



Humanistic Correctional Programming: A Test of Self-Actualization in a Correctional Cognitive Behavioral Program in the United States

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Abstract

Within corrections, cognitive behavioral programs focus on the rehabilitation of individuals through the remodeling of individualistic thinking patterns that often lead to deviant acts and/or thinking, which in turn contributes to criminal behavior. The vast majority of research focusing on cognitive behavioral programming in prisons tends to examine recidivism rates. This research is unique in that by, applying a per-test post-test design, this research seeks to measure self-actualization levels in a sample of prisoners participating in Freedom-101; a cognitive behavioral program implemented in several jurisdictions in the United States. Findings indicate that participation in Freedom-101, a cognitive behavioral program, does increase measures of self-actualization. Limitations as well as suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Cognitive behavioral programming, self-actualization, Freedom-101.

Introduction

The issue of rehabilitative treatment for prisoners has been a much debated issue within society since the inception of the prison. In 2010, 708,677 prisoners were released nationwide from United States prisons (Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2011) many of whom, often due to budgetary restrictions, may have received little or no rehabilitative programming. This is unfortunate, as it has been observed that during periods of incarceration many prisoners develop a yearning for meaning in an attempt to understand and resolve their dissatisfaction with life and may be susceptible to rehabilitative programming (Lofland & Stark, 1965). As a result criminal justice agencies and administrators are under increased budgetary pressures to implement cost effective evidence based rehabilitative programming.

Cognitive behavioral counseling has been described as possibly the most promising rehabilitative treatment for criminals (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007). Cognitive behavioral programming in correctional settings has received an abundance of academic attention during the last two decades. Cognitive behavioral

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programs (CBPs) are often based upon scientific theory (cognitive, behavioral, and/or learning), which frequently emphasize “active learning” (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). As noted by McQuire (1996) “there is no single cognitive-behavioral method or theory. Work of this kind is best thought of as a ‘family’ or collection of methods rather than any single technique easily and clearly distinguished from others” (p. 7). As such the notion of CBPs have come to be used as an umbrella term to identify a wide assortment of rehabilitative programming which concentrate on the cognitive aspects of criminality. Wilson, Allen-Bouffard, & Mackenzie, (2005) observe that all “effective” CBPs consist of an “emphasis on demonstrable, behavioral outcomes achieved primarily through changes in the way an individual perceives, reflects upon, and, in general, thinks about their life circumstances” (p. 173).

The current research is intended to measure self-actualization levels in a sample of prisoners participating in Freedom-101 (F-101) a CBP currently implemented in numerous county jails and prisons in the mid-western United States (U.S.). This paper will begin with a brief a discussion of humanistic psychology and self-actualization, a description of what CBPs are and how they work, a review of previous literature concerning CBPs, followed by the implementation of a three test methodology, pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, measuring self-actualization levels in a sample of prisoners participating in F-101, concluding with a discussion of the findings and suggestions for future research.

Humanistic Correctional Programming

Central to humanistic counseling is the belief that all persons are unique in their potential to grow and evolve while emphasizing the notion that people are inherently good and hold vast amounts of potential (Liebert & Spiegler, 1994). Toch (1997) argues that corrections practitioners should focus on “personal growth [and/or] constructive change” in prisoners (p. 97). Humanistic counseling attempts to guide the client to identify personal strong suits and to expand upon them. In doing so the counselor focuses on the present behavior, *what* the client is doing as opposed to why they are doing it; the focus is on teaching clients that their current actions have consequences (Lester & Van Voorhis, 2007).

At the heart of humanistic counseling are three core principals; involvement, rejection of irresponsible behavior, and teaching. Involvement consists of establishing a relationship with the participants; this relationship must involve the counselor as being a caring sensitive role model, who is tough, interested in the clients struggle, not aloof, and should share personal struggles. Rejection of irresponsible behaviors involves the counselor rejecting unrealistic or irresponsible behavior while accepting the participant as a person. The idea is to guide the client to act responsibly. Teaching involves the instruction of achieving the goals of the client within the social structure or reality at hand and seeks to make the participant aware of a possible reality beyond the participants’ current circumstances (Lester & Van Voorhis, 2007).

