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A Formative Evaluation of Washington Prison Animal Programs

Kim Satterfield
Seattle University

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This work and its defense approved by:

Thesis Chair: Dr. Elaine Gunnison

Thesis Member: Dr. Peter Collins

Thesis Member:
Dr. Alex Kigerl Data Scientist,
Washington State Institute for Criminal Justice Research

Thesis Member:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT
901 12th Avenue, P.O. Box 222000, Seattle, WA 98122
Phone: 206-296-6339 Email: mosesnicole@seattleu.edu
www.seattleu.edu/artsci/departments/criminal/

Abstract

With the ever-growing prison population in the United States, it is imperative to continue to examine programs that may foster reductions in recidivism rates. In the minimal observatory studies that have been conducted on animal programs in prison, it has been concluded that these programs have a positive effect on the inmates, prison environment, the animals, and the community. Implementations of these programs are in place nationwide, but thorough research and evaluation of methods and outcomes of these programs remain scarce. The purpose of this thesis is to gather data through interviews about the personal and community impacts of such programs by questioning formerly incarcerated individuals who successfully completed a prison animal program at a correctional facility in Washington State. The goal of the analysis is to understand the current benefits of prison animal programs to assist in future implementations.

Keywords: Corrections, animal-assisted therapy, animal-assisted activities, human-animal interaction programs, prison animal/dog programs, mass-incarceration, rehabilitation

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Chapter 1: Importance of Research to the Field of Criminal Justice

Crime control and subsequent punishment have been a primary goal of society for centuries (Cullen et al., 2011; Garland, 2001; Kraska & Brent, 2011; Miller, 2012; Phelps 2011; Weisburd et al., 2017). Generally, it is more favorable to punish the offender, rather than offer rehabilitation or answer the difficult question of what caused the manifestation of the criminal act. Prison overcrowding has been a long-standing problem in the United States, with minimal effort put forth to reduce it (Cullen et al., 2011; Miller, 2021; Phelps, 2011). Equally important to consider is the realization that many of these individuals will return to society (Cullen et al., 2011; Furst, 2019; Turner, 2007). Although not the primary or sole purpose for implementing prison animal programs, therapeutic and rehabilitative outcomes are common. (Furst, 2015; Strimple, 2003). Much of what is known about prison dog programs (PDPs) today comes from observational studies utilizing anecdotal evidence and self-reports from participants (Deaton, 2005). Studies that have been conducted to date on dog programs in prison have demonstrated a positive effect on the inmates, the prison environment, the dogs, and the community (Antonio et al., 2017; Britton & Button, 2005; Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018; Conroy et al., 2019; Cooke & Farrington, 2016; Flynn et al., 2019; Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Jasperson, 2010; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991; Turner, 2007; Wormer et al., 2017). The current literature suggests that prison dog programs may provide a starting point for reducing inmate populations and recidivism rates among offenders.

Statement of the Problem

The most recent published data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that at the end of 2019, the Department of Corrections had a total of 1,430,800 prisoners nation-wide, – 19,261 of which were housed in a Washington State Correctional facility – while the United

States had an estimated population of 328,239,523 (Carson, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there were 419 prisoners per 100,000 United States residents of all ages (Carson, 2020). Although this is the lowest population the prisons have seen since 1995, the United States still has the highest prison population in the world (Carson, 2020; Cullen et al., 2011). The prison system has grown more than five-fold since the early 1970s (Western & Muller, 2013). Furthermore, at the end of 2019, a total of seven states and the Bureau of Prisons met or exceeded the maximum capacity of their prison facilities, and 21 states had a total number of prisoners in their custody that met or exceeded their minimum number of beds (Carson, 2020). The prison population proliferated in the early 1980s, largely as a result of the War on Drugs and the acceptance of harsh determinate sentencing laws (Cullen et al., 2011; Garland, 2001; Miller, 2012; Western & Muller, 2013), but there has yet been a solid solution to reduce it and minimize the high recidivism rates of offenders. The United States currently accounts for five percent of the world's total population, yet houses one fourth of all prisoners (Jalongo, 2019b).

Overcrowding is not only a problem in the prison system, but in the animal shelters as well. There are over 7,000,000 animals in shelters nation-wide, and of those, it is estimated that about 1.5 million are euthanized each year (Pet Statistics, 2019). PDPs can help save dogs from spending their life in a shelter and from being euthanized. The Prison Pet Partnership (PPP) program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women, for example, saved dogs from the Humane Society that would have otherwise been put down (Deaton, 2005; Furst, 2006). Many dogs need to be rescued, and many dogs require proper training before entering a home as a pet or into a position as a service animal. Furthermore, there is a great community need for therapy and service animals, a need the current structure cannot accommodate (Furst, 2015). The demand

for therapy and service dogs far exceeds the ability of current organizations to fulfill. Training for these dogs, whether for socialization or specialization, requires an ample amount of time and dedication. Inmates in prison facilities have nothing but time to contribute to these dogs, and as Furst (2015) remarks, the pairing makes *a priori* sense. The sheer number of prisoners provides a solution to fill the gap between the need of the community and the means to produce it.

The Human-Animal Bond

For 12,000 years, animals, particularly dogs, have played a fundamental role in the lives of humans (Mims & Waddell, 2016). Furthermore, it has been recognized for thousands of years that domesticated animals provide comfort and other healing qualities (Mims & Waddell, 2016). Domesticated pets play a large role in the lives of humans all across the country. As of 2019, it has been estimated that there are 78,000,000 dogs and 86,000,000 cats in the homes of Americans as pets (Pet Statistics, 2019). The late 18th century marks the first instance of pets being placed into the care of people with mental illnesses at the York Retreat in England (Harkrader et al, 2004; Risley-Curtiss, 2010) with the purpose of enhancing the well-being of the patients by taking advantage of the human-animal bond (Mims & Waddell, 2016). Over a century later, in 1919, it was requested that dogs be used to interact with the patients at the Government Hospital for the Insane in Washington, D.C., marking the first instance of such an experiment (Britton & Button, 2005; Strimple, 2003; Thomas & Matusitz, 2016). In New York in the 1940s, men who were injured during military service worked with farm animals as part of their recovery; notably, the first time animals were utilized in a therapeutic capacity in the United States (Furst, 2006; Thomas & Matusitz, 2016). During this same period, a Yorkshire Terrier named Smokey was adopted and spent the next 12 years comforting physically injured and suffering soldiers during World War II (Mims & Waddell, 2016). Started by David Lee in 1975,

The Oakwood Forensic Center, in Lima, Ohio, was the place of the first successful prison animal therapy program (Deaton, 2005; Mims et al., 2017; Strimple, 2003). The program started when inmates snuck in an injured bird and cared for it. The ward that housed these inmates was home to the most depressed and noncommunicative patients in the institution (Strimple, 2003). A year-long study revealed a 50 percent reduction in the need for medication, reduced violence, and no suicide attempts among the inmates on the ward with animals when compared to inmates on a similar ward but without animals (Britton & Button, 2005; Strimple, 2003).

The Delta Society, an international organization established in Portland, Oregon in 1977, is now one of the leading resources for the human-animal bond and the important role animals can play in the health and well-being of people (Deaton, 2005; Hartwig & Smelser, 2018; Hines, 2003). It is posited that animals are able to provide a unique facilitation of change within an individual, one that cannot be achieved through interactions with other humans (Deaton, 2005; Hines, 2003). The first annotated bibliography on the human-animal bond was published in 1985, by Karen Allen Miller (Deaton, 2005). In 1997, Levinson (the first professional clinician in the United States) described how the inclusion of animals helped develop communication, rapport, and the relationship between the patient and therapist (Mims & Waddell, 2016). Animals can offer love, affection, and unconditional acceptance (Risley-Curtiss, 2010). As Furst (2015, p. 452) explains, “dogs have the ability to provide a non-stigmatizing, non-pharmaceutical alternative treatment intervention.” Dogs provide an alternative to traditional or standard therapeutic methods.

A modern-day example of animal comfort is represented by Errol, who is the 100th courthouse facility dog in the nation (Ellie’s Place, 2021). Courthouse dogs like Ellie (the very first courthouse dog) and Errol primarily sit in on witness interviews and comfort the victim

while they testify in court. This program began in 2004 and was started by Page Ulrey and Ellen O'Neil Stephens, both Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys for King County (Ellie's Place, 2021). In an interview, Page (Errol's handler) remarked, "Errol provides an excellent connection to people; everyone loves him. He brings such a positive energy everywhere he goes. We do a lot of hard work here in the courthouse, and he is fantastic at making our day better (personal communication, October 10, 2019)." Dogs like Errol and Ellie are trained through Canine Companions for Independence (CCI). CCI is a non-profit organization that provides highly trained assistance dogs to people with disabilities (Canine companions for independence [CCI], 2021). Canine Companions for Independence has provided over five thousand assistance dogs to people with disabilities since 1975 (CCI, 2021). Non-profit organizations such as CCI, and Paws with a Cause (which to date, has placed more than 3,000 dogs with clients) provide a valuable service to the community, and prisons can help assist in the venture of non-profit organizations (Paws with a cause, 2018).

