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ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether a maximum security institution housing inmates can benefit from a pro-social cognitive skills class. The inmates were taught Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders (J. Taymans; S. Parese) to determine if the pro-social skills class had any effect on the number of infractions they accrued. All the participants (N=78) were male; 25 were white and 53 were black. Thirty-nine of the males participated in a problem-solving skills class for offenders. A follow-up inquiry 4 months after the completion of the program revealed that the inmates introduced to the class had a 60.3% reduction over the control group in disciplinary actions received. The results suggest that a constructive problem-solving model can assist inmates in avoiding disciplinary problems within the confines of a correctional center. Although the results suggest that significant evidence exists for implementing the program in a maximum security level institution, continued research is needed. (Contains 6 appendixes and 19 references.) (JDM)

ED 453 494

**A Study to Determine if Cognitive
"Problem Solving Skills for Offenders"
is an Effective Method for Reducing Inmate
Infractions in a Maximum-Security Level Institution**

**A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Master of Arts Degree Program
Salem International University**

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This thesis submitted by Tina M. Spradling has been approved meeting the research requirements for the Master of Arts Degree.

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Abstract

Inmates housed in a maximum-security level institution are taught “Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders,” created by J. Taymans and S. Parese, to determine if the pro-social skills class has any effect on the number of infractions they accrue.

The participants were all male inmates housed at Keen Mountain Correctional Center, Oakwood, VA. The participants, numbering eighty, reduced to seventy-eight, were divided into two groups of thirty-nine, respectively. Twenty-five of the participants were white males while the other fifty-three were black males. The average age of the participants was thirty. According to the Test of Adult Basic Education the group averaged a 9.4 reading level.

All participants were given the Criminal Sentiments Scale, created by D. Andrews, 1980. They also completed a self-assessment from the “Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders” manual. Thirty-nine of the participants received treatment by means of the class, “Problem Solving Skills for Offenders.” After the skills were taught, a four month follow-up was used to compare the two groups and the new infractions they had incurred.

The Criminal Sentiments Scale showed that the participants exhibited criminal tendencies. The correlated t-test performed on the number of infractions showed a significant difference between the means. The Pearson correlation coefficient r-test showed no correlation between low level reading and the amount of infractions participants accrued.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Americans have a growing fear about the increasing crime rate. This has caused many politicians to take a hardened view of prisons and criminals. Many would like to lock up criminals and throw away the key. Yet, what most do not realize is that the majority of the inmates will be released some day. Now, the question is "Do citizens want these ex-offenders released into their community when they have received little to no training, education, or programming?" The key to successfully run prisons and a reduction in recidivism is educational programs. Although, the current trend is to cut programs, politicians, as well as, the general public need to consider the benefits of educational programs inside prisons (Tracy, Smith, & Steurer, 1998).

With the abolishment of parole and proposal X (requiring inmates to serve 85% of their sentence) by Governor George Allen, the Virginia Department of Corrections is continually growing in numbers of inmates and the length of sentences that specifically target violent offenders. The inmate population rose 8.1% in 1999. Virginia Department of Corrections, the largest state agency, currently houses 26,606 in-state inmates with an additional 2,576 out of state inmates. The Department of Corrections (DOC) has recently added two level six super-maximum security institutions and one level five maximum-security prison. Correctional facilities now total 29 major institutions, 16 field units and 7 work centers/work release units, designed to house Virginia citizens convicted of criminal behavior (Inmate Population and Movement Report, Feb. 1999).

The two new super-maximum institutions are designed to house Virginia's most violent criminals. Placement in these institutions is determined by the nature of the crime committed or by the institutional record, infractions an inmate has accrued while

incarcerated. These two prisons (they are not even called correctional centers) can house 1250 inmates respectively. This would mean that the DOC has the potential to house 8.56% of their population in these prisons that are “locked down” twenty-three hours a day, providing little in the way of programs and services. This type of incarceration often leads to a reduction in programs that try to decrease recidivism and the crime rate.

Virginia Department of Correctional Education, a separate state agency from the Department of Corrections, has developed a mission of reintegration through education. The mission is, “To provide quality educational programs that enable incarcerated youth and adults to become responsible, productive, tax-paying members of their communities.” (VA Board of Correctional Education, 1999) This mission is purposeful and necessary in reducing recidivism and implementing reintegration into society (W. McFarlane, DCE Superintendent, 1999).

In July, 1998, Virginia Department of Correctional Education (DCE) piloted a program called, “Problem Solving Skills for Offenders,” developed by Dr. Juliana Taymans, Professor of Special Education at George Washington University, and Dr. Steve Parese, a private educational and correctional consultant. It was designed to teach offenders skills that allow them to control physical, mental and emotional reactions in social situations.

Cognitive skills training program is based on the Cognitive Social Competence model of criminal behavior which derives from cognitive social-learning theory and research. Its principal aim is to train offenders in those skills, and impart those values and attitudes, which research has indicated are required for pro-social adaptation. (Porporino, Fabiano, Robinson, 1991).

Keen Mountain Correctional Center (KMCC), a maximum-security level (4) four institution does not offer cognitive problem solving skills to the inmate population. Many people believe there is no purpose or reason in educating inmates, especially those that will remain behind bars for one-quarter, one-half, or all of their natural lives. But, this program could not only help the inmates involved, but the security staff as well by reducing infractions. "Educated inmates can be a stabilizing influence in an often chaotic environment enhancing the safety and security of all who live and work in the correctional facility." (Consortium of the Niagara Frontier, No Date.)

There are several different programs offered to inmates while they are incarcerated. KMCC offers the Literacy Incentive Program (LIP), Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED), Masonry, Custodial Maintenance, and Electrical Classes. All are worthwhile programs that not only teach skills and knowledge, but also provide a constructive way for inmates to spend their days. However, a class not being offered at KMCC is the "Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders."

The major thrust of the cognitive problem solving skills program is that "what an offender thinks, how he views the world, how well he understands people, what he values, how he reasons, and how he attempts to solve problems plays an important role in his criminal behavior. (Porporino, Fabiano, Robinson, 1991).

