

CHOICE THEORY AND THE CRIMINAL MIND: EXPLORING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF CHOICE THEORY IN OFFENDER REHABILITATION
PROGRAMS

by

Makayla Ryland

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Thesis Supervisor:

Randall Osborne

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my amazing parents, Curtis and Tammy Ryland. If it were not for their continuous support and unconditional love, I would not be where I am at today. Ever since I was a little girl, my parents have been there to help motivate me. They always pushed for me to excel academically so that in the long term, I would be able to achieve any goal I set my mind to. Congratulations mom and dad. You did it. You raised a smart daughter. I love you.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to examine the previous literature to investigate how choice theory principles can be applied to the current criminal justice system in the United States of America. This research is significant as it highlights a new approach to rehabilitating incarcerated individuals and provides examples of the technique through case studies from Hubner's *Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth*. The present study suggests that by incorporating a choice theory perspective in prisons, more individuals can be successfully rehabilitated and released, which will ultimately decrease the serious issues of overcrowding and high recidivism rates. Furthermore, the present study offers a research proposal for testing the effectiveness of choice theory-oriented prison rehabilitation programs on recidivistic behavior.

Keywords: choice theory, criminal justice, rehabilitating, incarcerated, prisons, overcrowding, recidivism

I. INTRODUCTION

Significance

The present study affirms that choice theory should be applied to the criminal mind and implemented in rehabilitation programs for offenders. Mottern (2007) suggests that criminals think differently. This research supports that choice theory is effective in rehabilitating offenders because it focuses on thoughts. If choice theory principles were applied to rehabilitation efforts, it would allow more incarcerated individuals to become productive members of society and be released back into the community. This will help with issues such as overcrowding and high recidivism rates. More specifically, if choice theory perspectives are used in rehabilitation practices, offenders will be able to make changes in their lives through making more effective choices. By making more effective choices, they will be less likely to re-offend. Thus, if these individuals do not come back into the system after they are released, the issue of overcrowding in addition to recidivism will also significantly decrease.

Current Issues in the Criminal Justice System

Two major problems that exist within our criminal justice system in the united states are recidivism and overcrowding. The first issue, recidivistic behaviors among released individuals, largely contributes to the latter issue of overcrowding. Turner (2012) points out that referring to our institutions as “Departments of Corrections” is in fact a misnomer because the majority of offenders do not experience any corrections in their behavior. This leads them to re-offend when they are released. The present study proposes that corrective treatments for behavior should be utilized more often in prisons. In addition, the present study suggests that professionals should be aware of the most

significant predictors of recidivism: criminal attitudes and criminal associates (Boduszek, Hyland, Kielkiewicz & Pedziszczak, 2012). In response to criminal attitudes and criminal associates, choice theory-oriented rehabilitation aims to change offenders' ways of thinking through concepts such as total behavior, as well as teach offenders to develop more effective relationships and associations.

With incarceration being one of the leading methods of exercising control over deviant populations in society, overcrowding of prison systems poses a serious issue for our country as well as many others around the world. Coyle, Heard & Fair (2016) conducted a case study in which they visited a Salvadorian prison. They took notes of the condition of the institution and the consequences of overpopulation. They found that as a result of overpopulation, a large number of prisoners were forced to reside in large factory-like buildings with few facilities. Often times, there were not enough beds for all of the inmates and some had to resort to constructing a make-shift bed on the floor. Basic needs are ignored or difficult to meet in these circumstances. This research affirms that "overcrowding continues to be a severe blight on the record of many countries in their treatment of prisoners, with 116 countries having prison occupancy rates of over 100%."

Current Rehabilitation Efforts for Offenders

Ever since the 1970's, there has been a decrease in the belief that behavior is malleable and an increase in the belief that the goal of rehabilitation is incompatible with the values of those living within a free society. There is also a growing concern that crime is a serious problem for communities which makes people think crime controlling methods of behavior are more effective than rehabilitation efforts. Because of these beliefs, the goal of rehabilitation is attacked by both Democratic and Republican

politicians. Right-wing conservatives call for incapacitation while left-wing democrats continue to criticize the effectiveness of existing practices of rehabilitation (Orsagh, 1985).