Development of Therapeutic Animal Programs

On the broadest level, therapeutic animal programs can be classified as human-animal interaction programs (Fournier et al., 2007). The development of prison animal programs arose from the medical field, where animal-assisted therapy programs are often utilized to address a variety of health issues ranging from depression to mental illness to aging disorders (Furst, 2006; Jasperson, 2010; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 1987). Initially, these programs were referred to as pet therapy or pet-facilitated therapy. They were subsequently classified as animal-assisted activities (AAA) or animal-assisted therapy (AAT) by the Delta Society (Deaton, 2005; Hines, 2003). The Delta Society was the first international non-profit organization to offer comprehensive training and certification of animals and handlers in both

animal-assisted activities (AAA) animal-assisted therapy (AAT) (Jasperson, 2010). As defined by the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations, AAA is the informal interaction and visitation between the human and animal for the purposes of motivation, education, or recreation (Deaton, 2005; Hartwig & Smelser, 2018; Hines, 2003; Kelly & Cozzolino, 2015). These interactions are classified as informal because they are conducted by volunteers who generally do not have a relevant degree (Kelly & Cozzolino, 2015). Although informal, animal-assisted activities operate with specific goals in mind to assist in improving the client's quality of life (Deaton, 2005). Conversely, the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations defined animal-assisted therapy as a formal goal-oriented and planned therapeutic intervention that is facilitated by an individual in the health, educational, or service professional field (Deaton, 2005; Hartwig & Smelser, 2018; Hines, 2003; Kelly & Cozzolino, 2015). Animal-assisted therapy seeks to enhance the participant's ability to interact with others and assist in cognitive and behavioral development (Kelly & Cozzolino, 2015). Studies on vulnerable populations such as youths and adults in correctional facilities have demonstrated AAT to be beneficial to these populations by helping them to build trust or further develop social skills, for example (Kelly & Cozzolino, 2015). The current practice of AAT stems from the techniques of pet therapy that psychologist Boris Levinson developed in the 1960s (Turner, 2007). The most infrequent method utilized, animal-assisted counseling (AAC), specifically involves mental health practitioners in a clinical setting (Hartwig & Smelser, 2018).

In 2006, a professor of sociology and criminal justice, conducted the first and only national study on prison animal programs in correctional facilities with the intention of gaining insight into the details of their operations (Furst, 2006). By distributing a survey to each of the 50 states' department of corrections appropriate staff member, it was discovered that traditionally

the type of model utilized was that where animals are rehabilitated in order to be adopted into a home (Furst, 2006). Furst (2006) classifies this model as the community service model. The second most employed model was service animal socialization, where animals are trained to assist individuals with disabilities or special needs (Furst, 2006). Animal socialization programs include early socialization or final training for assistance dogs who serve individuals with disabilities or provide therapeutic support in other ways (Britton & Button, 2005). A small-scale review found that the three most prevalent types of assistance dog training in correctional facilities include those for guide dogs, seeing-eye dogs and service dogs (Harkrader et al., 2004). Another group of animal programs include visitation programs where a non-profit agency brings the dogs to the prison at a certain time for a specific purpose (Furst, 2006; Smith, 2019). Lastly, there are programs that train dogs in basic obedience so they have a better chance of being adopted and avoid euthanasia (Harkrader et al., 2004), which are known as second chance programs (Britton & Button, 2005). Enhanced training abilities stemming from the work of inmates also help to assist police forces and the military in obtaining working dogs (Furst, 2007; Jalongo, 2019b; Mims et al., 2017).

Prison Animal Programs Today

In current practice, most animal programs are only available to model inmates who have no history of violence towards humans or animals, and often must be infraction-free for a certain period prior to entering the program, and for the duration of the program (Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2011; Harkrader et al., 2004; Smith, 2019; Wright et al., 2020). Acceptance and continuance in these programs is regulated with strict enforcement and uncompromising guidelines. Such a privilege is only available to inmates who behave well, and the safety of the animals in the programs is a top priority. The most recently compiled data indicates there are

approximately 330 active prison animal programs across all fifty of the United States (as well as internationally), although the exact number and extent of programs is unknown (Cooke, 2019). The introduction of prison pet programs may be attributed to Sister Pauline and Dr. Leo Bustad who collaboratively founded the first modern program at the Washington State Correctional Center for Women in Gig Harbor, Washington in 1981 (Britton & Button, 2005; Deaton, 2005; Prison pet partnership [PPP], 2022; Strimple, 2003). This was the first of such programs to be established in Washington State (Harkrader et al., 2004; Owen, 2019). As participants in the program, the female inmates provide training, grooming services, and even boarding for dogs (Deaton, 2005). Sister Pauline and Dr. Leo Bustad expanded the program across 17 different institutions based on the results of the pilot program (Wormer et al., 2017). As of 2019, over 700 dogs had been successfully trained at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (Owen, 2019). PDPs began taking off in the 1990s and at an even higher rate in the early 2000s. Since their inception in 1981, programs have been implemented in minimum to maximum security prisons that house juveniles and adults; males and females; all across the United States. Program objectives range from basic socialization, to simple obedience, to therapeutic in nature, to specialized training for medical and law enforcement purposes. The diversity of programs and placement environments all have one thing in common: they provide a broad range of benefits to the inmates, the dogs, the prison environment, and the community as a whole.

In terms of inmate success, these programs are based on the assumption that a human-animal bond can strengthen the well-being of the individual (Smith, 2019). Dogs can serve as a link to the outside world by providing comfort and affection to the inmate; traits that are characteristically absent in a correctional setting (Turner, 2007). Furthermore, interactions between a human and a dog do not involve language. This may be of particular importance when

considering the inmates previous negative encounters utilizing language (Furst, 2007). The dog will not judge the inmate, but rather help facilitate a more therapeutic interaction session. Research on human-animal interactions has demonstrated improvements in the physical health of individuals (Allison & Ramaswamy, 2016; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al, 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007; HHS, 1987). In addition, these programs help address specific needs of the offender such as psychosocial, emotional and behavioral challenges (Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Flynn et al., 2019; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Jasperson, 2010; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007; Wesely, 2019). By addressing a broad range of issues pertaining to the environment and the inmates, relations between inmates and officers improve and hostility in the prison decreases (Antonio et al., 2017; Britton & Button, 2005; Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018; Conroy et al., 2019; Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Turner, 2007; Wormer et al., 2017). Perhaps most important, and unique to these programs, is the connection that is built between the outside community and the inmates (Andersen et al., 2020; Britton & Button, 2005; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007). Additionally, dog programs can provide vocational skills and training that may be utilized in the real world upon release (Conroy et al., 2019; Han et al., 2021; Jalongo, 2019b; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Strimple, 2003).

Statement of Purpose

Although preliminary results are promising, research examining long-term effects of prison dog programs on inmates are markedly scant (Britton & Button, 2005; Fournier et al., 2007; Thomas & Matusitz, 2016; Wormer et al., 2017). The goal of this thesis then is to add to the existing literature by capturing and examining detailed interview responses regarding the

implementation and aftermath of prison dog program participation in Washington State. The primary purpose of this project is to develop a deep understanding of how the program has affected the lives of the participants post-incarceration. To date, there are no published studies evaluating inmates post-participation to determine long-term benefits of the program. A secondary purpose of this project is to explore and examine data on prison dog program implementation. Ultimately, the supplemental knowledge will help to build the foundation of information on prison animal programs, thus potentially leading to standardization across programs and further implementations. By gaining a deeper understanding of what factors of the program provide the most benefit and to which individuals, adjustments can be made as needed to ensure the highest rates of success. The results of the study could provide insight into what is currently working, what needs improvement, and what additions need to be made; based on responses gathered from those directly affected by such programs. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify if the skills learned in the prison dog program led to increased employment opportunities post-incarceration and if the participants obtained employment in an animal-related field; a step not yet taken by previous researchers (Antonio et al., 2017; Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2019; Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991).

The subsequent chapters set forth the details of the present study. Chapter 2 will present an overview of the literature to provide a picture of dog programs in prisons from their inception to current day; Chapter 3 will outline the methodology, sampling, and procedure of the current study; Chapter 4 will outline the results, and finally, Chapter 5 provides a discussion, conclusion, and implications for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following chapter will examine the current literature regarding prison animal programs; specifically, those that utilize dogs. The summation of the literature provides a comprehensive understating of prison animal programs today. To begin, a historical account of ideologies in the United States towards incarceration will be provided. While the history will not be comprehensive, it will shed light on salient factors that contributed to the current structure and functioning of the criminal justice system. Prison dog programs (PDPs) will be examined through the lenses of rational/legalism and social constructionism to conceptualize their development and expansion. Next, the successes of current programs will be explored; through the perspectives of the inmates/participants, the correctional institution, and the outside community. The exclusion criteria for this review and analysis were twofold. Results from studies with juveniles or animals other than dogs were not included. Additionally, studies were limited to institutions in the United States given the varying social and political climates of other countries.

Historical Framework

The upcoming section will examine the social and historical processes that have influenced and continue to influence the criminal justice system. The 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s were characterized by a rehabilitative ideal (Garland, 2001; Miller, 2012). At the beginning of the 1970s, penal-welfarism and progressive penology were the central structuring elements in the field and formed the basis for most policy proposals, however, by the end of the 1970s, the support for a rehabilitative structure began to collapse (Cullen & Gilbert, 2013; Garland, 2001). In the mid 1970s, the consensus was that rehabilitative efforts had no effect on recidivism and crime rates were increasing due to a diminishing fear of punishment (Cullen &

Gilbert, 2013; Garland, 2001). In 1974, Robert Martinson published his report entitled, 'What Works in Prison Reform.' Martinson believed the treatment model was faulty. Crime rates were high because the fear of punishment was too low (Cullen et al., 2011; Garland, 2001; Weisburd et al., 2017). It was argued that rehabilitative policies bring about a rise in crime, not a reduction; and that reformation of criminals is not feasible (Cullen & Gilbert, 2013; Garland, 2001). In addition, it was claimed that these policies jeopardized democratic values and undermined the rights of the individual (Garland, 2001). Welfare policies came to be seen as an unjustified expense for the taxpayers (Garland, 2001). Martinson stated that the evidence reinforces treatment methods are a failure and rehabilitative efforts do not reduce recidivism (Garland, 2001).