The basic assumption of the cognitive model is that the offender's thinking should be a primary target for offender rehabilitation. Cognitive skills, acquired either through life experience or through intervention, may serve to help the individual

relate to his environment in a more socially adaptive fashion and reduce the chances of adopting a pattern of criminal conduct. (Porporino, Fabiano, Robinson, 1991).

This program, although piloted in detention centers, diversion centers and minimum-security level institutions, could have a positive impact on inmates housed in maximum-security level institutions. The offenders at KMCC need to be taught successful methods of dealing with or working through a problem. There is a process, which can be taught, and which will have an important impact on the lives of the inmates that are given the opportunity to participate in the program. The Problem Solving Skills for Offenders Program gives inmates an alternative to impulsive, reactionary behavior that often creates a larger problem for the individual. Problem Solving Skills for Offenders is not only a class to be taught; it is a tool for managing life.

Statement of Problem

Offenders are often impulsive and action-oriented thrill seekers that refuse to, or are unable to, view the consequences of their actions on people around them. Their behavior is often illogical and has negative impacts on themselves and others. They often refuse to accept responsibility and justify their actions by blaming anyone other than themselves. "Many offenders fail to consider that their thinking, their behavior, and their attitudes contribute to the problems they experience" (Porporino, Fabiano, Robinson, 1991).

This paper examined whether a maximum-security level (4) institution housing inmates can benefit from a pro-social cognitive skills class. A benefit could be a reduction in infractions, hence less segregation time served. If infractions can be reduced, inmates

may be eligible for a transfer to a lower security level institution. A reduction in infractions could also enhance eligible inmate's chances for discretionary parole. Additionally, how the attitudes and beliefs of an inmate effect their decision-making skills and whether decision-making skills and problem-solving abilities should be taught to offenders in a maximum-security level institution were studied.

Hypotheses

1. **Problem Solving Skills for Offenders training in a maximum-security level facility will reduce inmate infractions by 50% in a four-month period.**
2. **There will be a correlation between inmates reading levels and the amount of infractions accrued. Inmates with low reading levels will accumulate a higher number of infractions and should therefore, be targeted for the Problem Solving Skills for Offenders class.**

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of Problem Solving Skills for Offenders on inmate infractions in a maximum-security level institution. Inmates that lack the ability to look at a problem, create solutions, consider consequences, prepare and implement a plan, cause considerable problems for themselves and DOC security staff. Both the inmate and staff run a risk of injury when an inmate reacts impulsively and often aggressively. Inmates also run the risk of segregation time and / or possible transfer to a higher-level security prison. The Problem Solving Skills for Offenders training may help inmates relate to their environment and adopt a more pro-social attitude that would better

serve themselves, the staff around them, and in the long run, the communities in which they are released.

Another purpose of this study was to ascertain if inmates that do not read well tend to accumulate more infractions than inmates that have a higher reading level.

Assumptions

1. The population sample was representative of the targeted population.
2. Any reduction in infractions was a result of the stimuli.

Limitations

1. The study was representative of inmates housed only at Keen Mountain Correctional Center.
2. The experiment and the research results were conducted and reported by the same person.

Definition of Terms

Infraction – a written charge by security staff in which the inmate is found guilty of wrongdoing. An example would be #224, Possession of Contraband or #221 Being in an unauthorized area. A guilty verdict may result in loss of commissary, loss of visiting privileges, or segregation time.

TABE – The Test of Adult Basic Education (standardized test) used to measure adult students' grade equivalency in reading, math computations, math applications, language, and spelling.

DOC – “Department of Corrections” a state agency created for the purposes of enhancing public safety by controlling and supervising sentenced offenders in a humane, cost-

efficient manner consistent with sound correctional principals and constitutional standards.

DCE – “Department of Correctional Education” a state agency created for the purposes of providing quality education to incarcerated youth and adults.

KMCC – “Keen Mountain Correctional Center” is an institution designed to house adult males that are incarcerated.

AL – “Attitudes Toward the Law”, inmates’ perception of the necessity for rules in society, and measured in the Criminal Sentiments Scale. An example would include, “Nearly all laws deserve our respect.”

AC – “Attitudes Toward the Courts”, inmates’ perception of the morality of the justice system, and measured in the Criminal Sentiments Scale. An example would include, “You can’t get justice in court.”

AP – “Attitudes Toward the Police”, inmates’ perception as to the usefulness and need of law enforcement in society, and measured in the Criminal Sentiments Scale. An example would include, “Life would be better with fewer policemen.”

ICO – “Identification with Criminal Others”, inmates’ ability to empathize with those that do not obey laws, and measured in the Criminal Sentiments Scale. An example would include, “I would rather associate with people that obey the law than those that don’t.”

TLV - “Tolerance for Law Violations”, inmates’ need to rationalize and excuse criminal behavior, and measured in the Criminal Sentiments Scale. An example would include, “Most people would commit crimes if they know they wouldn’t get caught.”

ALCP – ‘Attitudes Towards Law, Courts, and Police’, inmates’ perception as to authority, and measured in the Criminal Sentiments Scale. This is a combined score of AL, AC, and AP.

Security Level – Appropriate level of supervision for inmates based on risk factors to insure for public, staff, and inmate safety. (Lower level institutions are termed a one and they proceed up to a super-maximum institution being termed a level six)

Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders – A six (6) step program designed to teach offenders skills that allow them to control physical, mental, and emotional reactions in social situations. The six (6) steps are:

1. Stop and Think
2. Problem and Goal
3. Information and Insight
4. Choices and Consequences
5. Choose-Plan-Do
6. Evaluate

Single Life – A sentence handed down by the courts that determines the length of time a person will be serving in prison. This term expressed in a numerical value is six hundred years.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The Problem Solving Skills for Offenders program based on the cognitive model was chosen as the treatment method by which inmates would be taught to think about potential, or past problem situations and create pro-social outcomes. However, there are many different models, methods, and opinions related to the causes of criminality. For every suspected cause there is an equal number of theories, models, therapy, medication and surgery proposed as treatment. These modalities range from effective to totally ineffective. Anyone proposing to modify criminal behavior must look at all the differing theories and chose a modality of treatment.

