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**DECISION MAKING AND THE FELONY OFFENDER:  
A COGNITIVE APPROACH**

**by**

**Marlene O'Hara**

**A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Education  
Department of Educational Leadership**

**Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
April 1997**

## **DECISION MAKING AND THE FELONY OFFENDER: A COGNITIVE APPROACH**

**Marlene O'Hara, Ed.D.**

**Western Michigan University, 1997**

**The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the theory of cognitive self-change as it applies to increasing the successful completion rate of felony offenders sentenced to a probation half-way house. Subjects used were young, males who had been convicted of non-violent crimes and who were ordered to complete the Alternative Directors Residential Probation program as part of their probation order.**

**The group of residents who entered Alternative Directions in October, 1994 was given an intensive ten hour course using cognitive decision making techniques during their first two weeks in residence. The groups of residents entering the program in September and November, 1994 served as a comparison group.**

**The discharge data provided by Alternative Directions staff were then analyzed and successful completion rates compared for those receiving the treatment with those who did not participate in the decision making classes. Seventy-five percent (9 of 12) in the treatment group fulfilled requirements for successful discharge, while forty-six percent (18 of 39) of the non-treatment group were similarly successful. Significance at the .05 alpha level was not achieved.**

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**Marlene O'Hara**



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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**The Criminal Justice System is charged with a number of tasks which include the apprehension, conviction, punishment, and rehabilitation of offenders. There are well accepted methods for apprehension which are being augmented by technological improvements; rules of law apply to the conviction aspect. Punishment, especially through incarceration has been a well accepted and long-standing approach to dealing with criminal behavior. The methods to be used in rehabilitation, however, meet with far less agreement on approaches. Many have posed serious questions about whether such a task is worthy or even possible and advocate spending what resources are available to the system in improving methods of catching, convicting, and punishing offenders. A growing number of criminologists, however, see rehabilitation of offenders to be the only hope of saving the system from bankruptcy at all levels of government.**

**Certainly, corrections in the 1990s is confronted by a host of complex problems that have stretched interagency relations and governmental budgets to the breaking point. During the previous decade, the nation's prison population increased by almost 134 percent. As a result, in 1990 there were more than 1.2 million persons in U.S. prisons and jails. More than 670,000 were in state prisons. Another 408,000 were in local jails. This figure was exceeded by the number of persons on probation or parole during 1990. There were more than 2.5 million adults on probation in 1989 and 400,000 on parole (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1990).**

These statistics resulted from unprecedented increases in the number of offenders entering the system. There were 4.1 million adults under correctional custody or supervision at the end of 1989 in the United States, which is one in every forty-six adults in this country (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1990). Since 1980, these figures represent a population increase of 126 percent for probation, 107 percent for parole, and 114 percent for jails and prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1990).

The high cost of incarceration limits what can be spent on the balance of correctional programs. In 1987, it was estimated that the cost of building a medium security prison was more than \$61,000 per bed, which was only slightly more than for jail construction costs (Lauen, 1990). For every dollar spent on construction, the estimated operation costs are sixteen times the costs of construction over the life of the facility.

The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world. In 1990, 274 out of every 100,000 adults in the general population were incarcerated in state prisons alone (Jankowski, 1990). Virtually all other nations incarcerate at a lower rate. The United States' incarceration rate is twice that of Canada, three times that of Great Britain, and four times that of West Germany (Lauen, 1990).

Our heavy reliance on incarceration has placed the correctional system "at the nexus of two incompatible and powerful forces: first, there is an unrelenting rise in prison and jail populations and second, there are more fiscal constraints facing all levels of government" (Cullen, 1993, p. 1). The cost of such policies is modestly estimated to be \$73 million per day and rising (Lauen, 1990). In virtually all jurisdictions, the Corrections budget has increased dramatically in recent years and there is no relief in sight. Michigan is no exception to the trend, with Corrections now receiving 15% of the overall state budget where it only received 2.8% in 1979 (Gregory, 1990).

More disquieting is the growing suspicion that many of the millions of man-years spent in confinement are not serving any useful function. "The problem is even more serious if, as the critics charge, society is taking away a great deal of liberty without getting increased order in return" (Sherman & Hawkins, 1981, p. 2).

Though there are still many voices calling for more prisons, and more and longer sentences, there is an increasing demand for and use of "intermediate punishments," sanctions that are "between prison and probation" (Morris & Tonry, 1990). If prisons are fiscally crippling and ineffective, and regular probation provides inadequate control and punishment of high-risk probationers (Petersilia, Turner, Kahan, & Peterson, 1985) it was argued that what was needed were initiatives that save the cost of confinement while providing for the safety of the community.

Advocacy for expanding the range of intermediate sanctions has emerged "from perhaps an unprecedented broad alliance of critics from all shades of the spectrum" (Harland, 1993, p. 6) and a number of new alternatives such as boot camps (shock probation), intensive supervision and parole programs, day-treatment and day-reporting centers, home-arrest/tether programs have joined the expansion and consolidation of earlier approaches such as restitution, community service, and substance abuse treatment in the hope that cost reduction without loss of safety to the public can be achieved.

Michigan joined the trend with the passage of the Community Corrections Act (Public Act 511) in 1988. The purpose of this act was to allocate money to programs designed to divert offenders from jails and prisons while providing services that would reduce recidivism. It established the Office of Community Corrections, as well as local Community Corrections Advisory Boards whose purpose was to determine local needs through a carefully developed comprehensive plan and to locate and fund agencies willing and able to fill those identified needs.

One of the programs funded by Public Act 511 is a half-way house in Grand Rapids, Michigan, known as the Alternative Directions Probation Program (A.D.). Although originally established as an outreach program of the Sunshine Christian Reformed Church in 1979, the program is now publicly funded. It has gained the respect of local judges, probation officers, and offenders and their families alike due to the multiple services and supervision it provides. Alternative Directions requires that its residents involve themselves in employment, school, and/or vocational pursuits, do community service, pay at least \$500 on any court assessments, and cooperate in any other activity ordered by the court (i.e., AA attendance, counseling services, parenting classes).

Alternative Directions has maintained a 65% to 70% successful completion rate for the first thirteen years of its existence. While efforts to improve those success rates were made, the fact that in the last year the rate was closer to 55% has caused a good deal of concern to the program's administrators (Table 1). Obviously, residents of the program are unable to profit from the services the program offers if they do not stay to receive them. Obvious too, is the fact that the costs of alternatives become more expensive than incarceration if failures to complete the program are extensive and are followed, as they usually are, by a period of incarceration to punish the offender.

Fortunately, there have been in recent years, a number of studies and analyses designed to determine what "works" in the treatment of criminal offenders. One of the more promising endeavors deals with programs that include techniques that foster the development of the offender's thinking and reasoning skills, their social comprehension, and their problem-solving skills (Ross & Fabiano, 1985). Many researchers have revealed a "considerable body of empirical evidence that many offenders have experienced developmental delays in the acquisition of a number of cognitive skills which are essential to social adaptation" (Ross, Fabiano & Ross, 1988, p. 44). This often



**Table 1**  
**Alternative Directions Completion Rates**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Total Discharges</b>	<b>Successful Discharges</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1993/94	286	163	56.99
1992/93	232	151	65.08
1991/92	207	131	63.28

results in failure to recognize when a problem exists, in reacting rather than thinking through options and possible consequences when faced with a problem situation, and then failure to reflect back on their behavior and its effects.

The intervention, variously referred to as cognitive self-change (Bush, 1989), cognitive behavior modification (CBM), cognitive problem solving (Alford & Larson, 1987), rational behavior training (Nauth & Edwards, 1988) and cognitive restructuring (Gendreau, 1989) has been shown to be capable of impacting the thinking patterns and thus the way individuals react to situations which in the past have led to impulsive and often self-defeating behaviors. Cognitive-behavioral theory combines the principles of social and developmental psychology and those of experimental-clinical psychology, and posits that social behavior is learned and this can be changed when new information is processed.

Often the environment teaches and reinforces skills that are antisocial and destructive. The cognitive-behavioral approach aids participants in learning new socially appropriate skills in recognizing and solving their problems and conflicts. The emphasis in this approach is on thoughts rather than feelings or perceptions, not

because feelings and patterns of perception are unimportant, but because thoughts are most directly within the offender's immediate control (Bush, 1989).

The cognitive approach has been used in a number of prison settings to reported success in reducing recidivism, misconducts, and violent behavior. There have been relatively few studies testing the effectiveness of such training in other settings and on other populations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to test whether participation in a class which both explains a cognitive approach to problem solving and gives participants practical experience in using such approaches will result in an increase in the percentage of residents who successfully complete the necessary requirements for successful graduation from the Alternative Directions program. In order to fully understand this purpose statement, it seems important that definitions of terms used be made clear.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms used in this study may be similar, but not identical, to the terms used in other studies to measure the same qualities. The following terms will be defined: cognitive, self-change, Alternative Directions and successful completion of Alternative Directions.

#### **Cognitive**

This means the emphasis is on thoughts, rather than behavior, feelings or perceptions. The purpose of such an emphasis is because thoughts are most directly within the immediate control of the individual. By changing one's pattern of thinking, an individual can directly control his/her patterns of perception, feelings and behavior.