During the 1980s, the War on Drugs along with factors such as the advancement of technology, changing social norms, and shifts in demographics led to the highest increase in crime rates and the prison population in American history (Garland, 2001). There was a steep increase in severity and length of punishments for drug-related charges (Garland, 2001; Western & Muller, 2013). Areas of economic and social disadvantage were disproportionately affected (Garland, 2001). This increase in crime led to the pressing need to change the criminal justice system, which unfolded as the implementation of long and harsh punishments. The goal was to contain the crime problem with forceful tactics. In this fight against the crime wave, came an abrupt societal shift of complete opposition to rehabilitation and the era of retribution was born (Garland, 2001; Miller, 2012). With the growing belief that the rehabilitative ideal was a failure, society (both the liberals and conservatives) began to lose faith in the criminal justice system (Cullen & Gilbert, 2013; Garland, 2001; Miller, 2012). Furthermore, it was claimed that the individualized treatment model was faulty, discriminatory, and inconsistent with the concept of

justice American society has come to understand (Garland, 2001). A new system developed that emphasized incapacitation and retribution (Garland, 2001; Miller, 2012). Determinate sentencing laws (sentences with a predetermined length) came to replace former indeterminate sentencing (sentences that range in length from the minimum to maximum) and by the last quarter of the 20th century, mandatory minimum sentences were adopted in every state and at the federal level (Alexander, 2010; Chen, 2008; Clark et al., 1997; Garland, 2001). From 1993 to 1997, three-strikes sentencing laws which were often coined as 'three strikes and you're out,' were enacted in the federal justice system as well as in 24 states (Chen, 2008; Clark et al., 1997; Sutton, 2013). In order to be considered out, one must have earned three strikes (what constituted or warranted a strike varied by state) in 20 of the states; while seven states also had enhanced sentences for the second strike depending on the offense committed (Chen, 2008). In 1984 in Washington state, the first truth in sentencing laws were enacted (Ditton & Wilson, 1999). These laws mandated the offender serve a majority of their sentenced time (typically 85%) before they are even considered eligible for parole (Ditton & Wilson, 1999). A decade later, in 1993, an offender who was convicted for the third time of certain violent felonies in Washington automatically received a sentence of life in prison without the opportunity for parole (Clark et al., 1997).

The 1980s and 1990s came to be dominated by New Right politics (Garland, 2001). The focus of criminal justice legislation was on reducing the proliferating crime rates. Funding for treatment programs and treatment-oriented research were cut (Garland, 2001). During this era, the public and representatives believed that criminal acts were the fault of the offender due to lack of self-control or the fact that they are inherently criminal, and thus *deserve* to be punished (Garland, 2001). This mentality supported legislation on deterrence and punishment for offenders (Garland, 2001). The goal was to get tough on crime and swiftly dole out punishments. Amidst

the overarching support of retributive harsh punishments, some scholars continued to advocate for rehabilitation and assessment of the individual needs of the offenders (Andrews et al., 1990; Cullen & Gilbert, 2013; Gendreau & Cullen, 1994; Gendreau & Goggin, 1996; Gendreau et al., 1996). It was argued that punitive sanctions would further deprive inmates of their dignity and be less efficient in its crime control methods – compared to the previous rehabilitative approach (Cullen & Gilbert, 2013). Punitive sanctions may in fact have the opposite effect by leading to further unrest and turmoil brought about by worsening conditions and overcrowding, as well as substantially increasing the cost of operations for the Department of Corrections. Furthermore, by utilizing actuarial and prediction tools (risk-assessments), the offender can be properly assessed to determine their individual needs and successful path for rehabilitation, if appropriate (Andrews et al., 1990; Gendreau & Cullen, 1994; Gendreau & Goggin, 1996; Harcourt, 2007). In this way, individualized rehabilitation could be integrated into a system that focused predominantly on punishments and retribution (Gendreau & Cullen, 1994). Throughout the 1990s there was an increase in parole supervision, widening the net of criminal justice involvement and increasing the number of individuals who could recidivate (Western & Muller, 2013). In recent years, crime rates and the prison population have remained stable, – albeit not due to the domineering attack on individuals – and with this plateau, the fear of and need to control crime has decreased as well.

Theoretical Framework

Criminal justice theories offer perspectives through which to explain and understand the policies, practices, and processes of the criminal justice apparatus (Kraska & Brent, 2011). Through this examination one can also understand the role of the actors and entities that comprise the criminal justice system. Furthermore, analysis through a theoretical perspective

seeks to understand and make sense of the crime control mandates that have been and are currently in place. Examining PDPs through the lenses of the rational/legalism and social constructionism perspectives introduced by Kraska and Brent (2011) provides an understanding of the creation and continuation of PDPs despite the retributive history of the American criminal justice system that persists today.

Rational/Legalism on Recidivism

The rational/legal theoretical orientation posits that criminal justice and crime control activity originates from the need of people to be secure from the harmful acts of others (Kraska & Brent, 2011). Members of society place their trust in the criminal justice system to uphold the laws and keep citizens safe (Kraska & Brent, 2011). Thus far, the United States has been unable to control the prison population or reduce the recidivism rates of its offenders. Studies completed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) have found high rates of recidivism among released prisoners. One such study that tracked more than 400,000 prisoners who were released from prison in 2012 in 34 states and found that within three years of release, just over 60 percent had been rearrested (Durose & Antenangeli, 2021). Almost half of those released in 2012 were incarcerated again within five years (Durose & Antenangeli, 2021). In terms of criminal history, forty-three percent of those released in 2012 had 10 or more prior arrests (Durose & Antenangeli, 2021). Another BJS study consisting of a nine-year follow-up period (2005-2014), found that approximately seventy percent of released prisoners were rearrested within three years; approximately eighty percent within six years; and over eighty percent by the nine-year mark (Alper et al., 2018). Washington State Department of Corrections (2021) reports that almost 31 percent of those released in 2017 returned within a three-year period. With this conception in mind, we can ascertain that the growing presence of prison dog programs is, in part, due to the

reduction in recidivism rates they can provide. To date, no studies have comprehensively confirmed the success of recidivism reduction, however, from the anecdotal results to date, it can be inferred that that addressing and targeting specific needs of offenders, the recidivism rates among those individuals decrease (Cooke & Farrington, 2016; Wormer et al., 2017).

Moneymaker and Strimple (1991) conducted one of the earliest evaluations of a prison dog program. The study took place at the Lorton Correctional Facility in Virginia where inmates were permitted to keep pets in the facility (Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991). Interviews with a sample of 98 male participants indicated that the program had a positive effect in terms of their outlook towards others, sense of self-worth, and achievement of a goal (Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991). It is posited that these effects will in turn contribute to a lower recidivism rate among the offenders (Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991). Additionally, only 10 of the inmates (of the 88 for which data was obtained) were rearrested and the remaining 97 percent never recidivated (Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991). During a confidential discussion with the superintendent of a Wisconsin correctional center, it was stated that of the 68 total inmates that participated in the dog training program and were subsequently released, none had reoffended (Strimple, 2003). The Prison Pup Program at a Virginia prison noted a 43 percent decrease in total number of aggressive incidents after the arrival of the puppies (Harkrader et al., 2004). Based on the available literature on PDPs, Britton & Button (2005) suggest recidivism reduction and behavioral infractions are evidenced.

In 2007, Fournier and colleagues conducted a quasi-experimental field study to evaluate how the PenPals shelter dog program affected criminal behavior. This study is significant in that it made comparisons between pretest and posttest scores, and comparisons between a treatment and a control group (Fournier et al., 2007). Non-statistical analyses (due to the small number of

infractions overall) of the results determined that participation in the PenPals program was associated with a reduction in criminal behavior (Fournier et al., 2007). Results in an article on a companion dog-training program in Washington State claims that the average three-year recidivism rate in the state is 28 percent; for inmates who have participated in the program, the rate drops to five percent (Burcham, 2016). In a qualitative study evaluating inmate and staff perceptions of a dog training program, the female inmates in particular felt that the programs were beneficial in reducing recidivism and infractions in the prison (Antonio et al., 2017). There was greater consensus among the inmates than the staff in regards to believing program assisted in reducing recidivism and provided inmates with marketable skills that would benefit them upon release (Antonio et al., 2017). Additionally, several inmates indicated improved social interactions, the development of a connection to the outside world, and consequently, feeling more confident and prepared in obtaining employment post-release (Antonio et al., 2017). Overall, the inmates and staff felt the dog training program provided positive benefits including a reduction in infractions and recidivism rates and an overall improvement of the prison environment (Antonio et al., 2017). Similarly, in a study focusing on infractions rates in 10 of the 12 correctional facilities in Washington State, researchers found that participation in the dog program had a significant decrease in infraction rates compared to no significant change in the group that did not participate in the dog program (Flynn et al., 2019). Notably, the sample consisted of males and females of all security levels; 150 inmates comprised the treatment group and 79 were in the comparison group (Flynn et al., 2019). In the largest study to date on the intermediate effects of prison animal programs, Wormer and colleagues (2017) noted significant reductions in serious infractions, violent infractions, and grievances filed as a result of participation in a Washington prison animal program.