One factor which differentiates effective from ineffective correctional programs is the explanation of criminal behavior on which the program is based. Program strategies which derive from inadequate or faulty conceptualizations of the causes of criminal behavior are unlikely to have much impact in reducing such behavior. (Ross, Fabiano, 1983).

Criminal Behavior

There have been numerous theories to explain criminal behavior. Theories and explanations began to emerge in the beginning of the 18th century. Crime and criminal acts were equated with sin before scholars began to question criminal behavior.

Cesare Lombroso attempted to identify criminals in his 1876 *The Criminal Man*. He determined “criminals are a distinct physical and biological type.” From this attempt

scholars have added, altered, and developed alternative theories that have expanded the scope of criminology.

Italian Raffaele Garofalo made a major contribution to criminology through his concept of natural crime. He asserted that a true criminal lacks altruistic sentiments of pity and honesty. He, too, thought that criminals were of a distinct biological or physical type. He believed deficiencies were organic or inherited, but made allowances for social and environmental conditions that might encourage criminal behavior. (Garofalo, 1968) Thus, researchers are continually asking and attempting to explain what creates criminal behaviors. There are three major theories of crime 1) Biological, 2) Psychological, and 3) Environmental and Social.

Biological Theories of Crime

Charles Goring, *The English Convict* (1913), disproved the existence of Lambroso's biological criminal type. Goring found no scientific or statistical evidence to prove criminality was an inherited deficit. Yet, with extensive technology of the late 19th and 20th century, a re-emergence of biological theories have once again appeared.

Current theories rely on gene, or neurological development as a physical indicator for predisposition to crime. Traits, believed to be found in this category include genes for aggression, impulsivity, and thrill-seeking as well as short-circuiting emotions that cause a lack of sympathy or empathy.

Richard Krusen reported in 1988 that, "...the sociopath has a difficult time relating his physiological reactions to states of stress. As a result he tends to not learn to apply appropriate emotional labels to physical stress."

Psychological Theories of Crime

Psychological theories are divided into three categories 1) moral development theories, 2) social learning theories and 3) personality theories. Moral theorists such as Piaget and Kohlberg assert that people develop the ability to make moral judgements through developmental stages that may or may not be complete. Social learning theories, like those by Edwin Sutherland, stress the process of learning and internalizing moral codes. Personality theories assume individuals develop perceptions and a predisposition in early socialization that increases the propensity for criminal behavior.

According to Anna Freud:

The sovereign principle which governs the psychic processes is that of obtaining pleasure. In the ego, on the contrary, the association of ideas is subject to strict conditions, to which we apply the comprehensive term “secondary process”; further, the instinctual impulses can no longer seek direct gratification – they are required to respect the demands of reality and, more than that, to conform to ethical and moral laws by which the superego seeks to control the behavior of the ego. (Freud, 1966).

Environmental and Social Theories of Crime

These theories are the most common theories attributing criminal behavior and motivation. Their focus is on social or economical factors. Social theories contend that, “Crime does not occur because people have been imperfectly socialized; it occurs because they have been socialized in a deviant group and acquired its values.”(Microsoft, Encarta, 1998). Criminal behaviors are believed to be a product of one’s environment,

position in society, or assimilation of similar values and attitudes. Sutherland and Cressey (1978) propose that:

“...the individual learns a new set of motivations, attitudes, and techniques when there is an exposure to criminal norms in excess of exposure to corresponding anti-criminal norms during interactions with peer groups. Therefore, those individuals who receive the most frequent, intense, and enduring exposure will have the highest probability of criminal behavior.”

Economic theories assert socio-economical motivation for criminal behavior. The prevailing thought is that people experience deprivation, and turn to crime to reduce their disproportionate status in society.

Attitudes, Beliefs and Criminal Thinking

The classic definition of attitude according to Allport (1935) is, “An attitude is a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations which it is related.” (Roy, Wormith, 1987).

Attitude is a position or stance that is indicative of a person’s beliefs, opinions, values and ultimately, one’s behavior. Attitudes then correlate with behavior. Current views hold that the examination of attitudes is an effective means of predicting behavior. Since there is a correlation, “modifying attitudes should produce a noticeable change in behavior.”(Roy, Wormith, 1987).

Yochelson and Samenow (1976) propose a theory on criminal thinking in their book, *The Criminal Personality*. They discovered thirty-two (32) thinking errors associated with criminal behavior. Sixteen (16) of the “criminal thinking patterns” include:

energy, fear, zero state, anger, pride, power thrust, sentimentality, religion, concrete thinking, fragmentation, uniqueness, perfectionism, suggestibility, the loner, sexuality and lying. The other sixteen (16) were labeled “automatic thinking errors.” They consist of: “the closed channel,” the “I can’t” stance, the victim stance, a lack of time perspective, failure to put oneself in another’s position, failure to consider injury to others, failure to assume obligations, failure to assume responsible initiatives, ownership, a fear of fear, a lack of trust, a refusal to be dependent, a lack of interest in responsible performance, pretentiousness, failure to make an effort or endure adversity, and poor decision-making for responsible living. (See Appendices A-1, A-2, B-1, B-2, C-1, and C-2.)

Richard Montgomery Krusen (1988) reported in his study of *Cognitive Indices of Criminal Thought: Criminals versus Non-Criminals*, “that nine of the tests utilized did significantly discriminate criminals from non-criminals and were supportive of the criminal thinking model.”

Criminal Sentiments Scale

One type of scale for identifying attitudes is the Likert scale. This type of scale measures participants’ agreement, or disagreement with statements on a questionnaire.

The Criminal Sentiments Scale is a questionnaire used to measure Attitudes Toward the Law (AL: 10 items), Attitudes Toward the Courts (AC: 8 items), Attitudes Toward Police (AP: 7 items), Identification with Criminal Others (ICO: 10) and Tolerance for Law Violations (TLV: 6 items). The sub-scales are then combined to produce a total score for Attitudes Toward Law, Courts, and Police (ALCP: 25). The Criminal Sentiments Scale questionnaire created by D.A. Andrews was taken from the

Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders program, created by Dr. Juliana Taymans and Steve Parese.