### **Self-Change**

The kind of change described here can only be self-change. There is no way it can be forced upon someone or done to them or for them. Accepting responsibility for one's own condition and for one's own change is essential to the foundation of the process.

### **Alternative Directions**

Alternative Directions is a probation half-way house located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Its residents are primarily 17 to 25 year old non-violent felony offenders. An alternative to incarceration, Alternative Directions attempts to involve residents in employment, education, counseling, community service, restitution and payment of court assessments. The program is run on a point system, with residents advancing through six levels, each one allowing increased privileges and freedoms. Points are earned by the residents for productive activities (i.e. 1/4 point per hour for employment, counseling, education, community service) and lost for rule violations (i.e. one point for each failure to make his bed, ten points for failing a breathalyzer test, etc.).

### **Successful Completion of Alternative Directions**

Three conditions are necessary for graduation from this program. They are: accretion of 280 points; accumulation of \$1,000; and completion of 20 weeks of residency.

### **Organization of the Study**

**This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. The statement of the problem, purpose of the study and the research question were discussed in Chapter I. Chapter II contained a thorough review of relevant literature related to the topic under investigation. Ascertaining a better understanding of the cognitive approach to problem solving is discussed and explored. Theories, practices and trends are featured in this chapter to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the need for a new approach to correctional rehabilitation.**

**The methodology used in the study is presented in Chapter III. Included are descriptions of the procedures, sampling methods, data collection, methods used to analyze the data. The cognitive problem solving training program implemented is also featured.**

**Chapter IV consists of the data analysis. Statistical procedures used to analyze the data are described.**

**Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusion, and results. Implications of the study are described and recommendations based on the findings are offered.**

### **Summary**

**This study has merit because it addresses a pressing need in society at this time; that of finding more effective and less costly ways of dealing with felony offenders. The decade of the 1980s saw a dramatic increase in the use of incarceration to deal with all types of criminal behavior. The resulting toll on federal, state and local budgets is the cause of a great deal of concern, particularly since the reduction of funds to other departments (including Education and Mental Health) is very likely to exacerbate the**

problem in the coming years. The fact that all these increases have not resulted in increased order or a feeling of safety by the general public should be a matter of grave concern to the public in general and to policy-makers in particular.

Precautions should be taken to avoid basing future decisions on knee-jerk reactions to crimes that jar the senses and more on objective evidence of what deters criminal activity, since to continue present sentencing trends will surely result in the bankruptcy of many jurisdictions. To increase both the number and length of prison and jail sentences as demanded by many politicians will shorten the time it will take for serious consequences to occur.

It seems important that the Criminal Justice system respond to the looming crisis with a determination to use research in the field of alternative approaches to dealing with offenders to determine which methods are best able to both save money and protect the public, build on the body of knowledge in the area, and seek to impact Criminal Justice legislation by educating legislators and the general public of the efficacy of those approaches.

There is a large and growing body of evidence that indicates that a number of approaches presently being used can greatly reduce continued criminal behavior in many offenders. Amongst the more promising are those that address the offender's thinking, in addition to his/her environment, academic and/or vocational skills, counseling needs and substance abuse issues. If such issues can be addressed in a less costly and less potentially destructive setting than jail or prison, the savings to taxpayers would seem to increase and the chance to positively impact the offender would seem to increase as well. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, many of the above offender needs have been addressed for the past several years at a probation halfway house called Alternative Directions. An alternative to incarceration, this program seeks to involve residents in productive activities such as employment, school completion,

community service and counseling during the five to six months of the probationer's stay.

The Alternative Directions' program offers a great deal of freedom in the community to its residents. Consequently, each day residents are faced with the necessity of making a number of decisions. Those who choose to follow the rules graduate from the program. Unfortunately, the percentage of those choosing this course has declined in the past year and administrators have sought methods to improve the successful completion rate. Research has indicated that cognitive approaches have enjoyed success in causing offenders to make better choices in other correctional settings, and a decision was made to attempt such an approach at Alternative Directions.

The problem solving cognitive training program used in this study has been used to reported success in a number of correctional settings. Its adaptability to community corrections seems a natural subject for research. The fact that the program is not therapy but training means that properly trained line staff can run the program, thus reducing costs and increasing the number of people who can participate.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

**In order to understand the value of study in this area, it seems important to note the history of research in corrections. The Federal Government is the prime funder of criminal justice research, and according to Petersilia,**

**It has never chosen to spend more than a small fraction of one percent on such research. For every U.S. citizen, the National Science Foundation reports that Federal funders spend about \$32 on health research \$4 on environmental research, \$1.20 on education, but only 13 cents on criminal justice research (Petersilia, 1991, p. 24).**

**Petersilia concludes, “that dollars allocated to research have steadily decreased since 1980, as a proportion of all monies spent on criminal justice” (1991, p. 24).**

**It is no wonder then, that there is a perception of disarray in efforts to develop a sound corrections strategy. The failure to develop such a strategy however, has allowed most policies to be driven by “public opinion, fear, and political hype” (Petersilia, 1991, p. 24). It is no exaggeration to say that a highly publicized, particularly brutal crime far overshadows the most empirically sound research in terms of influence on legislators, courts, police and the public. Many lives have been seriously affected, dollars spent and initiatives ended because of unrelated criminal activities that entered the public conscience and resulting in knee-jerk legislation.**

**Given the fiscal restraints already alluded to, however, it would appear that determining what “works” in corrections is more important than ever, particularly since**

the political impetus to lock up more and more offenders for longer periods of time seems to continue. Justification for such policies are often not a part of the political rhetoric, but they do exist.

There are four justifications for imprisonment used currently. They are retribution (or punishment), deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation. "All four compete with each other, and each have their own advocates that compete with each other as well as for programming and funding" (Lauen, 1990, p. 5). Clear and Cole (1986) have summarized the definitions of each of these four justifications for imprisonment. Retribution is the oldest justification. "An eye for an eye" goes back to biblical times. It focuses on past behavior, on the offense, and has no concern with the future acts of the criminal or with any utilitarian purpose such as reform or deterrence. Retribution is simple in that it is based on the belief that the punishment should be proportional to the seriousness of the offense (Clear & Cole, 1986).

Deterrence has two forms in contemporary criminology: general and special deterrence. General deterrence holds that the population at large is dissuaded from criminal behavior when it can be seen that punishment necessarily follows the commission of a crime. It is assumed that rational individuals weigh the fact that the pain of the punishment is greater than the benefits that may stem from the illegal act. General deterrence thus requires that punishment be severe enough to have an impact, that the population be certain that the sanction will be carried out, and that examples be numerous enough to remind people constantly of what lies ahead if they break the law. Special deterrence is concerned with changes in the behavior of the convicted, and is individualized in that the correct amount and kind of punishment is prescribed so that the criminal will not repeat the offense (e.g. aversion therapy for sex offenders) (Clear & Cole, 1986).



**Incapacitation assumes that crime may be prevented if offenders are physically restrained. By incarcerating, banishing, or killing them, society averts the crimes that those offenders would commit if they were at large in the community. It assumes that the criminal does not extend his career when he or she is released from prison to make up for lost time and that some other individual is not recruited to take his or her place in the criminal world. Research has suggested that a relatively small number of offenders are responsible for a large number of violent and property crimes, thus the increased attention given recently to selective incapacitation, which proposes to identify and incarcerate these high-frequency offenders for long periods of time (Clear & Cole, 1986).**

**Advocates of rehabilitation believe that the offender may be treated and resocialized while under the care of the state. Rehabilitation is future-oriented; the sanction is applied so that the offender will not commit new crimes. The focus is on the offender, not the offense; offenders return to society when they are “well,” when the resocialization has been completed. Rehabilitation lends itself to indeterminate sentence lengths (Clear & Cole, 1986).**

**The problem with having so many conceptually distinct justifications for imprisonment is “that advocates of each want their choice to dominate. The effect on correctional policy is a setting up of conflicting expectations, and imprisonment is seen as the ‘panacea’” (Lauren, 1990, p. 6).**

**For most of this century, rehabilitation was regarded to be the enlightened purpose of punishment, and this belief was institutionalized as the indeterminate sentence. The offender, under this system, was to remain in custody until prison staff had concluded that he or she had responded to treatment and was no longer a threat to society (Samuel & Moulds, 1986).**

The rehabilitation justification, however, was seriously discredited for a period which began (at least on the surface), with the publication of an article called "What Works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform," authored by Robert Martinson (1974). Written in essay form, the article was a presentation of the results of his research team's assessment of 231 evaluation studies of treatment programs conducted between 1945 and 1967, and concluded with the assertion that "With few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism" (Martinson, 1974, p. 25). The phrase "nothing works" became "an instant cliché and exerted enormous influence on both popular and professional thinking" (Walker, 1985, p. 185). The fact that Martinson later took pains to recant his earlier conclusions on the basis of a review of more recent studies (Martinson, 1979) was largely ignored, and his earlier conclusions continue to be used as justification for favoring a more punitive response to crime.