PDPs have the ability to provide cost-effective training for inmates and assist in keeping them from returning to prison (Strimple, 2003). Recidivism reduction will also alleviate the tremendous monetary burden on the entire correctional system and taxpayers (Cullen et al., 2011; Smith, 2019). According to the National Institute of Corrections and the Department of Justice, $80 billion is the annual cost to operate jails and prisons (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Taking into account other factors such as loss of wages, reduced lifetime earnings, eviction costs, and adverse health effects, among many others; there are an additional $923 billion in costs that are not accounted for in official state and federal budgets (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Approximately $500 billion is endured by the families, children, and the community of the incarcerated individuals (McLaughlin et al., 2017). The cost of corrections far exceeds any reasonable amount for the offender; their friends, family, and community; the criminal justice system; and any other involved party.

The costs associated with implementing and running a dog program in prison are relatively low (Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Cooke et al., 2021; Jalongo, 2019b; Strimple, 2003). This is because the facility (jail/prison) and the trainers (inmates) are already available, and the dogs being brought in often come from non-profit organizations (Furst, 2015). Typical costs to run the program include the salary for any professional staff, dog food and any needed supplies (Strimple, 2003). Prison dog programs often rely on volunteers and donations and are, thus, more affordable in comparison to other alternative programs (Jalongo, 2019b). The cost for taxpayers for the Blue Ribbon dog training program in Kansas, for example, is only $0.45 to $1.05 a day (Britton & Button, 2005). The Florida Department of Corrections, like many other correctional facilities, is not responsible for the costs of the dog-training programs; instead, the burden of these costs falls on the affiliates such as the local animal shelter (Cooke et

al., 2021). The first cost-benefit analysis of PDPs was completed by Cooke and colleagues (2021) with the sample consisting of correctional facilities in Florida. First, the recidivism rates of inmates who had been released from a prison in Florida from 2004-2011 were examined. Of the 204,094 total inmates who were part of this sample, 363 inmates had participated in a PDP across 12 institutions (Cooke et al., 2021). Next, the researchers gathered information as to the type, rate, and cost – including both the official cost for the criminal justice system and the unofficial costs that arise, such as those incurred by the victim or society – of offenses that occurred within the five years after participating in the program on the subset group of 363 inmates (Cooke et al., 2021). The projections indicated that for every dollar the criminal justice system spent on dog training programs, $2,877 to $5,353 were saved (Cooke et al., 2021). Although the findings may not be generalizable to the entire country, they do provide an encouraging starting point (Cooke et al., 2021).

PDPs address a plethora of concerns, and this may be why they are the only successful pilot program, thus far, in recidivism reduction. Late modern society requires a solution to reducing the prison population and lowering the recidivism rates among offenders. Prison dog programs provide a promising starting point for rehabilitation and reduction of the exorbitant cost of the correctional infrastructure, while simultaneously providing a desperately needed service to society – pet, companion, therapy, and service dogs. Although recidivism reduction is one factor that can measure success, it should not be the sole factor (Andersen et al., 2020; Miller, 2012; Wormer et al., 2017). Andersen and colleagues (2020) conducted in-depth interviews with 12 formerly incarcerated males to understand their perceptions on successful reentry into society. It was found that success hinged on factors such as stable employment, home ownership, and giving back to the community, rather than desistance from future criminal

activity (Andersen et al., 2020). Relying solely on recidivism measures to determine program effectiveness blatantly ignores other known contributors to recidivism such as lack of basic needs or stable employment that remain persistent problems (Furst, 2019). Rehabilitation and reintegration into society are complex phenomena and should be evaluated using more elaborate measures.

Social Construction of Crime and the Offender

The expansion and acceptance of prison animal programs in the modern era may accordingly be understood through the lens of social constructionism. Crime, and, therefore the offender, is a social construction. Crime is seen as a social artifact in which the political nature of the control of criminals maintains a dominant position in society (Kraska & Brent, 2011). The popularity of social constructionism stems from the contradiction between fact and presentation (Kraska & Brent, 2011). The claim that retribution is the correct course of action within the criminal justice apparatus is in conflict with large prison populations and high recidivism rates. The continually rising incarceration rates contribute to the decline in legitimacy of criminal justice institutions (Garland, 2001; Western & Muller, 2013). When the legitimacy of an institution comes into question, so do its policies and practices. Incarceration rates reached an all-time high in 2008 leading to a decline in support for the harsh treatment of offenders (Western & Muller, 2013).

Fifty years after the spike in prison population numbers, the country has started to examine the correctional model from a new perspective. There seems to be a reemergence of rehabilitation within the correctional system (Miller, 2012). Overt dissatisfaction ultimately leads to reconstruction of a faulty system. What distinguishes the current era of rehabilitation from that prior to the 1980s is the incorporation of unique programs that place dogs in the care of inmates.

These programs build upon evolving ideas in the criminal justice field and question current and former practices. This reevaluation of the system has led to a reconstruction of the offender. The *Second Chance Act* was enacted in 2008 with the intention of providing funding geared towards programs and initiatives that address the specific needs of those reentering into the community such as mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, housing, education and employment (Second chance act, 2018). The purpose was to address the known causes of recidivism while simultaneously increasing public safety and reducing the costs for correctional facilities (Second chance act, 2018). Such programs are in place because it is noted and valued that inmates are people, that they have complex and varying needs, and that the current practices in prison are inhumane and nonfunctional. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly accepted that the causes of crime and recidivism are in fact complex and based on a number of factors internal and external to the offender (Furst, 2011). The ideas of transformation and self-change are becoming central to the discussion of rehabilitation. As stated by Kraska and Brent (2011), criminal justice is a socially constructed reality; this reality assumes that humans create systems of meaning by actively interpreting the world around them.

The technological advancements and growing media outlets in the modern era play a large role in shifting attitudes. Today, non-profit organizations and prisons are advertising their programs in journals, on the news, on program websites, in newspapers and magazines. Documentaries in which inmates describe their experiences in the PDPs firsthand are becoming increasingly common such as *Dogs on the Inside* (2014) and *Prison Dogs* (2017), or the short film *Happy Hounds* (Oden, 2021), for example. Media has a large influence on the understanding and conception of crime (Garland, 2001; Kraska & Brent, 2011). The human love for dogs draws the audience into these success stories, and as a result, the stories become more wide-spread and

advertised. The media platforms in which to find information on dog prison programs are innumerable. Media stories of dog programs help show society that inmates are people, with the same needs and emotions as those who reside outside of the prison. Further community engagement between the worlds inside and outside of the prison will continue to shift the societal perception of the offender in a more positive direction. The expansion of knowledge about PDPs has assisted in the implementation, expansion; and can, in the future, assist with enhancing and developing standardization in their practice.

PDPs are becoming an increasingly popular method of rehabilitation and acting as a resource to assist with the community need for services (Deaton, 2005; Furst, 2015; Mims et al., 2017; PPP, 2022; Strimple, 2003; Wisconsin Academy for Graduate Service Dogs, 2021). These programs operate at a low cost to the prison, assist non-profits in the work they do for the community, all while helping to reduce the prison population and decrease the cost the correctional infrastructure bears. The acceptance of these programs is growing with the shifting societal view of the offender, their media presence, and their subsequent growing support. PDPs are relatively simple to implement since the participants (inmates, dogs, and non-profit employees) and facility (the prison) are already in place.

Overview of Select Modern-Day Programs

In 1993, Project POOCH (Positive Opportunities, Obvious Change with Hounds) was founded at the Oregon Youth Authority's McLaren Juvenile Correctional Facility (Deaton, 2005; Harkrader et al., 2014). This program allows incarcerated youth to provide obedience training to prepare formerly unwanted dogs for adoption into a family and was one of the first programs to pair juveniles and abused or abandoned dogs (Deaton, 2005; Harkrader et al., 2014; Strimple, 2003). In 1996, the Pilot Dog Program in Lima, Ohio was initiated to provide free guide dogs for

the blind (Deaton, 2005). Just a year later, in 1997, Gloria Gilbert Stoga founded Puppies Behind Bars in New York. Here, the first five inmates initially trained dogs that were rejected by official guide-dog training schools, and since has provided basic obedience training for dogs (Harkrader et al., 2004). Maine's Downeast Medium-Security Correctional Facility followed suit soon after in 1999, implementing their program where puppies donated by breeders are trained for one year by the inmates and then placed with a disabled person in the community (Deaton, 2005). The last noteworthy, although certainly not least, program of the 1990s is the partnership between Ellsworth Correctional Facility – a medium-security men's prison – and CARES (Canine Assistance Rehabilitation Education and Services), which began in 1999. This partnership allows the puppies to receive training for 12-18 months by the inmates. At the end of the training, the puppies are then returned to CARES to be placed with a recipient (Britton & Button, 2005). Also located in Kansas, the Topeka Correctional facility which houses female inmates of differing security levels, is home to two prison dog programs for either obedience or future canine work (Britton & Button, 2005).