Self-Actualization

Within this research self actualization is operationalized as, a state that an individual reaches where they are experiencing life in a way which allows for optimal development towards a superior state of individual being. This idea is based on the concepts of self actualization presented by the humanistic psychologists Abraham Maslow (1968) and Carl

Rogers (1961, 1980). Maslow viewed the fully self actualized person as one who has realized hidden potentials, talents, and abilities along with an achieved state of self-fulfillment. "Such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and to be doing the best that they are capable of doing. They are people who have developed or are developing to the full stature of which they are capable" (Maslow, 1970, p. 150).

Similarly Rogers (1961, 1980) viewed the self actualized person as one who is fully open to experiences in such a way that allows them learn and grow. Rodgers though avoided applying the term "self-actualized" as he felt it implies that an individual has reached a mental utopian ends, rather he preferred to use the term "fully functioning individual." For Rogers a "fully functioning person" is not one who has achieved an end-state, rather one who has the freedom to experience and nurture psychological growth. Ryff (1998) describes the fully functioning/self actualized individual as one who possesses "strong feelings of empathy and affection for all human beings and as being capable of greater love, deeper friendship, and more complete identification with others" (p. 1071).

Cognitive Behavioral Programs

Based upon the theoretical concept of self-actualization, F-101 is a CBP applying humanistic psychological principals in a correctional setting in an attempt to foster the development of mature coping skills while restructuring the cognitive process. In particular F-101 attempts to instruct prisoners to consider the impact of their behavior on others and to take responsibility for their intentions and resulting actions.

In general, within corrections, CBPs focus on the rehabilitation of individuals through the remodeling of individualistic thinking patterns that often lead to deviant acts and/or thinking, which in turn often contributes to criminal behavior (Bandura, 1977). The primary objective of CBPs is to help individuals link their thoughts and succeeding behaviors to the possible consequences in an effort to prevent criminal activity while also advancing pro-social thinking. The basic foundation of CBPs is to teach prisoners what is necessary to redirect their choices (thought processes) into living a more positive lifestyle. In short, these programs seek to re-socialize prisoners as well as assist them in altering their destructive thinking patterns.

CBPs within corrections began in the 1970s and have become extremely popular in recent years (Baro, 1999). Despite the fact that various cognitive programs differ from one another, they all share the common goal of altering prisoners' thinking processes (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Henning & Frueh, 1996; Meichenbaum, 1977). As noted by Baro (1999), "the primary treatment goal is to restructure the offender's thinking patterns or facilitate more pro-social thinking" (p. 467). When implemented as a form of group counseling these programs are far more cost effective than providing individual therapy (Yalcom & Leszcz, 2005). Additionally, social learning theory argues that just as *criminal* behavior is often learned through interactions with criminals, pro-social *conforming* behavior can also be learned in interactions with others (Akers, 1998). The effectiveness of these interventions in changing criminal behavior has been demonstrated in numerous scientific studies.

An early example of a successful CBP within corrections was implemented in 1988 when the Vermont Department of Corrections adopted a CBP based on Yochelson and Samenow's (1976, 1977) model of criminogenic thinking errors entitled the "Cognitive Self-Change Program." This program originally sought to address cognitive issues within violent adult male prisoners. The success of the pilot program prompted administrators to

expand the program to also include nonviolent prisoners. Utilizing a sample of 196 prisoners who participated in the program Henning and Frueh (1996) found that recidivism rates for program participants were significantly lower than recidivism rates of a comparison group.

A meta-analysis of correctional CBPs conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006) evaluated 25 research projects of correctional CBPs and found that, when applied to general population prisoners, cognitive behavioral programming significantly reduced recidivism rates by 8.2 percent. This same study evaluated five programs designed specifically for sex offenders and found a 14.9 percent reduction in recidivism rates. Additionally, for sex offenders participating in various non-incarceration community cognitive behavioral programming, six studies were examined; the findings indicate a 31.2 percent reduction in recidivism. In summation the authors assert that cognitive behavioral programs “work.” Another meta-analysis conducted by Drake, Aos, and Miller (2009) found similar results when they reviewed another 545 studies. The authors conclude that CBPs in prison or implemented within the community had one of the highest cost-benefit ratios of the treatment regimes they evaluated (p. 184).