Currie points out however, that "the enthusiastic reception accorded Martinson's nothing works idea had at least as much to do with ideology as with evidence" (1985, p. 237). The debate of social turbulence--which included protests over civil rights, and the war in Vietnam, as well as riots, bombings, and increasing drug usage and rates--preceding the publication of Martinson's article "profoundly affected many Americans, including criminologists and criminal justice policy makers" (Cullen & Gendreau, 1989, p. 27).

Conservatives, of course, had a long tradition for favoring a more punitive response to crime and often criticized the rehabilitation model as being the cause for failure to incarcerate or, if incarcerated, to grant early release to dangerous criminals. The events of the sixties placed emphasis on the declining "social order" and increased the volume of the protests against rehabilitation voiced by this segment of the population.

Liberals too, however lived through the same turbulence, but viewed many events as evidence of ineptitude and sometimes outright abuse of power on the part of government workers. The system that allowed corrections officials to decide when rehabilitation has been accomplished, upon scrutiny by Liberals,

**Disclosed disturbing ramifications: Unbridled discretion created not the opportunity for doing good, but for abuse. This judicial discretion often resulted in preferential sentences for the advantaged, whereas correctional/parole officials used the indeterminate sentence and their powers to regulate release not as a carrot to motivate inmate personal growth, but as a stick to coerce inmate conformity (Cullen & Gendreau, 1989, p. 29).**

Viewed in this context, Martinson's study then gave scientific legitimacy to views that were already held by large segments of society on both sides of the political spectrum. This would explain the wide-spread acceptance of research findings in a system not noted for its reliance on such information. While the criticisms of the rehabilitation model were not entirely without justification, neither was there justification for abolishing the concept entirely. Rather, though the attacks on rehabilitation have continued unabated, the appeal of the rehabilitative ideal have remained strong, especially amongst citizens, the group to whom many politicians are attempting to appeal with "get tough" legislation. Studies done by Zamble and Kalm (1990) and Stalans and Diamond (1990) indicate that public opinion is not as punitive as has been depicted, and that opinions of judicial leniency can be changed through education.

Another result of the "nothing works" proclamation was increased efforts by researchers in the field to determine if that was indeed the case. Perhaps the most exhaustive study of the genre was done by Robert Ross (1990) and his research team at the University of Ottawa. They undertook a meta-analysis that purported to examine every study of the treatment of offenders which had been published in the years between 1973 and 1980. The research was done in sequential stages over a period of

eighteen years, and led them to a number of well-controlled studies which demonstrated that some programs were highly successful, achieving major reductions in the frequency and severity of criminal acts of participants (Gendreau & Ross, 1979; Ross & Gendreau, 1980; Cullen & Gendreau, 1985; Gendreau & Ross, 1988).

Though they found more programs that were either unsuccessful or even counter-productive, their study of the difference between programs that succeed and those which do not provided several insights. In looking at the successful programs, it was noted that a variety of different treatment techniques were used, but almost every successful program had one characteristic in common: they included some technique which could be expected to have an impact on the offender's thinking. Successful programs included as a target of intervention not only the offenders environment, academic and/or vocational skills, or behavior, but his cognition: they included some technique which could increase his reasoning skills, teach him to stop and think before acting, increase his problem-solving skills, help him to develop alternative interpretations of social rules and obligations, and help him to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of others.

#### **Social Cognitive Ineffectiveness and Crime: A Link**

The ideal that there is something different about the way criminals think has a long history. Unfortunately, there have been a number of generalizations made on unsystematic observations, or on systematic observations of particular groups of offenders. Perhaps the most well-known of the latter is the explanation of criminal behavior expressed by Yochelson and Samenow (1976a, 1976b) in their work, The Criminal Personality, Volume I & II. They studied 240 chronic recidivists, many of whom had been judged "Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity" and concluded that there are 52 thinking errors that characterize the criminal's thinking patterns. Through such

statements as "All criminals are habitual liars" (Samenow, 1984, p. 16), they gave scientific credence to what many felt to be the case, but which led to the rejection of what should be considered a valuable study of a small and unusual group of offenders on the part of the scientific community.

### **Cognitive Research**

There are, however, a number of examples of research related to the cognitive model that are considered to be empirically sound. Though many of the studies overlap areas of concentration, and there is not yet a framework for purposes of classification, it would seem important to attempt to organize the findings under some of the major categories in which research has been most productive: self-control/impulsivity; locus of control; concrete vs. abstract reasoning; perception; empathy; and problem-solving.

### **Self-Control-Impulsivity**

A number of studies have suggested that many offenders evidence a lack of self-control, a failure to delay action when faced with a temptation, and a failure to consider the possible courses of action open to them or the consequences thereof. Among them are Hunt (1988) who observed that delinquents are more likely to be egocentric, impulsive and to evidence low tolerance for frustration; Doctor and Winder (1954) who used the Porteus Maze test and found 70% of a delinquent sample scored well within the impulsive range on that test; and Mischel (1981) whose experiment offered children a series of choices between something they could have immediately and something more valuable for which they would have to wait. He found that the delinquents showed a preference for immediate, smaller rewards.

### **Locus of Control**

**There is a wealth of research demonstrating that people differ greatly in terms of the amount of control they feel they have in their lives. Rotter (1966) believed people could be classified as either internals (those who believe that they have some control over what happens in their lives) and externals (those who feel that what happens to them depends not on their behavior but on circumstances beyond their control). Those who work in the Criminal Justice system are all too familiar with offenders who externalize the blame for their criminal behavior, citing parents, poverty, teachers, spouses, bad companions, bad luck, and substance abuse as the reasons for their involvement.**

**There is, however, surprisingly little research to examine the relationship between criminality and locus of control, and what studies there are have been contradictory. Dean (1979) found in his study that offenders are less able to understand the causal relationships in interpersonal interactions than are members of the normal population while Lefcourt and Ladwig (1965) found that adult male prisoners were more internal than college students. Obviously, this is an area that needs more study.**

### **Problem-Solving**

**There are a number of skills necessary to cope successfully with problem situations in interactions with others. Spivack, Platt and Shure (1976) summarize them in the following manner: (a) a sensitivity or ability to recognize the potential problems when people interact, (b) an ability to generate alternative solutions to any such problem, (c) an ability to consider the consequences of such solutions both for oneself and others, (d) an ability to conceptualize the step-by-step means needed to reach one's**

goal in the situation, and (e) an ability to see the cause-and-effect relation between one's actions and another's behavior. They further found deficits in all five areas in non-normal populations of all ages when IQ and verbal fluency are held constant (Spivak et al., 1976).

King (1975) suggested that impulsivity and poor judgment resulting from delayed cognitive development is a factor in violence, and Spivak, Platt, and Shure (1976) report that deficits in cognitive social problem solving are consistently found in non-normal populations of all ages when IQ and verbal fluency are held constant.

Spivack et al. (1976) and colleagues found that cognitive problem solving skills such as weighing pros and cons, generating options, conceptualizing a step by step process to a goal and perceiving the situation from another's perspective are skills which seem to be lacking in many socially incompetent individuals. Drawing on the research of these and many other theorists and researchers, Ross and Fabiano (1985) summarized the characteristics found to be a factor in criminal behavior as follows:

1. **Self-Control/Impulsivity.** Many offenders fail to stop and think before they act. They respond without stopping to consider the consequences of their behavior. Many also fail to think after they act. Therefore, even when they experience punishment, they do not learn to modify their behavior.

2. **Cognitive Style.** Many delinquents are external; they believe that what happens to them depends on fate, chance, or luck. They believe that they are powerless, that they cannot control what happens to them.

3. **Concrete vs. Abstract Thinking.** Many offenders are very concrete in their thinking. Their lack of abstract reasoning skills gives them major difficulties in understanding the reasons for rules and laws of the idea of justice, and difficulties in

understanding the reasons for rules and laws or the idea of justice, and difficulties in understanding the thoughts or feelings of other people.

**4. Conceptual Rigidity.** The thinking of many offenders and delinquents is inflexible and dogmatic. Because of this, they persist in behaviors which get them into trouble and get them few rewards.

**5. Interpersonal Cognitive Problem-Solving.** Many offenders have difficulty in thinking skills which are required for solving problems which we all encounter in interacting with other people. They cannot consider alternative solutions to interpersonal problems; they do not calculate the consequences of their behavior on other people; they do not understand the cause and effect relationship between their behavior and people's reaction to them.

**6. Egocentricity.** Many offenders see the world only from their own perspective and have never learned to consider how other people think or feel. Their lack of sensitivity to other people's thoughts or feelings severely impairs their ability to form acceptable relationships with people and contributes to their callous disregard for other people.

**7. Values.** In deciding what is right, many offenders only consider how it affects themselves, not how it affects other people. They think, "if it is good for me, it's good."

**8. Critical Reasoning.** Thinking of many offenders is irrational and illogical and lacks self-criticism. As a result they are gullible and easily influenced by others.

Although the existent studies do not provide a clear understanding of the nature or the strength of the association between cognition and crime there is little doubt that a substantial number of offenders have problems in some aspects of their cognitive functioning.



## **Cognitive Training and Criminal Populations**

A number of cognitive programs have been established in the last several years in response to the type of research described above. Though they differ in their underlying principles and goals and in the techniques they use, each focuses on the cognitive functioning of offenders.