In 2001, The Indiana Canine Assistant and Adolescent Network (ICAAN) was founded by Dr. Sally Irvin (Turner, 2007). ICAAN trains and places service animals in Indianapolis, Indiana (Turner, 2007). This program was initiated at a medium-security juvenile correctional facility and has since expanded to several institutions that house both adolescents and adults, males and females (Turner, 2007). In the same year, the Pen Pals Program at James River Correctional Center in Virginia was established. Pen Pals trains unwanted dogs from public shelters to turn them into adoptable pets and save them from euthanasia (Deaton, 2005). The following year, the California Institute for Women initiated the Prison Puppy Program. In this program inmates train service dogs for people with disabilities (Minton et al., 2015). Notably,

this was the first correctional facility in California to have a prison dog training program (Minton et al., 2015). Also, in 2002, the Prison Pup Program was created at Bland Medium-Security Correctional Center in Virginia. The inmates here train puppies to become service dogs (Deaton, 2005). Gayle Woods founded the Second Chance Prison Canine Program in 2003 at the medium-security Florence Correctional Center in Arizona where service dogs are trained (Deaton, 2005). In 2004, A.D.O.P.T. (Animals Depend on People Too) partnered with the Ohio Department of Corrections prison dog program at the Correctional Reception Center in Orient, Ohio (Animals Depend on People Too [ADOPT], 2019). The inmates in this program spend 24 hours a day with their dog (ADOPT, 2019). Homeless dogs are taught manners, basic commands, and are socialized with the inmates and other individuals present in the facility (ADOPT, 2019). A pilot animal-assisted therapy program was developed in 2008 for female inmates with mental illnesses and was implemented in Utah State Prison (Jasperson, 2010). The Missouri Department of Corrections founded Puppies for Parole in 2010 (Puppies for Parole, n.d.), and in 2011, the Arkansas Department of Corrections founded Paws in Prison (Paws in Prison, 2019). Another program that saves shelter dogs by means of rehabilitation was founded in 2016 in Bakersfield, California and is known as Marley's Mutts Pawsitive Change Prison Program (Pawsitive Change, 2019).

Success of Current Programs

A summation of the many positive effects these PDPs have had on the individual participants, the prison facility, and the outside community will be presented in the following sections. Results available from current research are derived from studies that contain small sample sizes and fail to utilize an experimental design.

Program Participants

Dogs have been shown to have tremendous benefits when it comes to both the physical and psychological/emotional health of an individual (Allison & Ramaswamy, 2016; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007; HHS, 1987; Wesely, 2019). Inmates attain a plethora of benefits by participating in the PDP and interacting with the canine(s). One psychological study determined that patients experienced an 82 percent decrease in negative symptoms; and a particular case noted that only one week spent with the dog was enough to decrease anxiety levels and insomnia (Mims & Waddell, 2016). The effects of training service dogs on women incarcerated in a maximum-security wing was investigated in California utilizing a sample of 30 inmates (Minton et al., 2015). Many of the women who participated in the study were charged with varying degrees of murder (Minton et al., 2015). Through semi-structured interviews that lasted one to one and a half hours, it was determined that participation in the dog training program positively influenced the physical, emotional, and psychological health of the inmates (Minton et al., 2015). Specifically, benefits included a decrease in stress due to refocusing priorities and weight loss, which favorably affected underlying conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure (Minton et al., 2015).

PDPs have contributed to helping further the inmate's sense of responsibility, patience thresholds, an increase in self-esteem and confidence and a more positive self-identity (Allison & Ramaswamy, 2016; Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Furst, 2007; Harkrader et al., 2004; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Turner, 2007; Wesely, 2019). Wesely (2019) examined the perceptions men held about masculinity in the context of current society through focus group responses. Masculinity is tied to one's sense of self and, thus, can be adapted to reframe one's identity (Wesely, 2019). A total of 28 inmates participated in the focus groups,

which lasted approximately two hours (Wesely, 2019). Participation in the dog program allowed the men to develop more authentic feelings and set aside the rigid masculinity that is expected from society, and in particular, the correctional institution (Wesely, 2019). The inmates began focusing on the dogs and the responsibilities that come along with caring for a dog, instead of having the time to potentially cause trouble. In doing so, the men shifted their focus as to what was important to them: the dogs rather than their image (Wesely, 2019).

A reduction in negative feelings such as anxiety, stress and loneliness have resulted from participation in PDPs (Flynn et al., 2019; Jasperson, 2010; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007). In addition, participation in these programs have led to a development in empathy, compassion, and hope among the inmates (Conroy et al., 2019; Flynn et al., 2019; Han et al., 2021; Smith, 2019; Wesely, 2019). Through the development of these emotions, the incarcerated persons found a new purpose (Han et al., 2021; Smith, 2019). The relationship between the dog and the inmate begins easily because all the dog has to offer is unconditional love with no judgement (Conroy et al., 2019; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019). Regardless of the type or level of complexity of the PDP, the incarcerated person can develop a sense of purpose and accomplishment while learning responsibility with a specific goal to work towards. The prison environment itself does not offer chances for personal growth through goal-directed behavior.

Correctional Facilities

Research has revealed that participants in PDPs further develop their communication skills, thus, leading to more prosocial interactions (Antonio et al., 2017; Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018; Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Turner, 2007). Turner (2007) found that inmates developed communication skills through the

need to clearly communicate with their dog. Additionally, the inmates in the assistance dog training program wanted to come together to help as many dogs as possible, leading to the expansion of teamwork (Turner, 2007). The women participating in a prison dog program where preliminary training for explosives detection canines is conducted claimed that relationships with their family members were also improving (Furst, 2007). Families of the participants enjoyed hearing about and seeing the in-training canines and witnessing the personal growth the inmates were experiencing throughout the training process (Furst, 2007).

Interactions between incarcerated persons and correctional staff in facilities with PDPs became more frequent and less hostile and, in many cases, the overall atmosphere of the prison improved (Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2007; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Turner, 2007; Wormer et al., 2017). The dogs appear to have a calming effect on the prison environment which in turn facilitates a decrease in tension levels (Turner, 2007). Participants in the Prison Pup Program discussed the support and fondness that developed between the dogs and the correctional officers (Minton et al., 2015). The prison counselor/puppy coordinator at the Bland Correctional Facility stated that the entire facility was benefiting from the presence of the dogs (Harkrader et al., 2004). There was an overall increase in morale of the inmates, correctional staff, and administrators (Harkrader et al., 2004). Not only do most individuals enjoy the presence of the canines, they also come together for this reason to work collaboratively or interact in a more positive way (Conroy et al., 2019).

Beyond Prison Walls

In the same way, dogs have the ability to bridge the gap between the correctional population and the outside community. This can include those who are involved in the dog program, the other inmates and staff in the facility, or members outside of the institution (Han et

al., 2021). Through a collaboration with "KUOW" (a non-profit radio news organization based in the Pacific Northwest) and "What's Next Washington" (an organization comprised of formerly incarcerated individuals and their allies) a small group of the public – including the author – had the opportunity to sit down and learn first-hand about the experiences and hardships suffered upon release for prison. Results from workshops such as the "Ask A…" program run by Ross Reynolds in Washington state demonstrate the impact a simple discussion and interest in the life of a formerly incarcerated individual can have (Harris, 2019). These workshops provide a link to the community between populations that would not normally come into contact with one another and provide evidence that these interactions can be advantageous for both populations. Similarly, interviews conducted on offender perspectives in Washington revealed that trust from a Community Corrections Officer was the "single most constructive thing" they could do for the benefit of the offender (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013, p. 127).

An opportunity to connect with and give back to the community in a positive and impactful way is a common sentiment among PDP participants (Andersen et al., 2020; Britton & Button, 2005; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007). Britton and Button (2005) conducted interviews with 38 men at a medium security facility with the aim of learning about their perceptions, motivations, challenges, and benefits in regard to the PDP (Britton & Button, 2005). Among the top three motivators to join the program was the ability to give something back to the community (Britton & Button, 2005). The Ellsworth Correctional Facility is one institution that holds graduation ceremonies which allow the trainers to interact with the recipients of the dogs they trained (Britton & Button, 2005). These interactions also provide updates on how the dog is doing post-training (Britton & Button, 2005). This connection and integration into the community appears to be a feature

unique to prison animal programs when compared with other vocational or alternative programs that are generally offered in correctional institutions (Britton & Button, 2005). This is in line with prior research indicating the need for transitional programs that help bridge the gap between the current or former incarcerated persons and the community (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013).

Other PDPs encourage the participants to create a journal documenting the time spent in the facility (Furst, 2007). Items in these journals could include photos of the dog dressed up for a holiday, or a list of likes/dislikes the dog has (Furst, 2007). These journals are given to the new owners when they receive the dog (Furst, 2007). Results from a qualitative evaluation of an Indiana prison animal program yielded the following statement from a program participant, “It’s just really a pleasure to know that even though I’m incarcerated, I’m still able to participate and I guess even serve the community. That’s very gratifying” (Turner, 2007, p.40). One member of the Prison Pup Program reported that even though they are serving a life sentence without the possibility of release, giving back to the community and doing something of value with their time is rewarding (Minton et al., 2015). Inmates who do not have the opportunity to reintegrate into society can utilize their time to benefit others and improve their own state of well-being.

Providing the opportunity for incarcerated persons to participate in PDPs increases the number of service and therapy dogs available for those in need. Downeast Correctional Facility in Maine houses a year-long training program that prepares canines to serve those in the community with disabilities (Deaton, 2005). Similarly, Branchville Correctional Center in Indiana operates an extended service dog training program to prepare canines for their placement with children and teens after a year or longer of preparation (Deaton, 2005). The contribution of the inmates at California Institution for Women reduced the waiting time for a service dog from two years to just a few months (Minton et al., 2015). Since the founding of the Prison Pet

Partnership Program, over 700 dogs have been successfully trained and placed with individuals in need of service or therapy dogs, or as pets (PPP, 2022). PDPs that assist in the training and certification of service, therapy, and companion dogs provide a vital service to those with disabilities. One group that benefits greatly from additional trained service dogs are veterans. Post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) is common among veterans, yet, the military does not officially recognize canines to assist with PTSD (CCI, 2021; Furst, 2015). PDPs are one way to mediate the need for more service dogs. The Wisconsin Academy for Graduate Service Dogs postulates the average waiting time nationally to acquire a service dog is one to two years (2021).