An additional meta-analysis of correctional cognitive behavioral programs conducted by Landenberger and Lipsey (2006) also provides support for CBPs. Examining 58 studies of CBPs published between 1965 through 2005 they found that overall these programs reduce recidivism by as much as 25 percent. These findings were consistent across diverse correctional populations (i.e. juvenile and adult populations) and various correctional settings (i.e., prison, jail, community probation and parole). Additionally the research found that CBPs significantly reduced recidivism among high-risk prisoners as the researchers note that even high-risk behavior did not reduce program effectiveness. For example, some of the most significant effects were found in those prisoners considered “high-risk.” This research concluded that it was not any “specific program” that produced significant reductions in recidivism, but rather it is the general cognitive behavioral approach which is responsible for the overall positive results. The authors further note that CBPs are *most* effective in reducing future criminal behavior when clients simultaneously receive other rehabilitative services (i.e., supervision, employment assistance, education and training, and/or mental health counseling).

The above mentioned meta- analyses’ all support the assertion that CBPs are programs that work within corrections, although administrators should be cautioned that not all research has shown statistically significant findings. Applying a quasi-experimental design, Lowenkamp, Hubbard, Makarios, and Latessa (2009) examined the effects of a CBP program administered in a community corrections capacity and found that the program produced “appreciable” reductions in recidivism rates when compared to the comparison group who were not exposed to the program. It needs to be noted at this point that Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge (1990) note that CBP facilitators should not prioritize participation by low risk prisoners as the effectiveness of such programs have to date shown surprisingly less effect in this classification. Therefore, at this point in the research, cognitive behavioral programs may yield the greatest cost/effect ratio by concentrating on prisoners classified as “higher-risk.” This could explain the findings of the study cited above by Lowenkamp, et al (2009), examining a sample of individuals participating in community corrections (low risk prisoners) yielding only “appreciable” reductions in recidivism.

As the majority of criminological research attempts to measure recidivism rates which have over time become the most meaningful test of all criminal justice interventions (MacKenzie, 2006), Milkman, and Wanberg (2007) it should be noted that many positive treatment outcomes exist that are rarely measured.

Research has also shown that CBPs can have an influence upon prisoner conduct while still incarcerated. Spradling (2001) found that prisoners housed in a maximum security facility who participated in a CBP had a 60.3 percent reduction in disciplinary infractions when compared to a control group. This research utilizing a sample of prisoners who volunteered for program participation did show a reduction in disciplinary infractions. Other research conducted by Lambert, Hogan, Barton, and Stevenson, (2007) which examined a CBP in a maximum security prison found no statistically significant reductions in disciplinary infractions of a sample of prisoners who were *involuntary* required to participate in the program. Findings suggests that self-selected, voluntary candidates are most susceptible to treatment, as individuals who volunteer to participate in various CBPs are more likely to change than those who are required to participate. The authors note that motivation is necessary for any CBP to be successful and as such, the forced participation of prisoners may have contributed to the less than optimal effect.

Research conducted in an Iranian prison sought to measure deteriorating psychological symptoms and enhancing the psychological status of prisoners. Khodayarifard, Shokoohi-Yekta, and Hamot, (2010) utilizing a sample of 180 prisoners randomly assigned to three groups: Group A received individual cognitive behavioral programming; Group B received both individual and group cognitive behavioral programming, and Group C acted as a control group and received no programming. The researchers found that the CBP implemented in either a group setting or on an individual setting, saw improvements on several of the psychological measures. Greater increases were found within the sample of prisoners who were exposed to both individual and group programming; Group B. Furthermore, after a one-year follow-up, reductions in recidivism were also noted for the CBP participants with the most significant increases found in Group B.

Research conducted by Frana (2011) is the only research to date examining F-101. Utilizing a mixed methods design this research provides both a descriptive analysis of F-101, as well as a limited recidivism analysis. Findings within this research indicate a 15% reduction in recidivism rates when compared to overall statewide statistics. The data provided by Frana (2011), while limited, suggests that F-101 is a program which works in reducing recidivism. The question then follows - were the reductions in recidivism the result of improved measures of self-actualization? To assist in answering this question, this research seeks to discover if measures of self-actualization of prisoners is being increased as a result of participation in F-101.

Methods

The methodological design for this research is to implement a pre-test (administered prior to F-101 seminar), followed by a post-test (implemented upon completion of the F-101 seminar) and then a third follow-up test (administered a minimum of one week after completion of F-101) to measure levels of self-actualization within a sample of F-101 participants in Louisville Metro Corrections. Research subjects were self selected to participate in F-101. The survey instrument, designed by Jones and Crandall (1986) is a one page paper and pencil survey containing 15 questions intended to measure self-actualization and was completed by all participants prior to any seminar instruction or

exercises beginning which established pre-test scores; next research participants completed the survey instrument upon completion of the seminar which established the post-test data ($n = 14$). A third survey was administered a month after seminar completion to determine if sustainable change occurred within the sample ($n = 8$).