Several meta-analyses that followed have further validated many of the same treatment principles (Andrews & Bonta, 1994; Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, & Cullen, 1990; Basta & Davidson, 1988; Cullen & Gendreau, 1989; Garrett, 1985; Gendreau, 1981; Gendreau 1989; Gendreau & Andrews, 1990; Gendreau, Cullen & Bonta, 1994; Gendreau & Ross, 1981; Gottschalk, Davidson, Gensheimer & Mayer, 1987; Greenwood & Zimring, 1985; Hollin, 1993; Izzo & Ross, 1990; Lipsey, 1992; Marshall & Pithus, 1994; Palmer, 1992; Ross & Fabiano, 1985; Ross & Gendreau, 1980; and Ross & McKay, 1978). It is significant to note that all of these published offender treatment programs have been conducted since the nothing works credo became popular in the later 1970's.

### **The Cognitive Skills Training Program**

Based on cognitive principles elaborated to Robert Ross and Elizabeth Fabiano in their book, Time to Think (1985), the Cognitive Skills Program was first piloted by the Correctional Service of Canada in the Atlantic and Pacific Regions during the first six months of 1979, but has since been used in several settings both in the United States and Canada.

Each program is designed to operate daily for approximately twelve weeks and to involve six to eight offenders. It is based on a group-interactive format in which staff lead the offenders through a series of structured training sessions. The sessions

allow time for the offenders to evaluate their behavioral patterns and examine what they learned with other participants. A number of skill building exercises are utilized in which the offenders learn to analyze new problem-solving skills.

### **Social Thinking Skills: A Problem Solving Training Program**

Based on research done through the University of California, a curriculum was developed by Katherine A. Larson (1988) which systematically teaches social problem solving. The curriculum consists of fifty group lessons and requires about six to ten weeks to complete. Instruction methods include role-play, vocabulary and worksheet practice, model demonstration, and group discussion. Students are taught by Larson (1987) to use a nine-step problem solving algorithm which includes the following steps:

- Step 1: Recognize a problem exists.
- Step 2: Stop and get ready to think.
- Step 3: State the problem and goals.
- Step 4: Get the facts.
- Step 5: Make plans.
- Step 6: Pick the best.
- Step 7: Be prepared.
- Step 8: Take action.
- Step 9: Check it out.

### **Criminality and Self-Change**

Developed by John M. Bush (1983) the Criminality and Self-Change strategy is based "on a simple set of facts confirmed many times in practical work with offenders." These facts are that offenders (however they came to be as they are) have

the ability (a) to recognize their own patterns of thinking, feeling, and perceptions; (b) to recognize how these patterns result in and support their destructive criminal behavior; (c) to make the personal decision to change their lives by changing these patterns; and (d) to follow out this decision with a practical program of cognitive self-change.

The course involves a series of 24-1 1/2 hour classes and is based on the belief that everyone is the product of forces beyond his/her control, but everyone also has a capacity for self-awareness and growth based on self-change. Dr. Bush (1983) presently works through the University of Vermont, but his methods have provided the basis for programs in several states.

### **Problem Solving Skills**

Developed by Juliana M. Taymons (1992a), the Problem Solving Skills Program was developed for adult inmates in a jail pre-release program, and recognized the fact that many correctional programs do not have the staff or the time to devote to small group instruction over extended sessions that is required by most cognitive programs. This unit was developed to meet the need for a short term training experience offered to large groups of inmates (20 or more).

The program can be taught in two-two hour sessions, but can be expanded if time allows. Participants learn steps to problem solving, actively work on problem solving skills, and apply problem solving steps to their problems. Such techniques as modeling and role-playing are employed to increase understanding and give participants practice in using the system (Taymons, 1992b).

### **Methods of Assessment**

**The methods used to assess the success of cognitive programs have centered on recidivism rates of varying lengths of time following the treatment. Bonta and Motiuk (1987) state, “correctional rehabilitation can be defined as an intervention which reduces recidivism.” They further state however, that “criminogenic needs are the intermediary links to recidivism,” thus opening the door to testing of outcomes that are more short term than recidivism than are associated with cognitive functioning.**

**There have been several methods used to assess cognitive functioning, but all fall under the categories of direct and indirect assessment. In direct assessing, the subject is asked to report what he/she is thinking. In indirect assessment, the subject’s cognitive functioning is measured by his/her behavior or from his/her performance on a test (Ross & Fabiano, 1985).**

**Both methods have been used extensively in research of offenders, but actual change in behavior (i.e., fewer misconducts, more successful completions) make training programs more salable to staff than do test scores or self-reporting performances. Gendreau (1981) has identified six characteristics associated with programs that successfully reduce recidivism. They are as follows:**

- 1. The services were intensive, usually of a few months’ duration, and were based on differential association and social learning theories of criminal behavior.**
- 2. The programs were behavioral, primarily of the cognitive and modeling type, and targeted the criminogenic needs of high-risk offenders.**
- 3. Programs adhered to the responsivity principle, that is, they were delivered in a manner that facilitated the learning of new prosocial skills by the offenders.**
- 4. Program contingencies were enforced in a firm, fair manner, with positive reinforcers employed more than punishers by at least 4:1.**

**5. Therapists related to offenders in interpersonally sensitive and constructive ways and were trained and supervised appropriately.**

**6. Program structure and activities reached out into the offenders' real-world social network and disrupted the delinquency network by placing offenders in situations (i.e., people and places) where prosocial activities predominated.**

### **Prison Overpopulation and the Financial Crunch**

**In Michigan, over the last twenty years, a combination of factors including changes in criminal justice policies have caused the state prison capacity to double, the prison population to triple and the incarceration rate to quadruple. Today, ten years after undertaking the most expensive prison construction program in the state's history, adding more than 15,000 beds and 26 new correctional institutions, the state once again faces a serious prison bed shortage in its prison system (Hansen, 1995).**

**Our experience does not lead us to believe that adding prison beds will solve the crime problem. It will however increase the percentage of the state's budget that goes to the Department of Corrections and away from other state departments and programs.**

**There have in the past been many ideas proposed that were to be "quick fixes" to the problems of the Criminal Justice System. If the past experiences have taught us anything, it is that there are no easy answers to this complex problem. The literature reviewed above, however, suggests that teaching offenders to think through problems to possible conclusions of various actions can impact positively on their behavior. Most studies reviewed dealt with individuals who were incarcerated in either juvenile or adult correctional facilities. Testing the theory on offenders who have not yet experienced incarceration seems a worthy subject for study.**

### **Alternative Directions and Retention Rates**

**Alternative Directions is a half-way house that provides residential services for adult non-violent felony offenders. This program is funded by the state Office of Community Corrections, who has set a 75% successful completion as a goal for such programs. The programs' directors are concerned about a movement away from that goal and have sought ways of reversing the trend.**

**The reasons given for leaving the program without permission, or for consistently breaking program rules (both of which result in unsuccessful terminations) are consistent with the characteristics Ross and Fabiano (1985) found to be a factor in criminal behavior (i.e., impulsivity, external rather than internal cognitive style, concrete rather than abstract thinking, conceptual rigidity, lack of critical reasoning ability, etc.). The reported successes in the use of the cognitive-behavioral theory in impacting prisoners' thinking patterns and thus the way they reacted to impulsive and often self-defeating behaviors presented a reasonable approach for study in dealing with the problem of impacting the behaviors which resulted in unsuccessful discharges from Alternative Directions.**

### **Hypothesis**

**The following hypothesis was thus set to provide the basis for study: the percentage of Alternative Directions residents who successfully complete the requirements for graduation will be greater for those who receive training in cognitive decision-making techniques than for those who do not receive such training.**

## Summary

**This study has merit because it addresses a need (that of increasing offenders ability to think through decisions before acting) to deal with an expressed problem (that of increasing successful completion rates at Alternative Directions) through the use of methods (classes in cognitive approaches to decision-making) which have been used to reported success in other settings (Busy, 1983; Bonta, 1987; Ross, 1990; Taymons, 1992a; Gendreau, 1994).**

**It also presents an alternative approach to dealing with the larger question of finding more effective ways to impact the behavior of felony offenders toward socially acceptable behavior without the need for incarceration and the problems, both economic and social, that have resulted from the dramatic increase in the use of that approach during the decade of the 1980s.**

**The leaders in the Criminal Justice System are well aware that politics plays an important role in what is deemed appropriate treatment of criminals at any given time. In the past, research has been used to give credibility to convictions already held. If the problems of dealing effectively with criminal offenders are ever to be solved, however, research much be used to formulate new, more effective programs which can be used to formulate problem solving that is both fiscally responsible and socially acceptable.**

**The design of the program is presented in Chapter III. Included are descriptions of the treatment, procedures, samples methods, the data collection and methods used to analyze the data. Chapter IV contains the results of the data analysis and statistical procedures. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusions, and results. Recommendations based on the findings are featured along with the implications of the research findings.**

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

**This research was designed to ascertain if participation in a ten hour problem solving training program could change the successful completion rate of felony offenders sentenced to a halfway house. The research was conducted at the Alternative Directions Probation Program situated in Grand Rapids, Michigan.**