Our current efforts utilize control, which is why we are constantly trying to reform and minimize the considerable amount of dispute amongst them. Control is not working. It is ineffective and creating more problems than it is solving (Rapport, 2019). Additionally, programs are not tailored to specific offenders but instead applied to mixed groups of offenders in prisons. Because of this, previous research has shown that there is no effect of treatment on recidivism rates. Rehabilitation efforts are more successful when treatment is specific to a subpopulation of offenders (Lipton, Martinson & Wilks, 1975).

Rational choice therapy is a treatment option that applies to the individual and is expected to have a more significant effect on recidivism rates. Patkar (2019) claims that a wide range of problems can be dealt with using choice theory and listed many reasons as to why choice theory-oriented treatment is a better option than other forms. For one, therapists enable their clients to take charge of their own lives, instead of being passive witnesses as to what is happening around them. This gives them the feeling of a greater sense of control which is considered therapeutic to make a change. Secondly, choice theory assumes that all individuals are considered capable of improving their lives, which makes clients more motivated to change their problem behaviors. Lastly, all choice theory concepts can be used in culturally diverse ways which makes reality therapy more applicable to various populations than other methods of treatment.

Choice Theory

Choice theory is centered around the fundamental principle that we have the power to control our own lives through choices. The theory emphasizes that external control has little effect and instead proposes that an internal locus of control is responsible for driving all human behavior. All we do from the minute we are born until the day we die is make choices that reflect an attempt to match pictures in our quality world and fulfill our basic needs. (Rapport, 2019; Patkar, 2019).

Choice theory solely focuses on the present when it comes to changing behavior. Reality therapy is concerned with what the client wants in the present moment. As Patkar (2019) states, “the past is understood to have contributed to the present but the past is unchangeable; there are no choices about the past”. Choices exist in the present and affect the future. The goal of reality choice therapy is for therapists to aid clients in choosing a future they will be happy about.

Happiness and relationships make up the foundation for choice theory. Happiness can be defined as “the degree that one experiences a positive overall quality of life” and it is one of the biggest choices one can make in their lives. In short, happiness is the goal of life that choice-oriented therapy aims to achieve for all clients through satisfaction of needs (Britzman, Nagelhout, & Cameron, 2011). In order to achieve happiness and satisfy all of one’s needs, one must have satisfying relationships. Choice theory posits that if one is not meeting their needs or in other words, is unhappy, it is due to an unsatisfying or non-existent relationship. These negative relationships are what cause a person to choose maladaptive behaviors to deal with the frustration of their needs not being met. This is why reality therapy focuses on the quality of relationships that people have in their lives (Corey, 2013; Bradley, 2014). In order to assess the quality of

relationships, choice-oriented therapy emphasizes the seven deadly habits that destroy relationships and the seven caring habits that improve relationships. According to Glasser, the seven deadly habits that destroy relationships include: criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, and bribing or rewarding to control. The seven caring habits include: supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting and negotiating differences (Wubbolding, 2000; Glasser, 2005).

Another key element of choice theory is the idea of basic needs. Glasser (1998) lists these needs as: survival, love and belonging, power, fun and freedom. The need for love and belonging is considered to be the primary psychological need in humans because it revolves around relationships which, as previously discussed, are the main source of happiness. However, the other needs are still important and should not be neglected. The need for power involves feelings of accomplishment, success, recognition, and respect. The need for freedom involves expression of ideas, choices, and creativity. Lastly, the need for fun involves laughing and enjoying one's life. These five basic needs are present at birth and each person has them. This means that parents could start preventative efforts by incorporating choice theory into raising their children. Parents can use choice theory to teach their kids to meet their needs in constructive ways to avoid the possibility of them becoming criminal adults. Though each person has the same basic needs, the strengths of these needs can vary depending on the individual. The strength of needs for each individual can also change over time depending on circumstances. Throughout the life course, we aim to meet our needs and if we do not, we feel frustrated. We then change our actions in an attempt to fulfill our needs so that we can feel more satisfied (Corey, 2013; Bradley, 2014). When a person is unsatisfied, they tend to create

internal problems that are seemingly out of their control, which may lead to the development of a psychological disorder. It is important to meet needs in constructive ways to avoid acting in destructive/criminal ways, or creating disorders for one to mentally take the blame off of themselves for their own actions (Rapport, 2019).