Findings

A total of 14 participants completed both the pre-test and post-test; of the 14 seminar participant's one had previously participated in an F-101 seminar at another correctional facility. Possible scores range from a low score of 15 to a maximum score of 60.

Table 1: Pre-Test

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
01	4	2	3	1	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4		<u>48</u>
02	1	1	2	4	1	2	2	1	3	4	1	1	4	3	4		<u>29</u>
03	3	2	3	1	3	4	4	1	3	4	3	2	3	3	4		<u>41</u>
04	4	2	2	1	3	3	2	3	2	4	3	2	3	3	4		<u>41</u>
05	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	1	2		<u>32</u>
06+	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	2	3	4	2	4	3	2	4		<u>38</u>
07	4	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	2		<u>45</u>
08	4	2	2	2	3	2	1	4	3	4	2	3	3	3	2		<u>40</u>
09	4	2	4	2	2	1	3	1	3	4	2	1	4	1	3		<u>37</u>
10	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	1	3	4	2	2	4	1	2		<u>34</u>
11	1	4	1	2	2	2	3	2	4	4	4	2	4	3	4		<u>42</u>
12	4	2	3	2	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		<u>52</u>
13	2	3	3	2	4	3	2	1	3	4	3	2	3	1	4		<u>40</u>
14	3	4	2	4	4	1	2	2	4	4	4	3	1	4	2		<u>44</u>

+ = Subject has taken F-101 previously

Table 2: Post-Test

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
01	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		<u>57</u>
02	4	1	3	2	1	4	3	1	2	4	1	4	4	1	4		<u>39</u>
03	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	4	2	4	3	3	1	1	4		<u>37</u>
04	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	1	3	4	4	2	3	1	3		<u>41</u>
05	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	4		<u>48</u>
06+	3	3	2	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4		<u>52</u>
07	4	2	3	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3		<u>52</u>
08	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	4	4	4	4	2	4		<u>50</u>
09	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	3	4	2	4		<u>50</u>
10	4	1	3	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		<u>53</u>
11	3	1	4	1	1	1	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	2	4		<u>42</u>
12	4	3	4	2	4	4	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4		<u>53</u>
13	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		<u>55</u>
14	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4		<u>56</u>

+ = Subject has taken F-101 previously

The pre-test was administered prior to the F-101 seminars, the mean score for the group on the pre-test was 40.21; with individual scores ranging from a low of 29 to a high of 52 (see Table 1).

Individual scores on the post-test ranged from a low score of 37 to a high score of 57 (see Table 2). Post-test scores represent a 21.6% increase over pre-test scores. The mean scores for the post-test which was administered after completion of the seminar, indicate an overall increase in levels of self-actualization as for the group which had an increase in the mean score 48.92, as demonstrated in Table 3 (Mean Scores).

Table 3: Mean Scores

Test	Mean	% Change from Pre-Test
Pre-Test	40.21	N/A
Post-Test	48.92	21.6%
Follow Up	50	24.3%