**This chapter will discuss the hypothesis and procedures used in the study. The subject grouping, data collection, statistical design, and other research considerations will also be examined.**

#### **Identification and Description of Variables**

**The research question to be dealt with in this study is, does participation in a ten hour problem solving training program designed to teach participants to stop and think before acting, decide what exactly constitutes the problem, consider various options and their consequences, and to select the option that best results in the attainment of the goal, significantly change the successful completion rate of felony offenders sentenced to a probation halfway house? The independent variable in the cognitive problem-solving course given the treatment group. The dependent variable is the successful completion rate for all participants.**



### **Hypothesis**

**The percentage of Alternative Directions residents who successfully complete the requirements for graduation will be greater for those who receive training in cognitive decision-making techniques than for those who do not receive such training.**

### **Subjects**

**The subjects of this research were young, male felony offenders sentenced to the Alternative Directions Probation Program, a halfway house financed by the State of Michigan's Office of Community Corrections. The program houses a maximum of seventy offenders who are expected to find and maintain employment and/or education and training programs, as well as perform community service, cooperate in counseling, pay any court assessments ordered and, in general, perform any other requirements contained in the order of probation.**

**The age of residents is fairly homogenous, ranging from 17 to 25 years of age. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the study participants by age. The mean age of all participants was 20.35. Table 3 divides participants by race. A total of 36 (70.6%) whites and 15 (29.4) blacks were included in the study. Table 4 shows education levels of participants. Thirty-six subjects were below high school level, 14 had completed requirements for a high school diploma or G.E.D., and one participant had taken some college classes. Only two (2) of the subjects were married at the time of the study.**

### **Procedures**

**Since this research involved protected subjects (felony probationers residing at a halfway house), the researcher accepted the ethical responsibility of confidentiality.**

**Table 2**  
**Ages of Participants**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum Percent</b>
17	6	11.8	11.8
18	8	15.7	15.7
19	6	11.8	39.3
20	9	17.6	56.9
21	6	11.8	68.7
22	5	9.8	78.5
23	4	7.8	86.3
24	5	9.8	96.1
25	2	3.9	100.0
	51	100.0	

**Mean Age = 20.35**

**Table 3**  
**Participants by Race**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>White</b>	36	70.6
<b>Black</b>	15	29.4
<b>Total</b>	51	100.0

**Table 4**  
**Education Level**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum Percent</b>
<b>Less than H.S.</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>70.6</b>	<b>70.6</b>
<b>H.S./G.E.D.</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>98.0</b>
<b>Some College</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Two informed consent forms were utilized (see Appendices G & H). The first informed consent form signed and dated by the probationer granted the researcher permission to discuss the nature of the study with the perspective participant. The second informed consent form signed and dated by each interviewee requested his consent to participate in the project. Western Michigan University's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board approved the research protocol used in the research (see Appendix E).

Each Alternative Directions' resident entering the program in the months of September, October, and November of 1994 was contacted within the first two days of residence and presented with the first consent form, which was signed in each case. The research project was explained in detail, as was the resident's right to refuse to participate emphasizing that his status and treatment at Alternative Directions would in no way be affected by his decision.

For those agreeing to participate, a consent form was signed and a fact sheet was developed and implemented to collect and record data relevant to the project (Appendix I). Information recorded for each participant included age, race, educational

level, and marital status. The sheet was also used to record whether the participant was a treatment or control group member, the attendance for the treatment group, and type of discharge the participant received when he left the program. All references made to the subject were done so in non-identifiable terms in order to protect the participants' anonymity and satisfy privacy issues.

The cognitive training, which is described in extensive detail in the next section, was given to all residents of Alternative Directions who entered the program during the month of October, 1994. The groups used for comparison were those residents entering the program in the month of September and those entering in the month of November, 1994.

There were a number of reasons for such a design. First, since there are only 15 to 20 new residents per month sentenced to Alternative Directions, to randomize those residents to treatment and control groups would render the treatment group size too small to be effective. Second, since residents are required to involve themselves in employment and/or education in the community the only time they are required to remain on the premises and available for training are the first two weeks of residence (They are also allowed home visits of increasing length as they progress through the program). Third, the treatment given could only occur at the beginning of the stay of each resident if it is to be considered a reason for program completion.

With the exception of the training program, all other program requirements remained the same for all of the residents participating in the study. Activities are based on individualized case plans (i.e., those needing high school completion classes are assigned to those; those needing substance abuse counseling or AA meetings are similarly assigned to those, etc.), so the absence of participants from their rooms was not particularly notable to other residents.

There were seventeen new residents entering Alternative Directions during the month of September and was designated control group one. Control group two consisted of the twenty-two new residents entering the program in November. In all, fourteen new residents entered the Alternative Directions program in October, but two declined to participate, leaving twelve residents who composed the experimental group. The members of the treatment group entering the program in the first two weeks of September were given an intensive ten hour course in cognitive methods of decision making held Monday through Friday for two hours during the third week. Those entering the third and fourth weeks were trained in the first week of November on the same schedule. All other program expectations and experiences were held constant throughout the months of the study.

#### **Statistical Design and Data Collection**

This research was designed to test the use of cognitive decision making methods in an attempt to increase Alternative Directions Probation Program's successful completion rates.

Following the completion of the course, Alternative Directions staff agreed to provide notification of the termination of stay of all participants in the study as it occurred, as well as the type of discharge (successful or unsuccessful). Since the program requires a minimum stay of five (5) months and a maximum stay of twelve (12) months, data collection was spread over several months for the three groups who comprised the study.

The rates of successful completion were then determined from the data produced by Alternative Directions staff, and were compared for significance using the Chi-square method for analysis of nominal data. The level of significance was set at .05 and used as the basis for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis. The null

**hypothesis used for the study is stated as follows: The proportion of Alternative Directions residents who successfully complete the program will be equal for those who complete a cognitive problem solving training program and for those residents who receive no such training.**

### **The Training Program**

**The experimental group participated in five, two hour learning sessions dealing with effective problem solving. The program focused on a systematic and integrated approach to problem solving. The following is a brief overview of the objectives of each of the five lessons used in the training program:**

#### **Lesson One:**

- 1. To establish credibility and rapport.**
- 2. To get to know group members.**
- 3. To create a comfortable environment.**
- 4. To introduce the basic concepts of decision making.**

#### **Lesson Two:**

- 1. To learn the reasons for learning the cognitive approach to problem solving.**
- 2. To illustrate examples of the cognitive method.**
- 3. To investigate closely the first three steps: (a) Stop and Think (Why its important), (b) What's the problem (Focus), (c) What is my goal (Why consider long term goals as an important part of decision making.)**

#### **Lesson Three:**

- 1. Review previous lesson.**

2. To investigate closely the last five steps of the process: (a) What information do I need--examining the facts closely and getting as much information about the problem as possible, (b) What are my choices. Generating a list of possible alternatives of action in response to the problem. "Brainstorming," (c) What are the consequences of each choice (for me and for others), (d) What is my choice? Does it help me to meet short term and long term goals? (e) Was it a good one? Did I achieve the objectives I was seeking?

#### **Lesson Four:**

1. To review the problem solving process through discussing problems presented by participants.
2. To explore the steps through role playing and group discussion.
3. To discuss feelings involved in the process when faced with a problem (i.e., anger, tension, righteousness).

#### **Lesson Five:**

1. To discuss individual situations.
2. To choose individual problem areas to work on.
3. To introduce interventions that will cause participants to "stop and think" and to use the decision making process has been learned: (a) Find one part of the situation that you are responsible for, (b) Put yourself in the shoes of the other person, (c) think of consequences of actions you are contemplating that have had very negative results in the past, (d) train yourself to observe positive aspects of others.
4. The final review and class evaluation.

### **Other Research Considerations**

To assess the opinions of the participants, a student appraisal form (Appendix J) was developed, attendance was recorded, and participant comments were logged. The appraisal form consisted of 20 questions to be used for further course planning. Participation in the evaluation process was strictly voluntary process and those who chose to participate were not asked to identify themselves.

### **Summary**

This research was designed to test the use of cognitive decision making methods as a tool to increase successful completion rates of residents of the Alternative Directions Probation Program. The need of the program to show better results, as well as the need of the residents to complete requirements for discharge in the shortest possible time formed the justification for the study.

Those residents entering Alternative Directions in October, 1994, who agreed to participate were given an intensive ten hour training program in cognitive methods of problem solving. Those entering the program in the months of September and November, 1994, formed the comparison groups. All three groups took part in all other aspects of the program as required.

The rates of completion for the three groups were then completed based on data provided by Alternative Directions staff six months after their date of entry. These rates were compared for significance using the Chi-Square method for analysis of nominal data; residents entering the program during the months of September and November were grouped together for purpose of analysis. An alpha level of .05 was used as the basis for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis.