A study performed by the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada found the Criminal Sentiments Scale to be sufficiently strong and deemed it a highly reliable instrument (Roy, Wormith, 1985) The Criminal Sentiments Scale was found to have a reliability greater than .80 however, validity scores between .30 to .40 were not as impressive.

“The Criminal Sentiment Scale could serve as an invaluable diagnostic tool in the assessment of offenders both for intervention programs and for parole purposes.”(Roy, Wormith, 1987).

The Cognitive Model

Cognitive curriculum models are based on identifying criminal thinking patterns, teaching pro-social skills, out of class skill practice, and reinforcing pro-social skills. The cognitive model advocates training opposed to therapy. Offenders need to learn problem solving skills as well as academic and vocational trades. Skills need to be taught for offenders to be able to recognize problems, analyze them, and construct plausible, alternative, non-criminal solutions. Offenders also need to be able to contemplate and acknowledge consequences to themselves and others. The cognitive model also suggests developing and broadening the offender’s social perspective. (Ross, Fabiano, 1983).

Many offenders have deficits, developmental delays, in the cognitive structure that cause difficulty for functions such as social perspective-taking, means-end reasoning, and interpersonal problem solving. These malfunctions make it less likely to think about problem situations than to react to them. Such offenders have a tendency to react without

adequately analyzing the problem situation, considering the consequences or deliberating between several options. These “cognitive deficits” may repeatedly lead to social difficulties and criminal behavior (Ross, Fabiano, 1983).

The Cognitive Problem Solving Skills Program is:

Consistent with the model, many programs which have been effective in reducing the recidivism of juvenile or adult offenders’ impulse control, broaden their view of the world, improve their ability to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of other people, increase their reasoning skills and their interpersonal problem-solving skills, and could help them to develop alternative interpretations of their social environment.(Ross, Fabiano, 1983).

In 1983, Ross and Fabiano reported that, “a differential component analysis of twenty-five effective and twenty-five ineffective programs revealed that successful correctional programming was significantly associated with cognitive intervention techniques.”

“Problem Solving Skills for Offenders”

“Problem Solving Skills for Offenders”(Taymans, Parese, 1998) was developed with support from the National Institute of Corrections to help offenders “improve their sense of self-control and their relationships with others by helping them make better decisions in crisis.”

The introduction begins with the Conflict Cycle based on a model obtained from Long and Morse (1995). This cycle describes how internal and external pressures create stress, which leads to problems. Each problem produces thoughts and feeling. These are often based upon our perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. From these thoughts and feelings

a behavior is produced. Consequences result from the behavior exhibited. Whether the behavior and consequences are negative or positive will be dependent upon our thoughts and feelings. This often creates an endless cycle. The "Problem Solving Steps" are interjected as soon as the student recognizes negative thoughts and feelings.

The first and most important step is to have offenders "stop and think." This is the most difficult step because it suggests inmates stop acting impulsively. McKenzie, 1992, wrote, "Behaviorally, juvenile and adult criminal offenders often display clinical evidence of impulse control deficits." During this step inmates are taught to recognize warning signs that may suggest they are becoming angry or upset at a problematic situation. Then they are taught to get space. This can be done mentally or physically from the potentially explosive situation.

The second step is to identify the real "problem" and the "goal", or desirable outcome. Here it is very important to have offenders describe what is really causing stress, how they feel about the situation, the thoughts (verbal or non-verbal, rational or irrational) that occur and how they would like to resolve the problem. Goals should not include anything that brings negative consequences to others.

The third, "information and insight" is a step that expounds perspectives. The goal in this step is to teach offenders to "perceive more accurately"(Ross, Fabiano, 1983). This can be a difficult step because they are not only asking offenders to view things differently, but to consider someone else's viewpoint. Krusen, 1988, noted that, "...criminals tend to be significantly less flexible in their thought and tend to view others in a much more narcissistic manner than non-criminals."

“Choices and consequences” is the fourth step. Awareness is the key to implementing this step. Offenders need to become aware of past choices and identify patterns in their decision-making process. They also need to be open and responsive to trying unfamiliar options. It is extremely important for offenders to consider the consequences, not only to themselves, but to others as well.

The fifth step is “choose-plan-do.” After completing step four, offenders must choose their best option for obtaining their goal. When a decision has been reached, a plan for implementation must be developed. Finally, a well-thought out plan is put into action.

The sixth and final step is “evaluate.” After enacting the plan, offenders question whether their goal was achieved, and what they learned. Offenders need to be able to reflect on situations and identify what went correctly and even what went wrong.

Discussion

While there are many theories that attempt to explain why crime occurs and how to prevent it, each deserves to be addressed. Often educators read or discover something that they like or that appears to work and they adhere to the method, theory or technique as a cure-all. As students exhibit a wide range of talents and deficits, teachers must also offer a wide range of methods, theories, and techniques appropriate for addressing each individual talent or deficit. No where is this more evident than in a correctional classroom setting. Correctional educators must rely on and offer a wide variety of approaches to educating criminals, as well as, experimenting with theories and methods for preventing criminal behaviors.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if teaching Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders was an effective method for reducing inmate infractions in a maximum-security level institution. This study is important because it impacts the lives and living conditions of the offenders, as well as the working conditions of correctional staff. If it can be proven that “Problem Solving Skills for Offenders” reduces infractions then it could be implemented in all maximum- security level institutions across Virginia.

Problem Solving Skills for Offenders was taught to a total of forty (40) inmates. Due to the size of the group, it was offered in two groups, twenty (20) inmates in each group. Each group met for one and one-half hours per day for eight times. Institutional records were reviewed to determine the amount of infractions accrued four months prior to the beginning of class and again four months after the class ended.

Research Questions

- I. Can a maximum-security institution benefit from a cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders class?
- H₀: There is no significant difference in a group of offenders in a maximum security level institution who are taught Cognitive Problem Solving Skills and a group who are not taught these skills as measured by the number of inmate infractions.
- H₁: Teaching Problem Solving Skills to offenders in a maximum-security level

institution will significantly reduce the number of inmate infractions over a four-month period.