The concept of quality worlds is another idea proposed by Glasser (1998) to explain choice theory. Quality worlds are made up pictures in our minds that reflect what our lives would look like in the most ideal scenarios. They are based off the level of satisfaction of our basic needs and serve as a mental inspiration board for everything we need in our lives to be happy. People are the most important part of one's quality world because as previously mentioned, relationships are the fundamental element that determines whether or not one is happy. Without people in one's quality world, there are no relationships, and without relationships, the quality world cannot be satisfied (Corey, 2013; Bradley, 2014). If something satisfies a basic need, it is placed in one's quality world and one will choose to act in certain ways to satisfy the need in order to achieve their ideal quality world (Rapport, 2019).

Lastly, the idea of total behavior is an important component of Glasser's choice theory. Total behavior is defined as the effort an individual makes in order to get what they need based on what they want (Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2010). All human behavior is purposeful and comprised of four components: acting, thinking, feeling, and physiology. Total behavior incorporates all four of these components. These components combined is how we fulfill pictures in our quality worlds and attempt to close the gaps between needs and wants. Total behavior begins with an action or thought. Our acting and thinking directly influences our feelings which then indirectly influences our

physiology. We choose to do something (act or think) based on satisfying a basic need in order to achieve a picture in our quality worlds and then develop feelings which further fuel our behavior (Bradley, 2014; Rapport, 2019).

II. APPLICATION OF CHOICE THEORY TO THE CRIMINAL MIND

Theories

Rational choice theory assumes that the behavior of offenders is no different than the behavior of the general population. Choice theory assumes all behavior is rational and is motivated by a desire to maximize well-being (Becker, Ehrlich, Block and Heineke). The theory is related and intertwined with other sociological and psychological theories of crime (Orsagh, 1985). Osborne's "PSY 3335 Forensic Psychology" details a number of other theories that can be used to explain why an offender might commit a crime including psychoanalytic theory, cognitive development theory, morality theory, learning theory, and strain theory. Though each of these differ in their explanations, they all utilize some element of choice theory.

Freud's Psychoanalytic theory assumes that personality is a result of a conflict between our pleasure-seeking urges and the limitations of society. It also assumes that everyone is capable of committing crime unless they have developed a strong enough superego to control the urges of the id. The development of our id, ego and superego has everything to do with how we are socialized (Osborne, 2018). In part, our socialization is based on the choices that either our parents or we make for our lives. For example, our parents make choices on how they will raise us, or what type of education we will receive as children, while we have the choice of whether we want to stay committed to our academics.

Piaget's Cognitive Development theory and Kohlberg's Morality theory assume that crime depends on what people think about the law and morals (Osborne, 2018).

These theories are related to choice theory's concept of total behavior. For example, if we want someone to act in accordance to the law, they must think the law is good and feel as though they are doing the right thing while they are obeying the law.

Skinner's Learning theory assumes that criminal behavior is learned and maintained by its consequences or value (Osborne, 2018). It is relative to choice theory's concepts of satisfying needs and quality worlds. For example, if one satisfies a need by committing crime, the picture in their quality world is fulfilled which is rewarding to the individual. Even more so if there are no severe consequences or if they do not get caught. This makes them more likely to offend again unless they either learn to meet their needs in more constructive ways or face more punishing consequences for their actions.

Strain theory assumes that crime occurs when there is a conflict between expectations and reality. When the gap becomes large, a "strain" is created. This theory is best represented in the belief in the "American Dream" which is not something everyone can achieve (Osborne, 2018). This theory is also related to choice theory's concepts of satisfying needs and quality worlds. For example, one may have financial success as a picture in their quality world. However, they may not have a job or the means to obtain that goal. This creates pressure or strain on the individual that causes them to perhaps steal money in order to meet their needs and satisfy the picture in their quality world.