**The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V contains conclusions based on the results of the study. Strengths and weaknesses of the study design as well as implications of the findings are cited. Recommendations for further research conclude the chapter.**

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

**The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the theory of cognitive self-change as it applies to increasing the successful completion rate of the offenders sent to the Alternative Directions Probation Program. To accomplish this, the successful completion rates of the treatment and non-treatment groups were compared, and the Chi-square test used to determine statistical significance.**

#### **Group Characteristics**

**The total number of subjects in the final analysis was 51. There were 39 subjects in two separate comparison groups (17 and 22) and 12 in the treatment group. Participants were grouped according to the month they entered the program. The seventeen who entered Alternative Directions in September and the twenty-two who entered the program in November were designated the control group. The twelve probationers entering the program in October were designated the experimental group, and received the ten hour cognitive training program in problem solving.**

**All the participants were volunteers, with two residents refusing to participate in the treatment group and one asking that he not be considered from the first comparison group. Excluded from the study were certain residents who were housed at Alternative Directions under a special program. These special residents were housed for only**

thirty days or less, and were not subject to the same criteria for discharge. There were no dropouts from the treatment group.

The independent variable in this study was the ten hour cognitive problem solving training program. The dependent variable was the successful completion rate of participants.

### **Results**

After six months, successful completion rates of all participants were checked using data provided by Alternative Directions staff. Nine of the twelve members of the treatment group (75%) were found to have successfully completed the program by the criteria established. Eighteen of the 39 non-treatment participants (46%) were successfully discharged (Table 5). The Chi-square test was used to determine the statistical significance between those two percentages (75% and 46%). The exact probability of the findings of this study having occurred by chance was .08. Since this figure exceeds the alpha level of .05 which had previously been set, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. The null hypothesis that the percentage of successful completions for those Alternative Directions residents who received training in cognitive problem solving skills is the same is accepted.

### **Summary**

This study was undertaken to determine whether the literature suggesting that cognitive training is problem solving could positively affect felony offenders' behavior. If so, would such behavior affect the successful completion rates of those felony offenders sentenced to Alternative Directions, a probation half-way house located in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Table 5**  
**A Comparison of Successful/Unsuccessful**  
**Completion Rates for Treatment and**  
**Non-Treatment Groups**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Treatment</b>		<b>Non-Treatment</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Fre</b>	<b>Pct</b>	<b>Fre</b>	<b>Pct</b>	<b>Fre</b>	<b>Pct</b>
<b>Successful</b>	9	75	18	46	27	52.9
<b>Unsuccessful</b>	3	25	21	54	24	47.1
<b>Exact Probability = .08</b>						

An intensive ten hour training program in problem solving was provided for all residents who entered the Alternative Directions program in October, 1994, and were willing to participate. Their successful completion rate was then compared to the rates of completion for those residents entering the program in September and November, 1994, who agreed to allow their data to be used and did not receive the cognitive training in problem solving.

Results showed that 75% of residents who received training succeeded in successfully completing requirements for graduation, while 46% of those who did not receive such training were similarly successful. When the two percentages were compared using the Chi-square test for significance, an exact probability of .08 was observed. Since this was beyond the alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

**This research project was designed to determine if training in problem solving techniques would help those felony offenders sentenced to a half-way house more able to adjust to program rules and complete requirements for successful completion than those afforded no such training. The group of residents who entered Alternative Directions in October, 1994, were given a ten hour course using cognitive problem solving methods during their first two weeks in residence. The groups of residents entering the program in September and November, 1994, served as a comparison group.**

**The null hypothesis that there is no difference in successful completion rates for those Alternative Directions residents who received decision-making training and those who did not could not be rejected. The exact probability level of .08 found in the study exceeded the alpha level of .05 set as the criteria for acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, no conclusion can be reached regarding the fact that there is no relationship.**

#### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study**

**The design used for the study was selected because of situations unique to the setting in which it occurred. It is well accepted that randomization is the best method for selecting the subjects for this research. While this method would not have been practicable due to the relatively small pool of residents available for study in a given**

month, the method used (comparing residents entering the program in the month preceding and the month following the treatment group) appears to have yielded subjects who are representative of the population. Similarities in age (average age 20.2 for treatment group and 20.4 for comparison group), marital history (one married subject in treatment group, one in comparison group), educational level (75% less than high school completion for treatment, 69% less than high school completion for comparison group) were noted. Ethnicity was the factor showing the most difference, with 84% of the treatment group being comprised of white subject while 76% of the comparison group were white.

It seems important to note that all residents of Alternative Directions are male, felony offenders whose convictions are for non-violent offenses. Both treatment and comparison groups were housed in the same environment, supervised by the same staff, and subjected to the same rules. No new staff members, activities, or rules were introduced during the length of the study.

All treatment participants attended each class and completed the program. Full retention of participants was undoubtedly made possible by the short duration of the study as well as the relative convenience of having the classes take place in the same building in which the participants lived.

The following are factors that could have affected the results of this study:

1. The sample studied was extremely small. This was due in part to the fact that the population of Alternative Directions during the months of the study was much lower than is the norm. The reasons for this phenomena cannot be explained; its effects cannot be measured.

2. The groups studied were more homogenous in age and ethnic background than is often the case in this and other similar programs.

3. Most of the research deals with classes of much longer duration than was possible at Alternative Directions under present circumstances. Many of the participants expressed a desire to continue meeting to discuss personal applications and experiences in dealing with the new approach. The design used in this research did not allow for such meetings.

4. Those residents who were given the treatment were not separated from other residents. Because of the close contact with members of the comparison groups in the living situation, as well as the enthusiasm of some participants to discuss subject matter, there is a possibility that non-treatment results were tainted.

### **Recommendations**

Based upon the results of this study the following recommendations are offered:

1. The cognitive skills training research should be the subject of further research, in both the same setting and in other Community Corrections settings, varying the length of the program offered, the individual teaching the course and the dependent variable. Programs with larger populations could provide the opportunity for randomization which should strengthen the design.
2. Different teaching methods including role play and written assignments should be tested for effectiveness.
3. Other areas of cognitive skills should be addressed by training include relationship building, anger control, and proper use of assertiveness.
4. Follow-up programs should be implemented to further assist residents in the learning, practicing and feedback process. In some cases, this could be achieved by introducing the concept to community-based corrections programs such as probation and parole officers and other treatment program personnel.

5. Follow-up studies should be initiated to determine if the program has long-term effects on offender behavior, which could impact recidivism.

6. Replication of this study should be considered both in this program and in others dealing with felony offenders.

7. Feedback from participants indicate that they feel certain that modifications in the program design would be more helpful to them. They suggested that a longer program, spread out over the length of their stay would have been more helpful in providing a forum for discussion of problems that arose and possible responses to same.

Though statistical significance was not found in this study, the positive reaction of participants and Alternative Directions administration to the training was encouraging and the need for more study in this area is suggested.

### **Implications**

Many responses to dealing with the criminal offender have proven to be costly and ineffective in modifying anti-social behavior. The importance of continuing the search, however, cannot be overemphasized, given the social and economic implications of continuing the trend toward incarcerating more offenders for longer periods of time without a noticeable increase in public safety.

Though statistical significance was not achieved in the study, the variance in completion rates as well as the positive feedback from participants, would seem to make further study in the area a worthwhile endeavor.



**Appendix A**  
**Request to Conduct Research for Dissertation**

June 28, 1994

Mr. John Wynbeek, Executive Director  
Alternative Directions Probation Program  
1706 S. Division  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Subject: Request to Conduct Research for Dissertation

Dear Mr. Wynbeek:

I am requesting permission to conduct the following research study. This study is the core of my dissertation. I hope to complete the actual research by January, 1995, and finish my degree requirements by May, 1995. I have briefly discussed the concept with my advisor, Dr. Eugene Thompson, who appears to be supportive. I am seeking your approval so I can begin finalization of my dissertation proposal to the Graduate College at Western Michigan University.

The title of my research is, "Problem Solving and the " Felony Offender: A Cognitive Approach." The manner in which residents resolve problems is a major concern of administrators. Styles of problem resolution could lead to difficulties within the correctional setting.

It is hypothesized that individuals can serve their own needs and the needs of others best if they develop the proper cognitive problem solving and social skills. This study will include a cognitive training program for participants to learn better problem solving techniques and how to effectively employ them.

Many conflicts arising daily in a resident's life may be resolved by simply knowing when it is best to accommodate the other party's needs, avoid a specific situation or compromise one's position. I believe it's

possible that a cognitive training program can be developed from this research to assist correctional residents in coping with daily challenges more effectively.

If you have any questions about my research proposal, please contact me at (616) 247-8983.

Sincerely yours,



Marlene O'Hara  
1236 Philadelphia S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

cc: Dr. Eugene Thompson

## **Appendix B**

### **Permission to Conduct Research at the Alternative Directions Program**



July 8, 1994

To Whom it May Concern:

Probation Officer Marlene O'Hara has permission to conduct cognitive restructuring research at Alternative Directions during August, September, and October of 1994.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Wynbeek", written in a cursive style.