Extending beyond the connection built with the community, incarcerated persons participating in PDPs have a unique opportunity to gain vocational skills that can be utilized upon reentry. Interviews with formerly incarcerated individuals (n=21) revealed the inclusion of "real-world applicable skills" that can be utilized upon reentry are fundamental in easing the transition back into society (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013, p.139). Research has consistently demonstrated lower rates of education among the incarcerated population; as well as the adverse effects lack of education and training can have when seeking stable employment (Garland, 2001; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Gunnison et al., 2016; Minton et al., 2015; Western & Muller, 2013). Requirements of finding employment that are often overlooked are the abilities to draft a resume or job application, conduct oneself in an interview or the knowledge to integrate in a technologically dominated world (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013). A sample of community corrections officers (n=19) were also interviewed as part of the same research project involving the 21 formerly incarcerated individuals, and one officer similarly indicated that the acquisition of job skills for offenders is vital (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013). Inmates who participated in the

Paws and Stripes college program felt they acquired skills that would be valuable to future employment (Mims et al., 2017). Specifically, participants acknowledged potential employability working with animals (Mims et al., 2017). Eighty-seven percent of the 30 total inmates in the Prison Pup Program study said participation in the program led to new goals in their lives, including the possibility of working in an animal-related field (Minton et al., 2015). Interviews with program staff representing 20 PDPs revealed that inmates in these programs learn skills ranging from pet first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to improved literacy skills as a result of writing reports and journals (Han et al., 2021). It was posited that the wide range of skills acquired in PDPs help prepare the participant in obtaining and maintaining stable employment upon release (Han et al., 2021). New Leash on Life participants have the option to take a Veterinary Assistant course, given that they at minimum have a GED and at least 18 months remaining on their sentence – to ensure they have time to obtain all required knowledge (Conroy et al., 2019). The uniqueness of this recent opportunity for women to earn certifications and the assurance of stable employment cannot be overemphasized. In the past, most women's facilities offered programs in cosmetology/hairdressing, basic office work, telemarketing/customer service, sewing, or homemaking, if any programming at all; and education in women's prison is far from a priority (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Gunnison et al., 2016). The scant programs that are offered in women's facilities are not due to an overarching budget issue, as evident in the availability of programs in men's facilities that include welding, electronics, construction, tailoring, plumbing, and college education (Belknap, 2007). Not only do men's prisons provide far more options, these options provide training for employment that is consistently more stable, provides a higher salary, and comes with minimal restrictions for those leaving prison (Belknap, 2007; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Gunnison et al., 2016). Women

leaving prison have found that training provided during incarceration for cosmetology, for example, cannot be utilized upon release due to their criminal history barring them from the field of work (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Gunnison et al., 2016). Furthermore, these programs provide opportunities for individuals regardless of class, race, and ethnicity. It is of note that the no country in the world imprisons so many of its racial or ethnic minorities as does the United States (Alexander, 2010).

According to the Washington State Department of Corrections (2022), at one point, all 12 facilities in Washington State had an operating prison animal program; the first, and notably the first in the country, began in 1981 at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW). Both the Airway Heights Corrections Center and Clallam Bay Corrections Center no longer offer a PDP program; operations were halted in 2020 due to COVID-19 and have yet to resume (Washington State Department of Corrections, 2022). The 1981 pilot program is known as the Prison Pet Partnership today and continues to operate at the WCCW in Gig Harbor, Washington (PPP, 2022). In 1996 the program expanded beyond training to include grooming and boarding services (Jalongo, 2019b; PPP, 2022; Strimple, 2003). Participants must first complete a 12-week course prior to becoming a kennel attendant (Jalongo, 2019b). Inmates have the opportunity to pursue a certificate through the International Boarding and Pet Services Association (Jalongo, 2019b). Furthermore, through the grooming program several certifications can be earned, up to a master groomer certificate, made possible by the partnership with the International Professional Groomers' organization (Jalongo, 2019b). Two years of participation is the minimum requirement to allow for adequate training in pet care and grooming (PPP, 2022). Nationally, most prison dog programs involve male inmates rather than female (Furst, 2006). Perhaps the most unique aspect about the Prison Pet Partnership Program at the WCCW, is that its founding

occurred in a women's prison, rather than in a men's facility (Cooke, 2019). Traditionally, programs are first developed in a men's prison and then later somewhat adapted to implement in a women's prison (Cooke, 2019).

Women and Crime

The vast majority of extant research in the field of criminal justice has utilized males for the sample populations (Akers et al., 2017; Cullen et al., 2018). Subsequent legislation and program implementations have derived policies based on the findings of these male-dominated studies; and have aimed to serve the male prison population (Akers et al., 2017; Cullen et al., 2018). Little consideration was put towards the potential differences between males and females and instead, researchers and practitioners designed programs for males, based on research utilizing males, and conducted by males, and simply tried to implement the same model in female prisons (Belknap, 2007). Recently, criminal justice research has seen a shift towards investigating the unique needs and challenges that women face during incarceration and reentry into society (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Helfgott & Gunnison, 2020). Part of this shift in focus may be attributed to the passing of the federal level *Violence Against Women Act* in 1994, as well as the inception of the journal entitled, "Violence Against Women" in 1995; both of which drew attention to the longstanding issues females faced in and out of the criminal justice system (Belknap, 2007). Research pertaining to women is of grave importance when considering the 700 percent increase that has occurred over the last 30 years in the female inmate population nationwide (Cowan, 2019).

One important consideration is that women are more likely than men to experience domestic violence (Belknap, 2007; Minton et al., 2015). It has been estimated that globally, about 30 percent of women suffer this type of violence throughout their lifetime (Both et al.,

2019). Likewise, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) states that about 20 percent of women reported having suffered severe physical violence at the hand of an intimate partner as well as having experienced sexual violence. To make matters worse, intimate partner violence (whether physical, sexual, or psychological) remains one of the most under-reported crimes (Belknap, 2007). Female survivors frequently feel shame and guilt and develop issues with depression and self-blame (internally), whereas men generally respond to the stresses of life with anger (externally) (Belknap, 2007; Gunnison et al., 2016). Women who have experienced domestic violence and sexual assault frequently enter the criminal justice system as a result of their victimization (Belknap, 2007; Both et al., 2019; Cowan, 2019; Gullapalli et al., 2017; Gunnison et al., 2016; Minton et al., 2015). Means of escaping this victimization often lead to illegal avenues (Belknap, 2007). Given that abuse may occur in the family home or at the victims' own place of residence, both escape from the abuse and housing in general become substantially more complicated (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013).

Trauma, mental health issues, and post-traumatic stress have consistently been shown to motivate drug related offenses and prostitution (Both et al., 2019; Cowan, 2019). The *Federal Welfare Law* enacted in 1996 enforced a prohibition on any form of welfare benefits (i.e., cash assistance and food stamps) indefinitely for individuals who had been charged with drug-related offenses (Gunnison et al., 2016; Major provisions of the welfare law, 2019). These illegal avenues may also be pursued due to coercion from an abusive partner (to sell drugs or enter prostitution) or retaliation against an abusive partner may lead to incarceration of the survivor (Belknap, 2007). Complicating female victimization even more, society tends to judge women and especially mothers in a much harsher manner than they would the male counterpart when it comes to substance use (Belknap, 2007). Belknap (2007) attributes this stigma towards women

offenders, in particular, to the differences in rules and expectations society holds for men and women (the gender differences); as compared to sex differences, which are biological. Correctional facilities that lack rehabilitation and treatment programs contribute to the further victimization of a vulnerable population (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018; Cowan, 2019). Failure to address these underlying issues will result in an endless cycle of recidivism.

Women are also more likely than men to be the primary caregivers and financial supporter of a young or adolescent child at the time of incarceration (Belknap, 2007; Gunnison et al., 2016). Men are treated less harshly by society than women when a child is left behind due to the prison sentence (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013). The disruption of the bond between mother and child can have lasting effects for both parties making it critical for correctional facilities to offer programming geared specifically towards mothers (Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013). This bond is further strained by the geographical isolation due to the limited number of women's facilities per state; traveling a far distance may not be feasible for family members or friends due to financial or other constraints (Belknap, 2007; Gunnison et al., 2016). If obtaining or reestablishing custody of a child is an option, it requires proof of stable housing and employment (Belknap, 2007). This becomes exceptionally difficult when the choice is between affordable housing (that likely does not allow a child, or restricts tenancy to non-offenders) or being required to pay a high cost for housing and thus being deemed financially unstable (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Gunnison et al., 2016). *The Adoption and Safe Families Act* enacted in 1997 terminates parental rights if the child spent at least 15 months in the foster care system (Gunnison et al., 2016). When examining the unique perspective of offenders, researchers found that some women saw their child as a transformative moment, while others felt unprepared for their new and sudden role of motherhood (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013). The

sentences women serve are generally shorter due to the conviction of less severe crimes compared to their male counterparts (Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018). The short time spent incarcerated may as well be utilized to improve parenting skills.