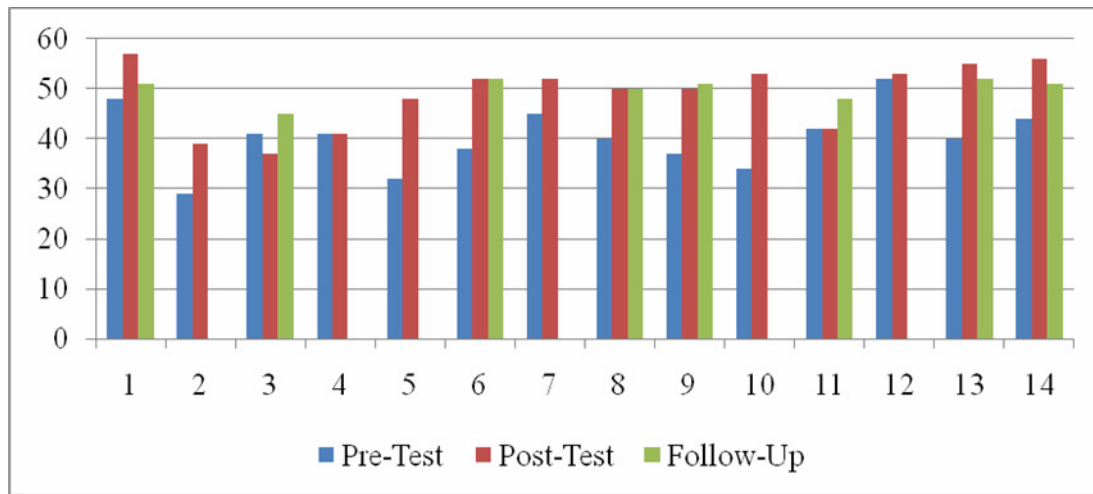
Of the 14 participants 11 showed increases in self-actualization, only one had a diminished score and two remained the same from pre-test to post-test. This demonstrates that participation in F-101 does increase self-actualization in the vast majority of participants. A third follow-up test of self-actualization was administered a week after the conclusion of the 4 day F-101 seminar. Results from this test (see Table 4) show that for the 8 individuals who participated in the follow-up session the mean score again increased. Follow-up scores ranged from a low score of 45 to a high 52, while the mean score for the group was 50.

Table 4: Follow-Up

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
01	4	4	1	1	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	<u>51</u>
03	4	2	1	2	4	4	4	4	2	4	3	2	3	2	4	<u>45</u>
06+	4	3	3	1	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	<u>52</u>
08	3	3	3	4	4	4	1	2	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	<u>50</u>
09	4	2	4	4	3	3	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	<u>51</u>
11	4	1	3	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	1	4	4	1	4	<u>48</u>
13	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	<u>52</u>
14	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	1	2	4	4	3	4	4	4	<u>51</u>

+ = Subject has taken F-101 previously

Graph 1



For the follow-up test the mean score of 50 represents a 24.3% increase over pre-test scores. Upon examination of the follow-up scores we see that three individuals scored lower on the follow-up than on the post-test, two scores remained the same and three scores increased. As only eight participants took part in the follow up we are unable to make any claims or generalizations concerning the long term influence of F-101 due to the small size of the follow-up group. Though as displayed in Graph 1, we see that of those who participated in the Follow-up session their entire individual test scores remained above those recorded at the time of the pre-test, thereby, indicating a long term effect of F-101 upon self-actualization.

Discussion and Conclusion

If we have learned anything from the “nothing works” era of rehabilitation, it is that there are no silver bullets in the treatment of prisoners. The primary objective of any CBP is the re-socialization of previous individualistic thinking patterns. Applying the theoretical concept of self-actualization, F-101 advances humanistic psychological principals within corrections as a way of teaching prisoners how to learn and grow in pro-social ways while restructuring the individual’s cognitive process. Petersilia (2003) notes that with proper rehabilitative programming in prison, recidivism rates can be reduced by as much as 15 percent.

In the current era of a one-size-fits-all criminal justice system, also described as the “McDonaldization” of justice and rehabilitation (Bohm, 2006), which does little to consider the needs or the personal growth of the individual, the humanistic approach advanced within F-101 may benefit prisoners in ways beyond what this research measures. As described by one author F-101 encourages prisoners to “look deeply at who [they] are and how [they] make choices in life” and are taught to “forgive others and most importantly, [to forgive] themselves” (Schulz, 2009, p. 1).

The current research seeks to determine if participation in F-101 increases levels of self-actualization within a sample of male prisoners. The limited findings confirm that participation in F-101 increases measures of self-actualization, as measured by the Short Index of Self-Actualization (Jones & Crandall, 1986), by over 24% from pre-test to

follow-up. Due to the unavoidable limited participation in the follow-up session it is not possible to determine if the findings can be maintained over an extended period of time, though the short-term results are promising.

These preliminary findings call for continued study; in particular, research should be applied to a minimum of 150 participants (thereby establishing validity for expanded statistical analysis) who have not taken part in prior F-101 seminars. Furthermore, future research may do well to examine the effects this program would have on a female prisoner population. Future researchers confronted with small samples, as has been the case in this study, would be well advised to consider conducting case studies of F-101/CBP participants, with the capability to highlight individual growth and/or improved reasoning skills of participants, pointing the way for future programs to incorporate more humanistic, or individualistic, themes into the curriculum.

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