John Wynbeek  
Executive Director

**Appendix C**  
**Notification of the Use of Probationers in Research**  
**to the Department of Corrections**

June 30, 1994

Mr. Douglas Kosinski  
Research Department  
Michigan Department of Corrections  
Grand Plaza; Second Floor  
Box 30003  
Lansing, Michigan 48009

Subject: Request to Conduct Research using Probationers

Dear Mr. Kosinski:

I am requesting permission to conduct the following research study. This study is the core of my dissertation. I hope to complete the actual research by January, 1995, and finish my degree requirements by May, 1995. I have briefly discussed the concept with my advisor, Dr. Eugene Thompson, who appears to be supportive. I am seeking your approval so I can finalize my dissertation proposal presentation for the Graduate College at Western Michigan University.

The title of my research is, "Problem Solving and the " Felony Offender: A Cognitive Approach." The manner in which residents resolve problems is a major concern of administrators. Styles of problem resolution could lead to difficulties within the correctional setting.

It is hypothesized that individuals can serve their own needs and the needs of others best if they develop the proper cognitive problem solving and social skills. This study will include a cognitive training program for participants to learn better problem solving techniques and how to effectively employ them.

Many conflicts arising daily in a resident's life may be resolved by simply knowing when it is best to

accommodate the other party's needs, avoid a specific situation or compromise one's position. I believe it's possible that a cognitive training program can be developed from this research to assist correctional residents in coping with daily challenges more effectively.

52

I am also enclosing a copy of my research proposal which explains my study in greater detail. If you have any questions about my research proposal, please contact me at (616) 247-8983.

Sincerely yours,



Marlene O'Hara

1236 Philadelphia S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

enc.

cc: Dr. Eugene Thompson



**Appendix D**  
**Human Subjects Institutional Review Board's**  
**Application Form**

<b>Western Michigan University</b> <b>Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB)</b> <b>Application Form</b> <i>(All materials must be typewritten to be considered)</i>	
<b>I. BASIC INFORMATION</b>	
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b> <u>Decision-making and the Felony Offender;</u> <u>A Cognitive Approach</u>	
<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR OR ADVISOR</b> <span style="float: right;">Associate</span> Name <u>Eugene Thompson</u> Degree <u>EdD.</u> Title <u>Professor</u> Department <u>Educational Leadership</u> Notification address <u>3512 Sangren Hall</u> Office Phone <u>(616) 387-3839</u> Home Phone <u>(616) 381-3388</u>	
<b>CO-PRINCIPAL OR STUDENT INVESTIGATOR</b> Name <u>Marlene O'Hara</u> Degree <u>MFA, SPADA</u> Title <u>Doctoral Candidate</u> Department <u>Educational Leadership</u> Notification address <u>1236 Philadelphia S.E. Grand Rapids, MI. 49506</u> Office Phone <u>(616) 336-4479</u> Home Phone <u>(616) 247-8985</u> If this is a student investigator, please indicate level of training and involvement in the research: Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> ; Master level graduate <input type="checkbox"/> ; Doctoral level graduate <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting Faculty Research <input type="checkbox"/> ; Thesis <input type="checkbox"/> ; Dissertation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ; Other _____	
<b>OTHER COLLABORATING INVESTIGATORS AND THEIR AFFILIATIONS</b>   	
<b>PROPOSED PROJECT DATES:</b> From <u>August 28, 1994</u> To <u>March, 1994</u> Source or potential source of funding <u>Out of pocket</u> Site(s) of the research activity <u>Alternative Directions Probation Program</u> <u>1706 S. Division Grand Rapids, MI.</u>	

8/93 All other copies are obsolete and cannot be used.

**II. PARTICIPANTS**

Total number of subjects: 00; Number of subjects in the control condition: 00  
 Age Range: 17 - 25; Sex: Female ☐; Male ☒; Both ☐; Number participating 60  
 Other Qualifications: \_\_\_\_\_

Specific Exclusions: \_\_\_\_\_

Source of Participants: August 28 - March, 1994  
 Length of Participation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vulnerable Participants:**

- ☐ Children (any subject under the age of 18) Approximate age \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Mentally retarded persons  
☐ Mental health patients  
     ☐ Check if institutionalized  
☐ Prisoners  
☐ Pregnant women  
☒ Other subjects whose life circumstances may interfere with their ability to make free choices in consenting to take part in research. DESCRIBE: Probationers of 17th Circuit Court sentenced to a residential center.

**III. LEVEL OF REVIEW**

To determine the appropriate level of review, refer to WMU Policy Guidelines for categories of exempted research (Appendix B).

- ☐ **Exempt:** Forward the original application to the Chair of the Department for a cover letter, then forward to HSIRB Chair via RSP along with Chair's letter.  
☒ **Not Exempt:** Forward original application plus 10 copies to HSIRB. If blood products are involved, you must complete and attach the HSIRB collection of blood and blood products form (available in HSIRB office).

**CERTIFICATION/SIGNATURE**

I certify that the information contained in the HSIRB application and all attachments is true and correct. I certify that I have received approval to conduct this research from all persons named as collaborators and from officials of the project sites\*. If this proposal is approved by the Institutional Review Board, I agree to conduct the research according to the approved protocol. I agree not to implement any changes in the protocol until such changes have been approved by HSIRB. If, during the course of the research, unanticipated risks or harm to subjects are discovered, I will report them to HSIRB immediately.

③

P.I./Faculty Advisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

③

Student Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date June 30, 94

\*Letters of approval from project site officials should be included in this approval packet.

Comments (committee members/staff only): \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. HSIRB PROTOCOL OUTLINE:** Prepare a proposal for review by HSIRB that follows the outline below. Alternatively, provide an existing research proposal and indicate next to each header below the page number on which the information may be found within the proposal.

(✓ or page #)

- ☒ **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Includes purpose, research procedure (including what exactly participants will do as part of the study), research design, location and duration.
- ☒ **BENEFITS OF RESEARCH:** Briefly describe the expected or known benefits of the research. This section should indicate benefits specific to the research participant in addition to longer term or more general benefits.
- ☒ **SUBJECT SELECTION:** Describe in detail how you intend to go about contacting and recruiting participants. Attach all written advertisements, posters and oral recruitment scripts.
- ☒ **RISKS TO SUBJECTS:** Describe the nature and likelihood of possible risks (e.g., physical, psychological, social) as a result of participation in the research. Risks include even mild discomforts or inconveniences, as well as potential for disclosure of sensitive information.
- ☒ **PROTECTION FOR SUBJECTS:** Describe measures to be taken to protect subjects from possible risks or discomfort.
- ☒ **CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA:** Describe the precautions that will be taken to ensure the privacy of subjects and confidentiality of information. Be explicit if data are sensitive. Describe coding procedures for subject identification numbers.
- ☒ **INSTRUMENTATION:** All questionnaires, interview scripts, data collection instruments, should be identified and attached. Coding sheets for video-tape or audio-tape and other data collection procedures are required.
- ☒ **INFORMED CONSENT:** A copy of all consent/assent forms must be provided. For all research, regardless of whether or not a signed consent form is required, describe the process by which informed consent will be obtained. If the participant is a child or mentally retarded, explain how the parents/guardians will be contacted for consent and how the researcher will insure that the participant understands to what s/he is assenting. This is especially important if the participant is unable to sign or understand language. For further information on writing consents (assents not covered), see Informed Consent by T. M. Grundner, on reserve at Waldo Library. Refer also to the checklist on back of this page and examples included in the HSIRB packet. Attach a copy of the informed consent and assent (if applicable) form(s). Each participant and/or parent/guardian must be given a signed copy of the consent form at the time of involvement in the study.

# INFORMED CONSENT FORM CHECKLIST

The following information must be included in the informed consent form. Check each of the requirements you have included and sign below, acknowledging that all required content is contained in the consent form. The absence of any of the required information must be satisfactorily justified in a separate, written explanation.

(✓ Here)

- ☒ A header that includes "Western Michigan University, Department of \_\_\_\_\_", the title of the study and the researcher's names. (see example)
- ☒ Language in the form of an invitation to participate AND at a level appropriate for the participant (remembering that the mean reading level in the US is 7th grade).
- ☒ The nature, purpose, duration of the study, including that it is experimental.
- ☒ Procedures to be employed in the experiment—exactly what the participant is expected to do.
- ☒ Risks (hazards, inconveniences, discomforts) the subject may undergo, so far as they are known and how any risks will be minimized.
- ☒ The following statement: "As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participants. If an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or treatment will be made available to the subject except as otherwise stated in this consent form." Any available compensation or treatment should then be specified if appropriate (e.g., alternative treatments to the experimental treatment).
- ☒ Benefits to the subject; state none if none; if general benefits expected, state those.
- ☒ If experiment is therapeutically related, disclosure of alternate procedures the subject might choose.
- ☒ Conditions of participation.
- ☒ How confidentiality will be maintained and any limits to confidentiality.
- ☒ That the participant can withdraw her/his consent to the experiment or discontinue participation in the experiment at any time without prejudice or penalty.
- ☒ Contact person(s). Include the researcher's name and telephone number (students must include faculty advisor's name and telephone number) as well as the following statement: "The participant may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board or the Vice President for Research if questions or problems arise during the course of the study."
- ☒ Place for date and signature of participant; witness line should be included ON! " if required.
- ☒ No language that would absolve the researcher of negligence.
- ☒ If appropriate, that any significant new findings affecting risks will be reported to the participant.
- ☒ If appropriate, circumstances under which the experimenter may terminate one's participation.
- ☒ If appropriate, any additional costs the participant may have to bear.
- ☒ If appropriate, consequences of the participant's withdrawal from the study.
- ☒ If appropriate, the approximate number of participants in the study.
- ☒ If appropriate, debriefing procedures.