II. Do inmates with low reading levels accrue a greater amount of institutional infractions?

H₀: There is no significant difference in the reading levels of inmates and the number of rule infractions prior to class.

H₁: Inmates with poor reading levels have a greater number of institutional infractions.

The Population

The sample population was taken from Keen Mountain Correctional Center. KMCC is a level four (4), maximum-security prison located in Oakwood, Virginia.

The Study

The study utilized the following research format: grouping based on high-risk offenders that are referred by counseling personnel at KMCC. The plan involved an experimental group, N= 40, and a control group, N=40. A Likert rating scale to measure criminogenic attitudes and beliefs, Criminal Sentiments Scale (Andrews, Wormith 1984) was given to the experimental and control groups in the alpha stage. Both groups also completed a Likert self- assessment survey of thoughts, feelings, and responsibility. The experimental group was broken into two groups of twenty each, for security purposes, (no large groupings or meetings). Within two to three days one experimental group consisting of twenty (20) inmates began classes created to teach Problem Solving Skills for Offenders . The second group of twenty received treatment upon the completion of the first experimental group. The control group, also consisting of forty (40) inmates,

were not offered the Problem Solving Skills class, but were given the Criminal Sentiments Scale and the self-assessment in groupings of twenty (20). Otherwise, the two groups were treated equally.

The goal was acquisition and implementation of skills taught. Those inmates in the experimental group attended a one and a half-hour (1.5) class every other day for three weeks. During this time they were involved in role-playing, modeling, reasoning exercises and group discussions. After the skills had been taught, inmates were asked to maintain a journal for six (6) weeks. In the journal, inmates wrote about potentially explosive problems they had encountered and the steps they went through to work the problem into a livable solution. These journals were collected and reviewed by the instructor. The journals were used solely for the purpose of gauging inmate acquisition of steps taught during class. The Criminal Sentiments Scale was re-administered to determine changes in attitudes and beliefs. At this time a review of inmates institutional record was instigated. A comparative study was performed to determine if teaching problem-solving skills made any significant reduction in inmate infractions.

The Instrument

The testing instrument being used to measure criminal attitudes is the Criminal Sentiments Scale. The total scale consists of forty-one (41) Likert type items using a five-point (5) scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Reliability measures include an inter-item correlation matrix, part-whole and split-half correlations, and the alpha coefficient. Validity measures were obtained by examining the relationship between scale scores and the interview/file review material including offence history. Results indicated that the three- (3) measures were highly reliable.

Validity estimates reported mild relationships between criminal sentiments and the criterion measures. (Roy, Wormith, 1987).

Again a Likert scale will be used to allow participants to rate on a four (4) point scale their thoughts (8 items), responsibility (14 items), and feelings (23 items).

...self-report procedure represents the most direct type of attitude assessment and should probably be employed unless one has reason to believe that the people whose attitudes are being measured are unable or unwilling to provide the necessary information. (Roy, Wormith, 1987).

Analysis

After the experimental group had been exposed to the stimuli, data was collected to compare the means for the experimental and control groups. This data included a four-month pre and post evaluation of inmates' institutional record. The data was used to determine if "Problem Solving Skills for Offenders" was an effective method of reducing inmate infractions. A t-test analysis was used to compare the means.

A correlation coefficient, r-test analysis, was used to determine if there is a relationship between reading levels and the amount of infractions accrued.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if "Problem Solving Skills for Offenders" can effect a reduction in infractions for inmates housed in a level four- (4) maximum-security institution. The study involved two groups, an experimental and a control group. "Problem Solving Skills for Offenders" was offered to the experimental group. After a four-month interval, a t-test analysis was conducted on both groups to compare the institutional records and infractions accrued by both groups. This analysis

was used to determine if “Problem Solving Skills” could significantly alter, by 50 %, the amount of infractions accumulated by inmates thereby, altering offenders’ methods of resolving conflicts.

The r-test was used to determine a correlation between reading levels and infractions.

Chapter 4: Results

Due to transfers, the subjects were reduced to N=39, experimental and N=39, control. Inmates participating in the experimental and control groups were compared according to demographic data including age, race, reading level, length of sentence, and number of prior infractions. The mean values for these variables are summarized in Table 1.

Demographic Means

TABLE 1

Demographics					
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Race^A W/B</u>	<u>Reading Level</u>	<u>Length^B Sentence</u>	<u>Prior Infractions</u>
Control	29.3	15/24	9.2	2y,16m,20d – mult.life	18.5
Experimental	32.1	10/29	9.6	2y, 40d – single life	17.7

^ARace: W=White, B= Black

^BMinimum and Maximum. y=years, m=months, d=days.

Self-Assessment

The self-assessment was given to help provide a direct type of assessment. It can provide helpful insight into the inmates' perceptions of themselves. This assessment was given to both the control and experimental before the start of class.

The responses from the self-assessment, which N=40 for both the experimental and the control, (given before the transfers) were rated on a Likert scale ranging from, a lot like me, sort of like me, a little like me, or not at all like me. The assessments were

taken from the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders teacher's manual, developed by Dr. Juliana Taymans and Steve Parese.

The assessment on common thoughts, which include eight, (8) are: self-centeredness, disregard for harm to others, unrealistic expectations, deception as power, denial of responsibility, uniqueness, pride, and zero-sum. The control group responded with the highest ratings given to the category "not at all like me", with the exception of deception of power where the highest rating was given to "a little like me". In the categories of self-centeredness and uniqueness "a little like me" received exactly the same rating as "not at all like me". The experimental group responded with the highest ratings going to "not at all like me", with the exceptions of self-centeredness, rating "sort of like me", and deception of power receiving the highest rating in "a lot like me". The pride category also received the exact same rating in "sort of like me" as it did in "not at all like me". (See Appendices A-1, A-2)