Basic Needs and Quality Worlds in Regards to Offenders

Offenders have high needs for power and fun but low needs for love and freedom. Research suggests that crime is the easiest way for offenders to meet their needs. For

example, there is no faster way to power and control than aiming a gun at someone's head. If offenders are unable to meet their needs, they not only become frustrated, but their motivation to achieve a picture in their quality world becomes greater which leads to them committing even more or greater crimes (Hubner, 2005; Mottern, 2007). Though offenders tend to have a low need for love and belonging, that need still exists. All humans need to be involved in satisfying relationships to be happy. However, in the case of most offenders, the majority are not. A powerful quote from Hubner (2005) summarizes this idea: "Next to the need to survive, a human being needs to form connections. If no loving figure is around, he will bond with his abuser and seek power, control, and recognition in ways he learns from his oppressor. Healthy humans also seek power, control and recognition. The difference is, being loved and nurtured and in turn being able to love sends those forces in directions that build families and community and careers which contribute to the greater good."

An example of these choice theory principles of basic needs and quality worlds is exemplified in the story of Ronnie from Hubner's 'Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth' (2005). Though a juvenile offender, Ronnie shared a similar need profile of most offenders: high needs for power and fun. Ronnie struggled with his need for power because he felt rejected by his dad. After sharing his life story, the therapist made it clear to Ronnie that once he made the choice to reject his dad as his dad did to him, he felt like he regained control over their relationship. This gave him a sense of happiness. As the pictures of a supportive mother and a present father began to fade from Ronnie's quality world, he began to replace them with the picture of acceptance from his new stepfather. Ronnie placed a great deal of value in achieving this

approval and began to commit a series of burglaries to impress his stepdad who also led an active criminal lifestyle. Ronnie stated that he “had the life [he] wanted” and that he “felt free”. Ronnie was meeting his need for freedom by committing crime and satisfying his quality world picture of acceptance from his stepfather. As a result, his life was good and he was happy (Hubner, 2005).

Hubner (2005) makes the point that “the same forces that work to civilize, the need for acceptance, the need to establish and maintain a reputation, the desire to follow in the footsteps of an older role model [are the same forces that lead to] antisocial behavior”. This statement supports the idea that all humans have the same needs in life and our behavior, whether prosocial or antisocial, depends on whether we make constructive or destructive choices. Choice-oriented therapy can perhaps propose alternative choices that will help offenders meet their needs in more positive ways, leading to prosocial rather than antisocial behavior.

Total Behavior in Regards to Offenders

Total behaviors are usually how offenders deal with difficult situations in their lives. Negative situations such as family problems or financial stress perpetuate negative behaviors such as criminal activity. Choice-oriented therapy focuses on these negative behaviors caused by the lack of satisfying relationships in the offender’s world (Patkar, 2019).

Again, the kids from Hubner’s ‘Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth’ (2005) provide an excellent example of how the concept of total behavior can be applied to offenders. Hubner (2005) notes that a lack of empathy can create criminals which is why it is important for an individual to be in tune with their

feelings, a component of total behavior. Ronnie, like most of the kids in the rehabilitation program, lacked empathy. It was the job of the therapists to make the kids feel this emotion through sharing their life stories and role playing in front of their peers. The goal was to change their behavior by first altering how they felt about the crimes they committed.

In addition to empathy, the rehabilitation program from 'Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth' (2005) stressed the feeling of anger. Anger is a feeling that fuels criminal behavior which is why it is also a goal for therapists to influence offenders to stop choosing this feeling. For example, Ronnie chose to walk past his dad on the way to school. This choice led to his aggression, resulting in him beating kids at school. Ronnie realized that he was essentially choosing this ineffective total behavior of aggression as an indirect result from him making the choice to be angry at his father. So, one day he chose to avoid the feelings of anger and stopped walking past his dad on the way to school. Thus, he temporarily became less of an angry and aggressive person.

III. APPLICATION OF CHOICE THEORY TO REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

What It Would Look Like

Reality therapy helps people make more effective choices as well as regain control in their lives which in turn helps to satisfy a need for freedom. The primary focus of reality therapy is to help an individual with the unsatisfying relationships in his or her life that are causing their negative behaviors through exploring the person's wants, needs, and perceptions. During choice-oriented therapy, the client is expected to focus only on

present behaviors, not past experiences. It is also important to help the therapist gain as much insight as possible in regard to their behavior by discussing their quality world and the relationships they have established (Bradley, 2014).