I certify that all required information is included in the informed consent form.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date 6-30-98

I certify that some required information has been omitted (justification attached).

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. HSIRB PROTOCOL OUTLINE

**Project Description** Leaders in the American Criminal Justice face serious problems that seem to be escalating. Two incompatible and powerful forces - first an unrelenting rise in offender populations incarcerated and, second the increasing fiscal constraints facing state and local governments - have resulted in a dependence upon research to provide answers to "what works in corrections?" so that dwindling public funds will be used in the most effective manner.

This research will attempt to apply the concept of cognitive restructuring in decision making (which research has identified as an important component in successful programs) to the residents of a probation residential center in order to measure its effectiveness in increasing successful completion rates.

The participants in this experiment will be those consenting offenders referred to Alternative Directions in the months of August, September, and October, 1994. The treatment group will consist of the September referrals, who will receive an intensive one week (10 hours) training program on effective methods of problem solving. This group will be asked to listen to lectures, observe modeling, participate in discussions and role play situations and do written exercises. All three groups will participate in all other Alternative Directions activities, but the August and October referrals will receive no decision-making training.

The type of program termination (successful or unsuccessful) for members of all three groups will then be recorded and the rate of completion for each group determined and compared. Successful completion involves the attainment of objective goals which include earning sufficient productivity points (180) and money for court assessments and independent living (\$1000.00 minimum).

The location of the project will be the Alternative Directions Probation Program in Grand Rapids, Michigan and it will begin on August 28, 1994. Statistics will be collected through March, 1995 (successful completion of the program is generally accomplished in five months) and analyzed.

**Benefits of Research:** Research has indicated that training in cognitive restructuring has been helpful in reducing recidivism rates amongst felony offenders of all ages. This study will attempt to determine if such methods can be used to help residents in Alternative Directions avoid the impulsive behavior that often results in serious misconducts, which in turn, lead to unsuccessful discharges. If so, residents will be able to realize the full benefits of the program and avoid incarceration, thus positively affecting jail overcrowding.

It is also possible that a model program could be developed for use in similar programs and with probationers who are not in residential programs.

**Subject Selection:** I will individually interview each resident of Alternative Directions entering in the months of August, September, and October, 1994. During the interview, the resident will be advised that the study is voluntary and

his decision to take part in or refrain from involvement will not affect his status or treatment at the program. Those not wishing to participate will be excused, while those agreeing to continue will sign an informed consent form.

**Risks to Subjects:** Some residents may find discussions about their thoughts and feelings uncomfortable. Others may be threatened by role-play and/or written assignments.

**Protection for Subjects:** Prior to their participation, I will establish a clear and fair agreement clarifying the expectations of participants. I will also make clear that each individual has the right to decline to participate in any exercise or to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. Information obtained about a research participant during the course of the project will remain confidential.

**Confidentiality of Data:** Using a linkage system, I will substitute numbers for resident numbers, not names, to assure confidentiality. I will be the only person to have access to the "key", which will be locked in my personal safety deposit box. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for three years in a locked file of the principle investigator.

**Appendix E**  
**Human Subjects Institutional Review Board's**  
**Approval to Conduct Research**



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-3899  
616 327 3222

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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Date: October 5, 1994

To: Marlene O'Hara

From: Richard Wright, Interim Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 94-07-04

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Decision-making and the felony offender: A cognitive approach" has been approved under the full category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you must seek specific approval for any changes in this design. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: Oct. 5, 1995

xc Thompson, EDLE

## **Appendix F**

### **Oral Script**

## ORAL SCRIPT

\* Hello, my name is Marlene O'Hara and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University.

Response---

\* During the months of September, October and November, 1994, I will be conducting a research project at the Alternative Directions Residential Probation Program and I need volunteers to participate in the project. Would you be interested in hearing more about the project?

Response---

\* There will be three groups involved in the project. One will participate in a training program and the other two groups will receive no such training and will be used for comparison purposes. Do you understand?

Response---

\* The group selection process will be based upon intake date into Alternative Directions. Do you understand?

Response---

\* If selected to the experimental group, you will meet with Ms. O'Hara and receive training in problem resolution. The program will consist of lectures, group discussions, role playing and discussing the methods others use to resolve problems. Do you understand?

Response---

\* Do you wish to continue the interview?

Response---

\* I want you to realize that by agreeing to be interviewed to hear more about my project does not obligate you in anyway. Do you understand?

Response---

\* I further want you to understand that you have the right to stop the interview at any time. Is that understood?

Response---

\* If you choose to stop the interview, this action will not affect your standing at the program. Is that understood?

Response---

\* If you are comfortable with participating in the interview, would you please sign and date this Informed Consent (1) form.

Response---

\*Thank you.

**Appendix G**  
**Informed Consent Form (1)**

## WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Eugene W. Thompson, Ed.D.

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Marlene O'Hara

## INFORMED CONSENT (1)

I voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Ms. O'Hara concerning a research project she is planning to conduct at Alternative Directions. I understand that I have the right to terminate this interview at any time without prejudice or penalty.

I understand that participation in this interview will not hinder nor help my status at Alternative Directions.

If I have any questions or concerns about this interview, I may contact Dr. Thompson at (616) 387-3879 or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (616) 387-8293.

---

Signature

---

Date

**Appendix H**  
**Informed Consent (2)**

## WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Eugene W. Thompson, Ed.D.

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Marlene O'Hara

## INFORMED CONSENT (2)

I have been invited to participate in a research project entitled, "A Study in Problem Solving and the Felony Offender: A Cognitive Approach." I understand that this research is intended to evaluate the effects of a training procedure. I further understand that this project is Marlene O'Hara's dissertation project.

My consent to participate in this project indicates that I will be assigned to one of three groups. Groups #1 and #3 will receive no training and will be used for comparison purposes. Group #2 will receive a ten hour training program on effective methods of problem resolution.

If selected to the experimental group (group #2), I will meet with Ms. O'Hara and receive training in problem resolution. The program will consist of lectures, group discussions, role playing and discussing the methods others use to resolve problems. I will be asked to meet Ms. O'Hara for these five-2 hr. sessions at the Alternative Directions Probation Program for five successive days of my second week of residence in the program. I understand that everything discussed in the training sessions will be held in confidence.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. If an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or treatment will be made available to me except as otherwise specified in this consent form. I understand that one potential risk of my participation in this project is that I may be upset by the content of the course material. I understand, however, that Marlene O'Hara will arrange for me to see a licensed crisis counselor should I become significantly upset and that she is prepared to make a referral if I need further counseling about this topic. I will be responsible for the cost of therapy if I choose to pursue it.

One way in which I may benefit from this activity is



having the opportunity to learn more effective ways to deal with problems. I also understand that others in the group may learn and benefit from my knowledge and life experiences. Another potential benefit for participation to all group members will be the attainment of information collected during the research.

I understand that this study will not use any personal information about me. The only information collected will be my attendance to the training sessions and the type of discharge I receive from Alternative Directions. This information will be recorded in such a manner as to protect my anonymity. This means that my name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. The forms will all be coded, and Marlene O'Hara will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for three years in a locked file in the principal investigator's laboratory.

I UNDERSTAND THAT PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT WILL NOT HINDER NOR HELP MY STATUS AT THE ALTERNATIVE DIRECTIONS PROBATION PROGRAM.

I understand that I may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may contact either Marlene O'Hara at (616) 247-8983 or Dr. Thompson at (616) 387-3879. I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (616) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research with any concerns that I have. My signature below indicates that I understand the purpose and requirements of the study and that I agree to participate.

---

Signature

---

Date

**Appendix I**  
**Probationer Fact Sheet**

ALTERNATIVE DIRECTIONS RESIDENT  
PROGRAM COMPLETION DATA

Probationer's Code Number \_\_\_\_\_

Group Assignment

1. Training Group \_\_\_\_\_
2. Control Group A \_\_\_\_\_
3. Control Group B \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance to group activity

Session 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Session 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Session 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Session 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Session 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Discharge

Successful \_\_\_\_\_  
Unsuccessful \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Race \_\_\_\_\_

Last School Year Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix J**  
**Student Appraisal of the Course**

**STUDENT APPRAISAL OF THE DECISION-MAKING COURSE**

Thoughtful student reaction can help improve course content and teaching effectiveness. This questionnaire is designed for these purposes. Your assistance is appreciated. Please do not sign your name.

- \_\_\_\_ 1. I have learned a great deal about decision-making.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. I believe I am better able to deal with making difficult decisions now that I have taken this course.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. I believe class time was used well.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Did the instructor know the information presented?
- \_\_\_\_ 5. Was the instructor sensitive towards your needs?
- \_\_\_\_ 6. Was the instructor helpful in getting you involved?
- \_\_\_\_ 7. I would encourage others to take this course.
- 8. What was the best part of this class for you?
- 9. What was the worst part of this class for you?
- 10. What would you change if you could change something about the class?

Additional Comments:

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