The second self-assessment was composed of fourteen (14) common tactics which include: building myself up by putting others down, telling others what I think they want to hear, lying, being deliberately vague, deliberately confusing others, minimizing my mistakes, changing the subject, saying 'yes' without meaning it, refusing to speak, putting something off, putting others on the defensive, accusing others of misunderstanding, claiming I have changed because I did something small, and deliberately ignoring others. The control group responses were overwhelmingly, "not at all like me" with one exception being, minimizing my mistakes, which received the highest rating in "a little like me". The experimental group's responses were more varied. Minimizing my mistakes was reported to be "a lot like me". Putting something

off was reported to be “sort of like me”, while the category of “a little like me” was selected for changing the subject, putting others on the defensive, and deliberately ignoring others. All others were rated as being “not at all like me”. (See Appendices B-1, B-2)

The final self-assessment consisted of twenty-three (23) common feelings. They include: aggressive, angry, anxious, bored, embarrassed, excited, foolish, frightened, frustrated, furious, exhausted, evil, guilty, hopeless, hostile, hurt, jealous, lonely, paranoid, regretful, resentful, sad, and stubborn. The control group reported that bored, frustrated, lonely, regretful, and stubborn were feelings that are “a lot like me”. Excited, received it’s highest rating in “a little like me”, while stubborn also received a matching number of responses in this category as it did in “a lot like me”. The other feelings were all rated as being “not at all like me”. In the experimental group, bored, frustrated, regretful, and stubborn were rated as being “a lot like me”. Aggressive and anxious were categorized as being “sort of like me”. Angry, excited, foolish, furious, hurt, lonely, regretful, resentful, sad, and stubborn were feelings described as “a little like me”, while all others were rated as “not at all like me”. (See Appendices C-1, C-2)

Criminal Sentiments Scale

Because criminals tend to exhibit characteristics that are not simply quirks of personality or temperament, but believed to be cognitive deficits that lead to social difficulties, cognitive abilities are essential for pro-social interaction. Cognitive Problem Solving Skills is designed to teach steps that allow inmates to logically work through problems in a pro-social manner. The Criminal Sentiments Scale was given to the experimental and control groups to determine if the subjects were indeed predisposed to

criminal thinking patterns. The means and standard deviation are given for both the experimental group, N=39, and the control group, N=39 with regard to attitudes toward law, courts, and police (ALCP), tolerance for law violations (TLV), and identification with criminal others (ICO) in Table 2.

Criminal Sentiments Scale**TABLE 2**

CSS			
Statistics	ALCP	TLV	ICO
Control			
Means	77.1	28.4	16.69
SD	14.29	6.50	5.35
Experimental			
Means	76.3	27.89	16.17
SD	14.34	5.29	2.69

The norms for offenders cited in a study by D.A Andrews were as followed, standard deviation noted in parenthesis: ALCP = 78.5 (12.4), TLV = 28.8 (6.4), ICO=18.3 (3.8).

The scores that are reported in Table 2 are approximately the same, meaning those inmates participating in the experimental and the control groups exhibit criminal tendencies.

The Criminal Sentiments Scale was administered to the experimental group prior to the start of the class and after the inmates completed the Problem Solving Skills class.

This was performed to determine if there were any changes in the criminal thinking patterns. The scores are reported in table 3. Again, the means and standard deviation are given for the experimental group, N=39, prior and post with regard to ALCP, TLV, and ICO in Table 3.

Criminal Sentiments Scale

TABLE 3

<u>Statistics</u>	<u>CSS</u>		
	<u>ALCP</u>	<u>TLV</u>	<u>ICO</u>
Prior Experimental			
Means	76.3	27.89	16.17
SD	14.34	5.29	2.69
Post Experimental			
Means	78.3	27.51	16.5
SD	15.24	4.88	2.91

Accordingly, the Criminal Sentiments Scale administered to the experimental group as a pre and post test measure, proved no significant change in attitudes toward LCP, TLV, or ICO.

Statistical Data

I. Does the Problem Solving Skills for Offenders class reduce inmate infractions in a maximum-security institution?

H₀: There is no significant difference in a group of offenders in a maximum security level institution who are taught Cognitive Problem Solving Skills and a group who are not taught these skills as measured by the number of inmate infractions.

H₁: Teaching Problem Solving Skills to offenders in a maximum-security level institution will significantly reduce the number of inmate infractions over a four-month period.

The institutional records were used to obtain the inmates infractions accrued prior to the start of the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders class. A t-test analysis was also conducted to determine the difference between means on the infractions that were accrued before the start of class for both groups. The results are presented in Table 4.

Prior Inmate Infractions

TABLE 4

Variable	Statistics		
	\bar{X}	SD	T Value
Pre Control	1.56	1.14	-1.642
Pre Experimental	1.17	.7564	

N=39 respectfully

The t-value is greater than the critical value in the t-test conducted on the infractions accrued four months prior to class. Therefore no difference between the means can be assumed.

The difference between means was determined by conducting a t-test where if the t-value is \geq the critical value, do not reject the H₀. If the t-value is \leq the critical value, reject the H₀ and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The means, standard deviation, and correlated t-test for measuring Cognitive Problem Solving Skills by a reduction in inmate infractions after the introduction of the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills are reported in Table 5.

Post Inmate Infractions**TABLE 5**

Variable	Statistics		
	\bar{X}	SD	T Value
Post Control	1.35	1.61	-2.56*
Post Experimental	.538	.72	

* $t < .05$, $n=39$ respectfully

The value of t is less than the critical value. A significant difference exists between the means of the infractions obtained four months after the class was taught. This means the null is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

II. Do inmates that are low level readers accrue more infractions and should therefore be targeted for the Problem Solving Skills program than inmates that read at a higher level?

H_0 : There is no significant difference in reading level of inmates and the number of rule infractions prior to class.

H_1 : Inmates with poor reading levels have a greater number of institutional infractions.

A Pearson correlation coefficient, r -test, was performed to determine the correlation between inmates reading levels and their number of infractions accrued prior to being introduced to Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders. The reading

levels were obtained from the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) test. The number of infractions used were the total accumulated during their prison sentence. The correlation varies between a positive one and a negative one. The closer the r-score is to a positive one then the reading levels ascended as the infractions ascended. If the score is closer to a negative one, then the reading level descended as the infraction level ascended. The correlation, along with the standard deviation, and the mean are reported in Table 6.