For choice therapy to be effective, the therapist has to offer the perspective to the client that making more effective choices in life will be beneficial to them. In order to do this, the therapist must figure out what the offender wants out of life to instruct them to make better choices to achieve what they want. Therapists must try to understand why offenders choose to act in the ways they do. They do this by assessing basic need profiles, quality worlds, and total behaviors of offenders. After an evaluation of the offender's need profile, the therapist should propose other means of satisfying needs so that the offender can do so in more constructive rather than destructive ways. This is the basis for understanding the criminal mind, which makes it possible to rehabilitate an offender by allowing them to see alternative perspectives in choosing their own behavior.

Additionally, after an evaluation of the offender's quality world, the therapist should try to put more realistic pictures into their mind in order to influence how they may go about satisfying their needs. For example, an offender may not care about society and thus will likely offend to satisfy a need. However, if we place better pictures in the quality worlds of offenders, they will find more positive ways to meet their needs and get closer to achieving a life representative of their quality world. (Rapport, 2019).

Strategies on How to Implement

First, it is important to establish that the foundation of implementing choice theory is that it revolves around a system of benefits and costs which relates to B.F Skinner's ideas of reward and punishment. Unfortunately, in a criminological context, the

theory is most often associated with costs. Specifically, with the modification of criminal behavior through crime control measures. The science from which the theory derives is not altogether dismal. The main point here is that choice theory has great potential utility for the modification of recidivistic behavior through the manipulation of benefit structures. Rehabilitation programs should focus on the rewards and benefits, instead of the punishment. This can be done by focusing on what the offender wants out of life (Orsagh, 1985).

The best way to focus on what the offender finds rewarding is to implement the WDEP technique. The previous literature details this technique and explains it as so: “W refers to wants, needs and perceptions. This involves helping clients identify and define their wants, what needs are met or unmet and reframing problems into goals for clarifying their perceptions. D refers to direction, doing and actions. At this stage, the client is asked to consider what they are doing and the overall direction in which they are heading. The focus here is on actions and thoughts, as it is these two components over which clients have more direct control. At the same time, they are asked to consider and look at the bigger picture; that is what they 'want' in order for long-term satisfaction of one or more of their needs. E refers to self-evaluation. This is the crux of reality therapy, where clients are asked to evaluate their current behavior and whether these behaviors are moving them in the direction they say they want. This is when clients begin to evaluative which behaviors are more effective for them in getting what they want and which behaviors are less effective in this process of self-discovery. P refers to planning” (Patkar, 2019). Essentially, the therapist’s role is to remind the clients of what is it that they want, whether they truly want it, and whether what they really want is serving the

function of fulfilling their needs (Corey, 2013).

Another technique to incorporate is to educate offenders on the concept of cognitive dissonance so that in turn, they can make choices that lead to cognitive consonance. Throughout using the WDEP technique, the therapist should challenge an offender's state of mind and correct thinking errors so that more appropriate choices can be made. The internal control system of reward and punishment becomes the motivational force to create a change in thinking. Once thinking errors are revealed, the offender will then see that his past choices have been preventing him from achieving what he really wants in life. He will then become motivated to change his thoughts, resulting in a change of his behavior (Turner, 2012).

Cognitive dissonance, according to Festinger (1956), is “the state of the soul in which the individual experiences a lack of peace due to a revealed conflict between his morals/values and his behavior”. Research has shown that recognizing cognitive dissonance is the precursor to change in a person's life. The desire to eliminate the cognitive dissonance in order to achieve a state of harmony between one's actions, thoughts and feelings motivates a change in total behavior. In order to achieve cognitive consonance, the offender must either change his morals and values to match his behavior or change his behavior to match his morals and values. The latter appears to be the easier choice and even offenders realize this (Turner, 2012).

