of help with practical and emotional problems and of onward referral to specialist organisations. Openness and approachability were particularly valued in staff, combined with an ability to influence circumstances and help the individual better understand their situation and/or behaviour. Most probationers considered themselves to be at less risk of reoffending than when sentenced and many believed that probation played a part in this. Other benefits included problems that had been resolved, increased self-confidence, motivation, self-respect and self-control. Notably some valued the control and structure that probation provided, as well as the 'care'. However, about a quarter thought they had gained nothing from the experience.
18. As part of the same evaluation programme, McIvor and Barry (1998b) also examined 31 ex-prisoners' experiences and views of 'throughcare' (or 'resettlement') supervision; 24 were adults and 7 were young people (aged 16-21). Sixteen were subject to parole, 5 were on life licences, 4 were receiving statutory aftercare (for young offenders) and 6 were receiving voluntary throughcare support. Most of these ex-prisoners had high expectations of post-prison social work support, although 7 saw parole merely as a form of monitoring or surveillance.
19. Most ex-prisoners had a low opinion of prison-based social work services – either because the workers were seen as untrustworthy or uninterested or because the detached nature of life in prisons made prison based staff ineffective in engaging with the outside world. Although ex-prisoners mostly agreed with their community-based social workers in terms of the focus of supervision, some would have preferred more help with housing issues. Indeed, ex-prisoners tended to report that social workers tended to overplay the importance of work on offending behaviour and to underestimate the importance of accommodation (and practical help). Only 9 of the ex-prisoners thought social work support had improved their situations, with 22 either identifying no improvements, or attributing improvements to their own efforts. Two thirds felt they had gained nothing from throughcare – just under half would have valued more proactive, practical support. Nonetheless, about two-thirds regarded their social worker as having been helpful overall, with one third complaining that their involvement with social work was intrusive and time-consuming.

Contemporary criminal justice social work

20. The evaluation of the national standards reveals both continuities and changes in the experience of sanctions – with a stronger focus on offending behaviour emerging alongside rather than displacing the earlier emphasis on probationers' welfare. By the early 2000s, some research evidence was emerging of longer-term cultural shift in CJSW practice. Robinson and McNeill (2004), for example, report the findings from a qualitative study conducted (by McNeill) in 2001-2002 which involved in-depth interviews and focus groups involving about 20 social workers. They found that the social workers tended to accept public protection as an overarching aim, but that they typically insisted that protecting communities required helping offenders; that the social work relationship was their primary vehicle for change, and that both offending behaviour and their efforts to bring about change had to be located in their wider social contexts. These ways of linking public protection and social welfare concerns perhaps reflect the Scottish policy context in suggesting a broader concept of rehabilitation connected with social inclusion agendas. However, they also illustrate how, at the front line, ideological change can be negotiated, mediated and managed in practice by individual penal professionals finding differing ways to re-inscribe existing purposes and practices with evolving ideologies. Perhaps unsurprisingly in this regard, it was apparent in Robinson and McNeill's (2004) study that the ways in which public protection came to be interpreted and operationalised in practice was primarily governing by risk, and in particular, risk of harm. Workers and others moved more clearly towards public protection as a super-ordinate or governing purpose and, correspondingly, towards assisting individuals primarily as an instrumental rather than an intrinsic good, in cases where the risk of serious harm to the public was seen as significant. However, since these studies did not seek probationers' views, the impact of these shifts in professional culture on the experience of supervision remains uncertain.
21. A more fully developed, ethnographic study of criminal justice social work was conducted by a team based at the Universities of Strathclyde and Glasgow between 2003 and 2005 (Tata et al, 2009; Halliday et al, 2008, 2009; McNeill et al, 2009). Rather than relying on interviews, and thus on *accounts* of practices, this study included two lengthy periods of participant observation, in two different CJSW teams, focused on the routine production of social enquiry reports (SERs). Leaving aside the specific findings about SER practice, this study paints a detailed picture of the impact on CJSW of the wider social changes affecting the field of penalty so well articulated by Garland (2001) in his account of the emergence of the 'culture of control'. The criminal justice social workers evidenced an enduring role tension between their responsibilities as justice professionals towards the courts, and their responsibilities as social work professionals towards their clients or service users. In their discourses and practices, they also revealed a sense of 'double-marginalisation'; both from generic social work (or more specifically generic social managers) and from the law-profession dominated world of the courts.