TABLE 6

Correlation Between Reading and Infractions

Statistics			
Variable	\bar{X}	SD	R Value
Reading	9.46	2.91	.066
Infractions	18.11	18.3	

N=78

No correlation was noted within the inmates reading levels and the number of infractions accumulated.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary

Criminals are incarcerated due to some type of offense committed. With the growing rate of recidivism, many question why offenders continue to engage in the same ominous behavior. Large populations of offenders exhibit signs of aggression, egoism, impulsivity, lack of empathy, and emotional reactions, which prevent them from effectively solving problems. The cognitive model deals with the offenders' lack of ability to problem solve. Skills these offenders are deficient in, yet are necessary for problem solving, are noted in Ross and Fabiano (1983):

1. Sensitivity to interpersonal problems.
2. A tendency to link cause and effect spontaneously. (causal reasoning)
2. Readiness to view possible consequences of action. (consequential reasoning)
3. Ability to generate solutions.(alternative reasoning)
4. Ability to conceptualize step-by-step means for reaching specific goals.
(mean-ends reasoning)

The average person does not need to approach potential problems in a rigorous, systematic manner, in which they write, search, determine a plan, implement, and evaluate. The steps are much more natural, they have the ability to visualize and focus, allowing them to make discriminate choices in decision-making and problem solving. However, there are those that appear to lack the ability to problem solve. Criminals seem to represent those lacking the ability to effectively problem solve. Yet, problem-solving

skills can be taught. Modifying offender's thinking is the goal of all correctional programs and facilities.

At KMCC the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders program, proved to have a positive effect on reducing the number of inmate infractions. A follow up inquiry four months after the completion of the program revealed that the inmates that were introduced to the class had a 60.3% reduction over the control group in disciplinary actions received. The experimental group received a total of twenty-one (21) new infractions in comparison to the control group's fifty-three (53) new infractions. During the four month follow up the control group was not exposed to any extenuating circumstances that may have perpetuated a larger number of infractions over the experimental group. The data from this study reflects that a constructive problem-solving model can assist inmates in avoiding disciplinary problems within the confines of a correctional center.

The data also reflects no correlation could be made between the groups' low level readers and the number of infractions.

The self-assessment reports were not that revealing. One reason for this could be, "Subjects high in criminal sentiments are less likely to disclose personal matters to staff." (Roy, Wormith, 1987). Another reason could be that the inmates responded by what they thought would be acceptable, or they perceive that the common thoughts, feelings, and tactics truly aren't representative of them.

The study does not include any data to support or presume the benefits of the program will affect or lower recidivism rates among those who are released into society. But, one can conclude the cognitive program can assist inmates with daily coping skills

and in retaining privileges throughout their incarceration, so long as, the inmates continue to apply the principles of the program. Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders can help reduce the number of infractions inmates receive, thus creating a safer environment for staff, as well as, inmates.

Recommendations

The Criminal Sentiments Scale is a highly reliable instrument that allows researchers to identify offenders with criminal thinking patterns. This scale should be used to ascertain offenders' eligibility for Cognitive Problem Solving Skills. This scale created by D.A. Andrews (1980), allows programmers to specifically target those inmates that have criminal thinking patterns.

Although, the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders suggests significant evidence exists for implementing the program in maximum-security level institutions; continued research is needed. In ascertaining the long term benefits of the program, a two-year follow up would be beneficial; using the same criteria as the four month follow up comparing the control and experimental groups.

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Appendix A-1

Control Group-Common Thoughts *

	<u>A lot</u> like me	<u>Sort of</u> like me	<u>A little</u> like me	<u>Not at all</u> like me
<i>Self-Centeredness</i>				
Example: "Everything must be on my terms. I'm In control." "I've got to take care of me First."	10%	25%	32.5%	32.5%
<i>Disregard for harm to others</i>				
Example: "What happens to others is their problem, not mine." "They should know better than to mess with me."	5%	5%	17.5%	72.5%
<i>Unrealistic Expectations</i>				
Example: "I am entitled to what I want." "I expect others to accommodate my wishes."	12.5%	5%	22.5%	60%
<i>Deception as power</i>				
Example: "No one knows the 'real me' and that's how I like it." "I like to keep people guessing."	17.5%	15%	35%	32.52%
<i>Denial of responsibility</i>				
Example: "It wasn't my fault! I'm the victim here!" "I never meant to hurt anyone, so I'm not responsible."	12.5%	5%	17.5%	65%
<i>Uniqueness</i>				
Example: "I live by my own set of rules." "Nobody Else could possibly understand what I'm going through."	25%	10%	32.5%	32.5%
<i>Pride</i>				
Example: "I refuse to back down, even on little points." "I insist that everyone see my point of view."	25%	5%	22.5%	42.5%
<i>Zero-Sum</i>				
Example: "Success means being the best – overnight."	12.5%	5%	30%	52.5%

*Total Number 40 – Taken from the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders teacher's manual.

Appendix A-2

Experimental Group-Common Thoughts *

	<u>A lot like me</u>	<u>Sort of like me</u>	<u>A little like me</u>	<u>Not at all like me</u>
<i>Self-Centeredness</i>				
Example: "Everything must be on my terms. I'm In control." "I've got to take care of me first."	12.5%	40%	15%	32.5%
<i>Disregard for harm to others</i>				
Example: "What happens to others is their problem, not mine." "They should know better than to mess with me."	0%	15%	17.5%	67.5%
<i>Unrealistic Expectations</i>				
Example: "I am entitled to what I want." "I expect others to accommodate my wishes."	10%	17.5%	20%	52.5%
<i>Deception as power</i>				
Example: "No one knows the 'real me' and that's how I like it." "I like to keep people guessing."	37.5%	22.5%	17.5%	22.5%
<i>Denial of responsibility</i>				
Example: "It wasn't my fault! I'm the victim here!" "I never meant to hurt anyone, so I'm not responsible."	7.5%	12.5%	17.5%	62.5%
<i>Uniqueness</i>				
Example: "I live by my own set of rules." "Nobody Else could possibly understand what I'm going through."	22.5%	20%	27.5%	30%
<i>Pride</i>				
Example: "I refuse to back down, even on little points." I insist that everyone see my point of view."	17.5%	30%	22.5%	30%
<i>Zero-Sum</i>				
Example: "Success means being the best – overnight."	15%	20%	10%	55%