The Parenting, Prison, and Pups program engages women through the use of specially trained service dogs whose handlers are licensed mental health professionals (Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018). Researchers found a significant decrease in general and parenting-related stress, along with a more positive outlook and an overall increase in self-esteem by utilizing a pretest and posttest, quasi-experimental design among 10 program participants (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018). Women in this program noted an improved relationship with their families through means of effective communication (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018).

Conclusion

The totality of research on PDPs in the United States has demonstrated a multitude of positive benefits: (1) reduction of recidivism rates and associated costs for the Department of Corrections; (2) more humanitarian perspective towards incarcerated individuals; (3) improvements to the mental, physical and psychological health of the participants; (4) improved prison atmosphere; (5) bridging the gap between the community and the inmates; and (6) vocational skills to assist with stable employment upon reentry. Although much of the aforementioned research has been conducted on small sample sizes and relied on interview or questionnaire responses, positive and beneficial results appear to be a reoccurring theme. In addition, anecdotal evidence coupled with a cost-benefit analysis conducted by Cooke and colleagues (2021) indicate these programs operate at a low cost to the prisons. There are, however, currently no studies examining the long-term effects participation in a PDP may have following reentry into society (see Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991). More specifically, it is not

yet known what effects the participation has on future employment in general, and future employment in an animal-related field. The current study will attempt to fill this gap in the literature by obtaining in-depth and first-hand information from those who have completed a PDP in Washington State and have since been released from custody to determine the outcome of future employment. Chapter 3 will outline the methodological details of the study, the sample, and procedures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To better understand the personal and community impacts of prison animal programs in Washington State, this study utilized semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated individuals who completed an animal program at a Washington correctional facility. The extant literature on prison animal program (PDP) outcomes is negligible, thus, additional qualitative data on the long-term impacts of PDPs will help to fill the gap. In addition, evaluation of employment outcomes, specifically, the likelihood of working in an animal-related field upon release extends beyond current data obtained by former studies. As noted by Belknap (2007), qualitative data is not necessarily preferrable or 'better' in some way compared to quantitative data, rather, it is a different type of data, and also provides the starting point to quantitative analysis. One cannot know which quantitative variables need to be studied, without having first obtained extensive data provided by qualitative inquiries (Belknap, 2007; Patton, 2015). Moreover, individual stories and experiences provide an understanding of those who have experienced the program firsthand (Jalongo, 2019a).

Participants

The sample consisted of three individuals who had participated in a prison animal program at one of the Washington State correctional facilities and were subsequently released and not under Washington State Department of Corrections supervision. The entirety of the sample participated in the Prison Pet Partnership Program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. Upon release, participants were located in Washington state. All were female (n=3) and confined to a multi-level security facility. The mean age of participants was 39 with the youngest participant age 35 and the oldest age 44 when they began the interview process. The race/ethnicity of the participants was white (66%) and black (33%). Length of time since release

ranged from one to five years. The educational background of the participants included a bachelor's degree, a certificate in animal behavior, a planned master's degree in public administration; a bachelor's degree in gender, women, and sexuality in progress; and lastly a bachelor's degree in social psychology under way. Participants were formerly incarcerated for (1) second degree attempted murder; (2) second degree murder and conspiracy to commit robbery; and (3) first degree murder with a deadly weapon enhancement. These charges incurred a mean sentence length of 19 years, with a range from 12 to 23 years. Of the total years sentenced (57.75), a collective 49 years were served. One participant served the entirety of their sentence; one participant won an appeal reducing the sentence by 15 months and then later was granted clemency resulting in another reduction of 5 years; and the last participant was released early due to the recent *Senate Bill 6154*. This bill allows a petition to be filed on behalf of the inmate for reconsideration of past sentences dependent upon mitigating circumstances or new laws that have developed since the original sentence (Washington State Legislature, 2019). Work history prior to entering the prison consisted of hospitality, food service, bartending, telemarketing, and other similar customer service jobs; these positions constituted a small portion of overall employment experience. During incarceration participants worked in a variety of departments including the embroidery shop, the kitchen, photography, as a teacher's assistant (TA) for GED courses, as an assistant for the trade apprenticeship program, and with PPP as a clerk, learning animal care, grooming, and training of dogs for service and adoption. Employment positions post-incarceration were comprised of a law enforcement civilian position in an outreach capacity, a certified yoga instructor, and dog grooming. Notably, all three participants worked as a dog groomer upon release. All of the aforementioned data was obtained directly by the researcher from the declaration of the participant during the interview. The

research population was drawn from a relatively small pool, encompassing up to a maximum of 12 facilities. Additionally, the number of participants in PDPs is minute compared to the overall facility population, resulting in a further restricted population from which to obtain participants.

Instrument

The interview guide utilized in this study consists of 25 questions addressing the thoughts and experiences of those who participated in a prison animal program, as well as former sentences. The first three questions inquired about background (i.e., education, former charges). Next, questions four through nine examined the details of the program (i.e., extent of participation required). The following set of questions (10-16) seek to understand the individual's experience in the program (i.e., motivations, goal attainment, expectations). Recommendations and suggestions were obtained by questions 17-19 and experience with the staff and other inmates are examined in questions 20-22. Finally, questions 23 and 24 sought to understand outcomes upon release and question 25 inquired as to any additional thoughts or comments. Additionally, demographics on age, race, and gender were collected (See Appendix A). Rationale for development of the interview questions stemmed from prior qualitative research on prison animal program experiences and was guided by the aims of this project (i.e., employment outcomes post-release). Interviews were typically 35 minutes in length, ranging from 30 to 40 minutes.

Procedure

Prior to the onset of the study, protocols were formally submitted to and subsequently approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Seattle University. Primary data in this study were derived from responses obtained through one-on-one interviews consisting of the researcher and a single participant. Virtual interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom

video (with participant consent). Furthermore, participants were instructed to participate in a confidential setting or make arrangements to ensure non-participants cannot overhear and/or be recorded inadvertently. The researcher administered these interviews in a private office setting. The time period that interviews were conducted began April 2022 and ended August 2022. The interviews were semi-structured; semi in that additional information presented by the participant were included in the notes and structured by employing a series of 25 consistent questions. No secondary data was utilized for the current research.

To begin the recruitment process, the sample starting point disseminated a flyer providing a brief summation of the study and the contact information of the researcher (see Appendix B). The researcher was not provided contact information for referral, rather the interested party contacted the researcher with the information provided by the third party. Those who elected to participate in an interview were asked to provide verbal consent indicating they understand the study's purpose and their needed involvement. Furthermore, potential participants needed to verify they understood participation is voluntary and consent may be withdrawn at any time without penalty of any kind. The researcher affirmed that there were no further questions or clarifications needed before proceeding to the interview. Following an introduction by the researcher, each question on the interview guide was addressed in numerical order and discussed one at a time. In addition to the recording via Zoom, the researcher recorded answers and additional notes on the interview guide word document on a computer. To protect participant privacy no names were recorded and instead, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. Additionally, no characteristics that could lead to a deduction of the participant's identity were reported. All research materials were stored utilizing a two-step authentication process; via Dropbox Business and kept on a password protected computer. In conclusion, participants were

given a verbal debriefing, thanked for their time and contribution, and dismissed if no further questions arose.

To obtain additional participants upon completion of the first interview, the researcher recruited additional interview participants through the utilization of snowball sampling (Patton, 2015). The first interviewee provided information to another potential interviewee about the study and the contact information for the researcher. The sample pool was restricted by a variety of factors. The first, only twelve correctional facilities exist in Washington State, and of those, it has been confirmed that at least two of those no longer offer a PDP. Furthermore, participation in PDPs is not available to the entire facility population. Beyond, the researcher only had access to individuals who completed a PDP, and not those who were in progress or have since been released but are still in the custody of the Department of Corrections (i.e., Electronic Home Monitoring). Significant time and monetary restrictions stemmed from the prison administration, specifically their inability to allow student researchers access to the institution or any accompanying records. Ultimately, the population from which the sample was selected from is significantly limited. All participants who met the requirements of (1) successfully completing a prison animal program at a Washington State correctional facility, and (2) release from incarceration with no pending charges or sentences were included in the sample if they were willing to participate. No monetary cost was required of the participants, nor were they provided any incentives, monetary or otherwise.

Analyses

Following the completion of data collection, an overall analysis was conducted based on individual interview answers and answers across and within the sample. This analysis was conducted in accordance with guidelines and suggestions set forth by Patton (2015). Similarities,

differences, and patterns were determined. Coding categories emerged from results of the interviews rather than having been predetermined prior to data collection. These categories were unveiled through a line by line examination of the notes and statements in the recorded interview sessions. Organization was based on a color-coding system to represent the distinct themes. This process was repeated on two separate occasions to ensure accuracy of the coded content. Due to the small sample size, the researcher opted to code results by hand, rather than utilizing qualitative analytic software. The data which was designated with a particular color were subsequently placed in table format to determine the extent and quantity. Having identified the scope, another line-by-line examination was conducted to locate quotes that were characteristic of the identified themes. Training and preparation of qualitative data analysis and coding were obtained through the fulfillment of graduate level courses (i.e., Criminal Justice Theory, Qualitative Research Methods, Advanced Research Methods) and graduate research assistantships by the researcher. Next, chapter 4 will provide a detailed account of the results obtained through the aforementioned study protocols.