To reveal cognitive dissonance in an offender's life, therapists ask questions to show the disconnection between offending behavior and their morals and values. Turner (2012) provides the questions and the most received answers. The first question therapists ask is: “Is it wrong to do what you did that brought you here?” to which most offenders

respond by stating yes, it is wrong. Next, therapists dig deeper and ask: “Why is it wrong?” to which most offenders usually cannot come up with a good answer. They will usually respond with some sort of reasoning based on the law or religion. It is not until a therapist provides the correct answer for them that they begin to understand why their behavior is wrong. The correct answer the therapist is looking for is that their behavior is wrong because it hurts people. The offender then realizes what he did is not only against society's law but against his own law in terms of morality and values. This realization causes cognitive dissonance. To establish it further, the therapist will then ask: “Do you care if you hurt others?”. Unless they are sociopaths, most offenders will answer yes. Lastly the therapist will ask offenders: “What is one word that describes what you want most from your life?” to which most offenders respond with: happiness. According to Gandhi, “Happiness is when what you think, say and do are all the same” or in other words, happiness occurs when one is in a state of cognitive consonance. After questioning the offender, the therapist should propose that it is possible that the offender is not happy with their life because some of the things they do are not the same as what they say or think and introduce this concept as cognitive dissonance. The therapist should then explain to the offender that in order to get rid of the cognitive dissonance in their life and achieve cognitive consonance, they must treat others the way they would like to be treated. This principle is best understood as the golden rule (Turner, 2012).

Choice theory-oriented rehabilitation programs should also stress important total behaviors such as forgiveness in their practice. Amzy (2019) defines forgiveness as: “an effective behavior that characterizes a productive lifestyle”. Focusing on these behaviors benefits both the offender and therapist because it improves their relationship. This

technique also serves as an example that proves choice theory works in changing behavior by showing that making effective choices such as forgiving, leads to a better life. If the offender notes that the therapist is making this choice to forgive, then perhaps he can forgive himself and be more likely to change other aspects of his behavior. The previous literature describes each of the components of the total behavior of forgiveness for therapists to use in their practice and encourage offenders to do the same. First, the acting component would be making the choice to forgive. The thinking component would be engaging in conscious thoughts that affirm your choice to forgive. The feeling component involves the positive emotions one feels from making the choice to forgive and is an indirect effect from changing actions and thoughts. This research says that those who are unable to forgive themselves display “relationship damaging emotions” such as anger and hostility. This is unfavorable because it could lead to relationship problems which in turn could lead to more offending. This is why rehabilitation programs should place emphasis on forgiveness so the offender can learn to forgive himself and also feel forgiven. Forgiveness will result in the offender being able to experience positive emotions and become more likely to become rehabilitated. The last component of the total behavior of forgiveness is physiology which relates to the negative health effects caused by an inability to forgive. Poor health may lead to stress which could result in more offending behavior (Amzy, 2019).

In addition to forgiveness, choice theory-oriented rehabilitation programs should focus on relationships and character building. Research has shown that negative or nonexistent relationships can be a cause for crime. Relationships are affected by an individual’s personality which is why an important part of reality therapy is to build

positive character. A positive character results from the offender choosing to engage in total behaviors such as respect and empathy. These are core principles for successful relationships, so having these qualities promotes a better character and results in one being less likely to re-offend. In order to help the offender build up his character and improve his relationships, the therapist should focus on his strengths instead of his weaknesses. The therapist should also offer to help the offender come up with ways to deal with adversity. Another way to build character includes teaching the offender to focus on himself and the fact that he can change. In addition, the therapist can suggest ways for the offender to elevate his mood through improving wellness. For example, nutritional awareness; physical activity; environmental awareness; spirituality; and self-talk are all ways the offender can improve his health and build a positive character (Britzman et. al., 2011).

What Therapists Should Keep in Mind

The previous literature offers valuable information that reality choice therapists working with offenders should keep in mind while trying to rehabilitate these individuals. The first and most important thing a therapist should focus on is creating a trusting and supportive relationship with the offender. This will put a picture of the therapist in the offender's quality world and enable the therapist to work more effectively with the offender to help change his or her behavior (Patkar, 2019). In order to establish this relationship, a therapist must maintain a caring and accepting attitude, as opposed to one that is demeaning and critical. Establishing this connection serves as an example for the offender to learn how to create beneficial relationships in their life which is one of the goals of reality therapy (Corey, 2013; Bradley, 2014).

The second thing therapists should note is that a change in behavior will never result from forcing an offender to do something that is not satisfying to them. When working with offenders, a therapist is likely to have cases where offenders choose not to help themselves and engage in the treatment. These individuals cannot be rehabilitated because the therapist cannot control their behavior. The offender has to make the choice to change in order to become rehabilitated and be released. No amount of punishment will make an offender choose to learn if they simply do not want to. Regardless of one's best efforts, there may be occasions in which the offender does not choose to implement therapy guided interventions, because it does not satisfy their needs (Rapport, 2019).