*Total Number 40 - Taken from the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders teacher's manual

Appendix B-1

Experimental Group-Common Tactics *

	<u>A lot like me</u>	<u>Sort of like me</u>	<u>A little like me</u>	<u>Not at all like me</u>
Building myself up by putting others down	0%	5%	17.5%	77.5%
Telling others what I think they want to hear	7.5%	27.5%	25%	40%
Lying	0	17.5%	32.5%	50%
Being deliberately vague	0	12.5%	35%	52.5%
Deliberately confusing others	2.5%	17.5%	15%	65%
Minimizing my mistakes	37.5%	17.5%	35%	10%
Changing the subject	2.5%	25%	37.5%	35%
Saying “yes” w/o meaning it	10%	10%	35%	45%
Refusing to speak	12.5%	25%	22.5%	40%
Putting something off	25%	35%	25%	15%
Putting others on the defensive	10%	17.5%	37.5%	35%
Accusing others of misunderstanding	7.5%	12.5%	32.5%	47.5%
Claiming I have changed because I did something small	5%	7.5%	20%	67.5%
Deliberately ignoring others	20%	17.5%	40%	22.5%

*Total Number 40 - Taken from the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders teacher's manual

Appendix B-2

Control Group - Common Tactics *

	<u>A lot like me</u>	<u>Sort of like me</u>	<u>A little like me</u>	<u>Not at all like me</u>
Building myself up by putting others down	10%	0	5%	85%
Telling others what I think they want to hear	7.5%	12.5%	25%	55%
Lying	5%	7.5%	32.5%	55%
Being deliberately vague	5%	5%	32.5%	57.5%
Deliberately confusing others	10 %	12.5%	10%	67.5%
Minimizing my mistakes	25%	22.5%	32.5%	20%
Changing the subject	10%	12.5%	32.5%	45%
Saying "yes" w/o meaning it	12.5%	7.5%	25%	55%
Refusing to speak	5%	15%	22.5%	57.5%
Putting something off	20%	20%	27.5%	32.5%
Putting others on the defensive	12.5%	10%	27.5%	50%
Accusing others of misunderstanding	17.5%	10%	32.5%	40%
Claiming I have changed because I did something small	25%	7.5%	15%	75%
Deliberately ignoring others	17.5%	12.5%	27.5%	42.5%

*Total Number 40 - Taken from the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders teacher's manual

Appendix C-1

Control Group- Common Feelings *

	<u>A lot like me</u>	<u>Sort of like me</u>	<u>A little like me</u>	<u>Not at all like me</u>
<i>Aggressive</i>	20%	12.5%	22.5%	45%
<i>Angry</i>	17.5%	10%	25%	47.5%
<i>Anxious</i>	27.5%	17.5%	25%	30%
<i>Bored</i>	35%	10%	22.5%	32.5%
<i>Embarrassed</i>	10%	15%	22.5%	52.5%
<i>Excited</i>	25%	22.5%	27.5%	25%
<i>Foolish</i>	10%	15%	27.5%	47.5%
<i>Frightened</i>	7.5%	5%	15%	72.5%
<i>Frustrated</i>	37.5%	27.5%	25%	10%
<i>Furious</i>	12.5%	5%	30%	52.5%
<i>Exhausted</i>	22.5%	10%	20%	47.5%
<i>Evil</i>	7.5%	2.5%	20%	70%
<i>Guilty</i>	15%	5%	27.5%	52.5%
<i>Hopeless</i>	7.5%	7.5%	5%	80%
<i>Hostile</i>	7.5%	12.5%	12.5%	67.5%
<i>Hurt</i>	20%	12.5%	22.5%	45%
<i>Jealous</i>	5%	7.5%	20%	67.5%
<i>Lonely</i>	35%	22.5%	15%	27.5%
<i>Paranoid</i>	7.5%	20%	15%	57.5%
<i>Regretful</i>	45%	22.5%	17.5%	15%
<i>Resentful</i>	22.5%	10%	22.5%	45%
<i>Sad</i>	15%	20%	30%	35%
<i>Stubborn</i>	27.5%	22.5%	27.5%	22.5%

*Total Number 40 - Taken from the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders teacher's manual

Appendix C-2

Experimental Group- Common Feeling *

	<u>A lot like me</u>	<u>Sort of like me</u>	<u>A little like me</u>	<u>Not at all like me</u>
<i>Aggressive</i>	15%	32.5%	20%	32.5%
<i>Angry</i>	12.5%	17.5%	37.5%	32.5%
<i>Anxious</i>	17.5%	37.5%	17.5%	27.5%
<i>Bored</i>	35%	15%	22.5%	27.5%
<i>Embarrassed</i>	5%	20%	25%	50%
<i>Excited</i>	22.5%	17.5%	42.5%	17.5%
<i>Foolish</i>	2.5%	17.5%	40%	40%
<i>Frightened</i>	2.5%	7.5%	32.5%	57.5%
<i>Frustrated</i>	32.5%	20%	30%	15%
<i>Furious</i>	22.5%	12.5%	32.5%	32.5%
<i>Exhausted</i>	12.5%	25%	27.5%	35%
<i>Evil</i>	7.5%	10%	20%	62.5%
<i>Guilty</i>	5%	17.5%	27.5%	50%
<i>Hopeless</i>	0	0	20%	80%
<i>Hostile</i>	2.5%	0	50%	47.5%
<i>Hurt</i>	12.5%	20%	45%	22.5%
<i>Jealous</i>	12.5%	10%	27.5%	50%
<i>Lonely</i>	27.5%	27.5%	30%	15%
<i>Paranoid</i>	7.5%	15%	22.5%	55%
<i>Regretful</i>	30%	20%	30%	20%
<i>Resentful</i>	12.5%	10%	42.5%	35%
<i>Sad</i>	10%	32.5%	37.5%	20%
<i>Stubborn</i>	35%	12.5%	35%	17.5%

*Total Number 40 - Taken from the Cognitive Problem Solving Skills for Offenders teacher's manual



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