22. The insecurities of this double-marginalisation, underpinned by their awareness of the changing social and political climate, meant that, on some level, they recognised that those welfare discourses and techniques that previously provided the capital in and through which they had historically traded had lost their political and cultural purchase (see also McCulloch and McNeill, 2007). Policy discourses and public debates may have led social workers to believe that their welfare affiliations were a liability that had to be offset by adapting to a risk management and protection ethos. Thus, criminal justice social workers had come gradually to invest, some more reluctantly than others, in new discourses and techniques of risk assessment, management and reduction; discourses and techniques that represented new forms of capital through which some of them perhaps sensed that they might maintain or acquire influence from their marginal position within criminal justice. Nonetheless, this strategy sits uneasily with their existing habitus (meaning 'durable disposition'), in many cases framed in earlier eras. Their individual and shared histories at the intersections between the fields of justice and welfare seem to produce a habitus that predictably retains much more than a residualised commitment to penal welfarism; thus, even where the need to trade or invest discursively in risk and protection is recognised, the meanings of risk and protection are themselves reframed; existing practices are re-legitimated in new ways.
23. Once again however, a lack of attention to the lived experience of being the subject of the pre-sentence report (or of the supervisory process) leaves a lacuna in our knowledge about the impact of these changes in the field.

User Views of Punishment

24. Fortunately, a recent research project has begun to plug this gap, by comparing experiences of short prison sentences and of supervision in the community. Armstrong and Weaver's (2010) study is set within the context of Scotland's current engagement in one of the biggest penal reform projects in a generation, seeking to fundamentally change its approach to punishment, which is characterised by high use of imprisonment compared to other parts of Europe, and the use of very short prison sentences. In Scotland around three quarters of prison sentences handed down by the courts are for six months or less. But, they argue, because short sentences are seen as minimally intrusive compared to long-term or life sentences, there has been, until now, little research on their effects. Their study sought to fill this gap in knowledge by speaking with those serving short prison sentences *or* serving a community-based sentence (the main proposed alternative on the reform agenda). Armstrong and Weaver (2010) spoke with 35 men and women ranging in age from 19 to 55 about their experiences of punishment. The aim was to accurately describe the experience for offenders of doing a short sentence, in prison or the community. In summary, the key findings of the report are the following:

Short prison sentences in Scotland are a form of 'doing life by instalments'. Most of the people interviewed counted the times they had been in prison not in terms of numbers but as frequencies, that is, by how many times per year they are in prison.

It is the cumulative effect of doing many short sentences, more than the experience of any single sentence, which carries the largely negative impacts of short-term imprisonment. For many people short prison sentences have become a regular life activity, and the constant coming and going between community and prison interrupts the ability to deal with drug and alcohol issues, strengthen family relationships, and become employable.

The extensive use of short sentences is a function mainly of drug and alcohol dependency. For nearly everyone interviewed, the offending which led to their imprisonment was motivated by drug and alcohol use. Common offences were shoplifting (to pay for drugs) and minor assaults (while under the influence of drugs or alcohol). This finding suggests that prison and the criminalisation of addiction have become primary strategies of dealing with drug and alcohol problems, particularly for those in the most marginalised socio-economic groups.

Prison has produced positive life changes for some but in a way that is almost impossible to predict. Some people reported that it was during their short prison sentence they had achieved the resolution to abstain from drugs. In one case this resolution came after only serving two brief sentences in prison, while for another it took nearly twenty years of serving short sentences to make this step towards recovery. The finding suggests prison is an expensive and unpredictable technique of getting people to change.

Contrary to prior research, nearly everyone would prefer a community-based sentence to a prison sentence. Past research showed many people would choose a short period in prison over a longer period on probation. Armstrong and Weaver (2010) found the opposite: most people would prefer serving their time in the community, largely to preserve links to family and work. However, the preference was affected by the state of an addiction problem, suggesting reforms to community-based sentences need to develop effective means of addressing drug and alcohol dependency.

Women's experiences of supervision

25. Although the studies reviewed above involved a range of offenders (and in most cases report basic demographic characteristics of their sample), most of them have little to say about variations in experiences of supervision associated with gender, ethnicity, age or other aspects of diversity.
26. Malloch and McIvor's (2011) recent review of women's experiences of community sentences begins to address this problem, at least in respect of one dimension of difference. Their paper draws mainly on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 23 women subject to probation supervision¹, though it also draws on the authors' experiences of a range of evaluative studies of community disposals. The paper has three important and central messages: (1) that the

¹ Semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with 34 experienced social workers; 21 women and 13 men.

quality of the supervisory relationship is particularly important to women; (2) that the enhancement of women's self-efficacy is a critical component of positive experiences, and; (3) that women face particular barriers to compliance with community sentences.