Lastly, therapists should make sure that offenders continue to choose to meet their needs in constructive ways to ensure that they do not re-offend when they are released from prison (Mottern, 2007). The goal of reality choice rehabilitation is to make offenders aware that they can be more intentional about making choices that are not only need-fulfilling but also promote a more positive lifestyle in the long-term (Britzman et. al., 2011). Therapists can achieve this goal by presenting the truth to the offender, while also helping them identify damaging behaviors they should try to change. Research shows that there are five stages of truth in an offender's life: (1) the truth was placed (early in life); (2) the truth was misplaced (the offender began using excuses for his selfishness); (3) the truth was replaced (in counseling by exposing the thinking errors); (4) the truth was faced; and (5) the truth was embraced (Turner, 2012). Once an offender embraces the truth, they will be more likely to become successfully rehabilitated, and less likely to recidivate once released.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Research

The present study examined elements of choice theory in depth including an analysis of concepts such as basic needs, quality worlds, and total behavior. The study then applied these concepts to the criminal mind in order to propose a new way of identifying why offenders commit crime. The major findings were that offenders have high needs for power and fun but low needs for love and freedom. Because of this, they do not have many effective relationships meaning that they consider few people to be part of their quality world. This leads to them engaging in problem total behaviors such as crime. This research then applied the information from the previous literature to rehabilitation practices in prisons and outlines how choice theory can be implemented as a technique to rehabilitate offenders. To summarize, therapists should focus on training incarcerated individuals to meet their basic needs in more constructive ways by offering more effective total behaviors to satisfy their quality worlds. The research highlights numerous approaches to go about doing this such as the WDEP technique; educating offenders about the notion of cognitive dissonance; and focusing on forgiveness, relationships, and character building. This research is significant because it makes the point that our current criminal justice system will operate more effectively if rehabilitation programs for offenders incorporated choice theory perspectives.

Limitations of the Present Study and What Future Studies Should Explore

The present study faces some limitations. For one, the lack of time and resources needed to collect data on this topic hindered the potential for a complete and in-depth analysis. Additionally, the population being studied is a vulnerable population. Thus, there is a limited amount of approved research that deals with offenders. Lastly, there is a

wide range of literature on choice theory as it is gaining more popularity. The present study only examined some of the research leaving much more literature pertaining to this topic yet to be explored.

Future research on this topic should collect data in order to empirically test choice theory. According to Corey (2013), choice theory can be used in all aspects of human relationships and in various settings. Future studies may also want to apply this theory to other institutions, such as juvenile justice systems or school systems, to explore its effects.

V. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Proposed Analysis

The following is an example of a proposed study that could be done to examine the relationship between choice theory and rehabilitation programs within the criminal justice system to see if there is a significant effect. The proposed study will discover whether the type of therapy an incarcerated individual receives is related to whether or not the offender re-offends after he/she is released. This question will be investigated using qualitative data. The independent variable in this study is the type of therapy while the dependent variable in this study is whether or not the offender re-offends after he/she is released. Because both variables have a categorical level of measurement and researchers are trying to see if there is a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, a chi-squared analysis should be used to assess this data.

The independent variable, the type of therapy, will contain two levels. The first one being control-based therapy in which the criminal justice system attempts to change the behavior of the offender utilizing external psychological techniques. The second level

will be rational choice therapy based on the idea that the offender has the capacity to make his/her own choices in regards to changing his/her behavior. The dependent variable, whether or not the offender re-offends after he/she is released, will also contain two levels. The first one being “yes, the individual re-offended” and the second one being “no, the individual did not re-offend”.

Methods

Subjects

The proposed study will consist of administering treatment to a specific number of randomly selected incarcerated individuals then monitoring the activity and police records after they are released. While incarcerated, the selected individuals will undergo one of two types of treatment for rehabilitation: control-based therapy or rational choice-based therapy. The subjects will be selected from prison records. To control for any confounding variables, selection of subjects should be limited by factors such as selecting all subjects from the same prison, selecting subjects who were convicted of the same offense, selecting subjects with similar sentences and selecting subjects of the same age. Other variables and demographics in addition to those previously mentioned may also need to be controlled to produce reliable results. However, one should be cautious as limiting the selection of subjects decreases the external validity or the generalizability of the study.