27. Malloch and McIvor (2011) note that because women tend to present with more complex needs, social workers tend to regard them as requiring more intensive support – both emotional and practical. Women seemed to expect more of supervision and to require more flexible, unstructured and informal responses; sometimes this seemed to lead to workers regarding them as more 'burdensome' to supervise.
28. A number of the women seemed to feel the stigma of being labelled an 'offender' more intensely than most male supervisees, leading to anxieties about shaming where community sentences involved some public element (for example, in relation to CS).
29. Focusing on offending behaviour in the supervision process sometimes seemed problematic and inappropriate to both women and their social workers; especially where the offending was minor whereas the social and personal problems that lay behind it were significant. The women often had significant experiences of trauma and abuse, typically connected to their (sometimes ongoing) relationships with men.
30. Given these experiences of abusive relationships, it is significant that the women reported very positive and sympathetic relationships with their supervisors; they valued the 'listening ear' that supervisors provided, often describing their supervisors as being like a friend. Being accepted as who they were and treated with respect was critical in forging these positive relationships. Where women were less satisfied with their workers, they reported that these supervisors were rushed, disinterested or unreliable. Although most women expressed no preference as to the gender of their worker, those that did preferred to be supervised by women.
31. Within the context of these positive relationships, and against the backdrop of the personal and social problems alluded to above, supervision could contribute to the development of women's self-efficacy, at least where workers were encouraged and supported to do things for themselves (having talked them through with the supervisor). Practical assistance was highly valued, but women were wary of becoming dependent on their supervisors. Developing greater self-confidence and self-reliance was a precursor to enhanced self-reliance.
32. However women faced several barriers to compliance with supervision. Sometimes these related to the inconveniences of getting to appointments, in terms of locations of offices, costs of transport or timing of meetings. These inconveniences were most acutely felt where the relationship with the supervisor was less good. Women generally preferred to meet their supervisors at home, sometimes finding the office an intimidating or threatening place.

Childcare problems were another obstacle for some of the women, especially in relation to undertaking community service.

Other stakeholders' experiences of supervision

33. In the time available, I have been unable to locate and summarise studies that explore families' experiences and victims' views about offender supervision.
34. There is some Scottish research on public attitudes to sentencing and to community sentences in particular (Hutton, 2005). The findings are complex, though not dissimilar to similar studies elsewhere. There is evidence of public support for community-based sanctions where they can achieve constructive outcomes – specifically linked to reparation (for victims) and crime reduction (through rehabilitation). But respondents are equivocal about the ability of community sanctions to deliver these outcomes.

Conclusions

35. Looking at the substantive findings from these studies across 50 years of offender supervision in Scotland, the main message would seem to be that the experience of supervision is a highly variable and contingent one. The meaning, substance and impact of supervision is constructed somewhere in the interplay between the offender's characteristics, attitudes, disposition and situation, and the characteristics, attitudes, disposition and situation of the officer. But both of these key actors are themselves influenced by multiple social systems. For the offender these systems may be personal, familial, peer group related and environmental; for the officer they are personal-professional, team-related and organisational. The wider social context of penalty also influences both the construction of the practice and experience of supervision (McNeill, forthcoming; Robinson, McNeill and Maruna, forthcoming). Given that the experience of supervision is nested within these various systemic and personal influences, it is perhaps no surprise that it is so contingent in its forms and so vulnerable to personal and social interactions. In consequence, the experience of supervision emerges as a dynamic and fluid one.
36. However, our grasp to date of these interacting influences upon supervision – and of the complexities of supervision as a lived experience – is seriously constrained by methodological limitations of three main sorts:
 - a. Firstly, there is a probable selection bias in many (but not all) of the studies reviewed above, in that they often rely on self-selection of respondents and/or are affected by low response rates. There is reason to believe that the picture of supervision that they present is likely to be skewed towards those with favourable supervision experiences, who are more likely to be in contact with services, to be traced easily by researchers and to respond favourably to research access requests.
 - b. Secondly, the studies reported above (Malloch and McIvor's aside) are relatively insensitive to issues of diversity and how they impact on

supervision, tending to treat offenders as a relatively homogeneous group.

- c. Thirdly, these studies rely on *accounts* of supervision rather than on observations of supervision. These accounts may be influenced by social desirability biases (e.g. anticipating that the researcher expects positive responses, or wishing the interview to reflect favourably on the supervisor) and perhaps by anxiety about reporting adverse experiences (i.e. where to do so might be perceived as risking negative reactions and adverse consequences from supervisors). Both limitations may tend to produce an artificially or at least unrepresentatively positive account of supervision.

37. By implication, a richer (and more accurate) grasp of the lived experience of supervision seems to require the development of more fully ethnographic studies of probation – studies which take diversity seriously and which are specifically prospective in nature, observing and engaging with the experience as it happens, rather than relying on retrospective accounts of it. Only such an approach seems capable of generating a properly cultural account of supervision as a lived experience in its inter-personal, social and organisational contexts.