Measures

To measure the independent variable, type of therapy, researchers will provide a contract for both the therapist and each individual to sign. The contract will outline the treatment plan and signatures will be required each session to hold those involved accountable. For

the choice-oriented treatment plan, the contract will explain that sessions will include an analysis of the subjects' basic needs and quality worlds to assess behavior. For the control-oriented treatment plan, the contract will explain that sessions will include an analysis of external factors that may influence the subjects' behavior such as race, income, employment, social factors, etc.

To measure the dependent variable, whether or not the offender reoffends, researchers should utilize police data. Within the set time period of the study, if the police records show a subject has been arrested for any reason, this constitutes a repeated offense. Each subject will be marked either "yes" or "no" if they reoffended during the allotted time of the study.

Procedure

This research study will follow a longitudinal design where researchers aim to find a difference in recidivism rates between offenders who received choice-oriented therapy versus offenders who received control-oriented therapy while incarcerated. Researchers will randomly select a set number of individuals (more than 30) from a specific jail or prison facility. The researchers will then collect personal information from the subjects such as age, sentence, crime committed, date of conviction and expected release date.

There should be little variation in the personal data among the subjects in order to control for confounding variables. The subjects will then be randomly assigned to receive a type of therapy. Half will receive choice-oriented therapy and the other half will receive control-oriented therapy. The researchers will then administer the respective treatments every day to the subjects for X amount of time (as long as both treatment plans begin and end at the same time). All subjects should be released around the same time (within a

month) and have similar release conditions. Upon release, the study should follow the individuals by keeping track of police data and records for X amount of time (a year, five years, etc.) to observe whether or not the individual re-offended.

After the set amount of time has elapsed, the data collected will be analyzed using a chi-square goodness of fit test to see if there is a significant relationship between the variables. The analysis will aim to answer the question: is there a difference in recidivism rates between offenders who received choice-oriented therapy versus offenders who received control-oriented therapy while incarcerated? The null hypothesis would be: There is not a difference in recidivism rates between offenders who received choice-oriented therapy versus offenders who received control-oriented therapy while incarcerated. The alternative hypothesis would be: There is not a difference in recidivism rates between offenders who received choice-oriented therapy versus offenders who received control-oriented therapy while incarcerated.

The best way to do a chi-squared analysis is to make a table of the values. For this research, it should look as so:

Dependent Variable: Re-offended?			
Independent Variable: Type of Therapy	Yes	No	
	Choice Therapy	A. Observed: Expected:	B. Observed: Expected:
	Control Therapy	C. Observed: Expected:	D. Observed: Expected:
		Column total:	Column total:
			Row total:
			Row total:
			Total of all values:

To fill out the table, the researchers would start by recording the observed values for the number of subjects who: A. completed choice therapy while incarcerated and re-offended after being released into the community; B. completed choice therapy while incarcerated and did not re-offend after being released into the community; C. completed control therapy while incarcerated and re-offended after being released into the community; D. completed control therapy while incarcerated and did not re-offend after being released into the community. Then, the researchers would calculate the expected values. To do this, use the observed values and multiply the row total by the column total and then divide by the total of all values. Repeat this for each individual cell. After recording all observed and expected values, researchers will obtain the chi-squared statistic by using this formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

For each cell, researchers will subtract the expected value (E) from the observed value (O), square that number, then divide it by the expected value. Once calculating the values for each cell (4), the researchers will then add them all together to obtain the chi-squared statistic.

For this study, the degrees of freedom of 1 will be used to obtain the critical value of 0.05. If the obtained chi-squared value is less than 0.05, then the null hypothesis should be accepted because this would mean the results are not statistically significant and there is more than a 5% probability that they are due to chance. If the obtained chi-squared value is greater than 0.05, then the null hypothesis should be rejected because this would mean the results are statistically significant and that there is less than a 5%

probability that they are due to chance. It would be the hope of researchers for the latter to present itself in the data because it would indicate that the type of rehabilitation efforts made makes a noteworthy difference in recidivism rates.

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