Chapter 4: Results

The objective of this study was to gather primary data from formerly incarcerated individuals who have successfully completed a prison dog program (PDP) at one of the twelve prison facilities in Washington State. The goal was to obtain detailed information on these programs and explore the effects they have on participants post-incarceration. Presently, no research on employment outcomes or long-term effects of PDPs on participants have been published. Responses from program participants were procured through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher over Zoom, lasting on average 35 minutes. Content of the interviews were examined twice, line-by-line, to extract qualitative themes, patterns, and all pertinent quotations. A number of key themes emerged from the qualitative analysis including: (1) summation of daily operations of the Prison Pet Partnership Program (PPP) from the perspective of the program participants; (2) expectations prior to joining; (3) motivations for joining; (4) benefits acquired by program participants, the correctional facility, and the outside community; (5) relations with PPP staff and volunteers; (6) difficulties and challenges encountered; (7) favorite aspect of PPP; (8) advice for prospective participants; and lastly, (9) recommendations for future implementation of PDPs.

Overview of Prison Pet Partnership

Official data on prison dog programs is negligible. In an attempt to fill this gap, the researcher contacted multiple persons at all 12 Washington state correctional facilities, at various points in time and over a three-year period. Reponses were only obtained from four of the twelve facilities (25%). Coupled with the low response rate, information provided was inadequate for its intended purpose of expanding current knowledge regarding the functions and operations of PDPs. For this reason, the researcher inquired as to the details of the program from past

participants during the interview process. The questions pertained to the model of the Prison Pet Partnership (PPP) Program, the aims and goals of the program, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and details of the training and grooming facilities' practices and procedures.

The PPP program is not affiliated with the Department of Corrections (DOC), rather, it is a nonprofit organization which works in partnership with, and within the prison facility. As explained by one participant, "PPP has its own mission and that can exist within and also apart from the DOC." Being a nonprofit, PPP is reliant on its volunteers as well as donations and grants from the community. However, PPP offers a full service kennel with grooming and boarding, with 28 runs (a fenced area for animals), which remains a large source of revenue to fund the PPP program. Training service and assistance dogs remains the predominant focus of PPP. One participant noted that, "we brought every dog into the facility/program with the hope that they could be placed as a service animal, and the dogs that did not make it as service animals were opted into 'Paroled Pet Program for adoption'." Customarily, dogs are the primary animal within the program, followed by cats (part of the 'Rescue to Adopt' program or boarding facility), and the occasional ferret (PPP staff would sometimes bring their animals in to be cared for during the day).

Inmates who participate in the PPP program have the opportunity to work in both the grooming and boarding sectors. Participants begin the program by first learning about basic animal care in a boarding facility. A kennel staff member may be required to walk the dogs, feed the animals, or administer medication, for example. Most of the dogs are rescues, thus behavior modification training often takes place prior to their official training for service. Program participants gain hands-on experience in the grooming department and are taught by an instructor. Moreover, program participants have the opportunity to earn multiple certifications in

grooming. A typical work schedule in the kennel (basic animal care, boarding, grooming) was five to six days a week, ranging from six and a half to ten and a half hours per day. Both members of the community, as well as internal employees utilize the boarding and grooming facilities offered at PPP.

Fulfillment of service or assistance training for canines may take several years. The first year of training takes place within the prison facility. Next, the puppies go out into the community where they stay with a foster. It is critical for service and assistance dogs to be comfortable and prepared for all environments (i.e., crowded stores, high traffic areas). Following exposure to diverse settings and people, the dog returns to the prison to complete the final stages of their training. The considerable time commitment of the trainer also entails 24-hour monitoring and care of the puppy, while remaining mindful of the behaviors and actions of the dog.

In addition to requiring a high school diploma/GED, strict stipulations govern acceptance and ongoing participation in the program. First, it is impermissible for a major disciplinary infraction to be incurred within one to two years of applying for the program (time frame is dependent upon current policies). Major infractions obtained while in the program may be cause for immediate termination. Next, one's record must be clear of minor infractions for a 90-day period, such as having extra socks in one's cell or eating in the day room, for example. Of note, it has been posited that inmates who incur greater infractions on their records, may in fact benefit more from PDPs, than infraction-free individuals (Smith, 2019). Third, it is required that a certain amount of time has been served on the sentence – at the time the interview participants were in the program, the duration was four years. Lastly, charges relating to a crime against a vulnerable person automatically make the individual ineligible for the program. Contrary to

former literature findings indicating the consensus of this regulation, some of the formerly incarcerated persons in the PPP program did not agree with the policy. The reasoning for the objection is described below:

> That was actually a policy we kind of fought because we tried to break down the stigma against people who had specific crimes because you can't ever get past it if that stigma is always there. We started to see the program actually re-write their policy to include, on a case by case basis; they could look at somebody's crime and kind of determine based on their behavior in the prison and how much time they had been there, whether they would be considered as a candidate to work there.

Expectations

Each participant (n=3) remarked that the program surpassed their initial expectations and impacted their lives far more than was anticipated. None were familiar with the extent and scope of work at PPP, nor the entirety of what would be required of them as a participant in the program. Similar to results of a large scale (n=285) study conducted by Smith and colleagues (2019) who evaluated PDPs in two maximum security facilities, participants of the PPP program noted that it provided them with a sense of hope.

> I knew that this program existed. I had never expected myself to go to prison but when I was sitting in the county jail and I was thinking about spending the next decade plus of my life there, it was like this one beacon of hope for me.

Another participant described the significant and unexpected long-term impacts of the program:

> Of course I didn't really have a full understanding of what I was getting into. It was much more, there was way more to it than I thought that there was or that there could be. It really was a huge, it became a part of my identity. Of course it was different, but I think it was better than what I expected it to be.

PPP imposes less rigid rules and regulations within their program as compared to the rest of the prison facility. Relationships with PPP employees were distinct from those with correctional employees; PPP staff treated the participants as peers rather than inmates. Furthermore, PPP staff helped instill a sense of humanity in the participants and helped to rebuild their sense of trustworthiness.

> It was a lot less rigid than I expected it to be. I am still in contact with a lot of people that ran the program. I think I didn't expect to make those kinds of bonds. Up until that point I had a really distinct line in my head: people who work at the prison and people who live at the prison. I think that that line – in many good ways – was blurred at PPP because we were treated as equals. I walked in expecting not to be trusted because that is the narrative I had been fed the whole time I had been there (8 years). There was a lot of responsibility, but with that I started to rebuild that idea that I can be trusted, which you are robbed of that feeling or that sense of humanity.

Goal development and goal attainment were attributed to the PPP and the staff members:

> I hate to even think about what that period of my life would have looked like, or what it now would look like if I hadn't been a part of that program. I probably would have found a way [to address my individual goals] but I might not have even known what my goals were without the program.

Motivations

Inquiry into motivations for initially joining PPP resulted in the following four responses: a desire for a relationship, preparation for the future, trying something new, and the dogs themselves.

Relationship and Tenderness

> I wanted to learn skills, obviously. I also wanted to have the opportunity to participate in a relationship in a way that was not permissible in prison between people; there is no tenderness, there is no care, there's none of those things, and so I really just wanted to be able to participate in that and prepare for my future.

Preparation for the Future

With regard to the future, participants all acknowledged the profound impacts the program had, and continues to have on their lives. This may be best illustrated through the following short statement provided by a participant when questioned as to the greatest benefit received by participation in the program, "I got a second chance, honestly." Research conducted by Britton and Button (2005) presents a similar sentiment when discussing the PDPs with recipients of the canines; one recipient declared, "[This program] helps them [inmates] to have a second chance at life, to get their stuff straight" (Smith, 2019, p. 92). Not only were the participants of PPP well prepared for their future, they had the added benefit of profoundly enjoying their work.

> Over time, I really kind of fell in love with the whole industry and I think that therapeutic piece of working with animals every day. I hadn't really had an idea of what I would do when I was released as far as a job. I had been really interested in the medical field, but I

knew there was nothing I would be able to do there because you can't get licensed as a felon, especially with a violent crime. Some crimes can be expunged, but nothing like that [violent felony]. I was really trying to re-evaluate what I would do for a living once I was finally out. This [PPP] actually provided something that was tangible and feasible for me.

It definitely helped me address my goals as far as finding a purpose and passion and something that I liked and could do and support myself. It helped me support myself inside so that I wasn't dependent on any family to take care of me. It also helped me to have enough money to pay on my LFOs (legal financial obligations) and to help support my daughter. It helped me support myself out here too.

Trying Something New

Initially, I just wanted to get away from doing desk jobs. Before I worked at PPP, I had worked for a program called 'College Texts on Tape.' As archaic as it sounds, we used to read college texts onto recorded tapes for students who have dyslexia or any sort of learning disabilities, anybody who is better at listening to versus reading texts. I had always just worked desk jobs. I didn't even know if I would like it [PPP] or be good at it. I liked animals, but I never really grew up taking care of animals or knowing anything about them so it was kind of a crapshoot when I got a job there.

Love of Animals

I have always been an animal lover, even when I was young. At my house before I was incarcerated we had a hamster, gerbil, turtle, a lot of birds; so I have always grown up with animals, always had a love for animals. It was just a natural thing to gravitate

towards the dog program. I probably would have entered sooner, however, I wanted to focus on some of my educational goals; getting my degree and whatnot. Once I did, I wish I had gotten in sooner.

Benefits

Upon completion of PPP, program participants have attained valuable and applicable skills essential for a competitive job market. Research has consistently demonstrated the negative consequences of unreliable employment and the success possible for those individuals who do acquire stable employment. In addition, the structure and implementation of PPP fosters growth and opportunity. Successful reintegration into society may be defined traditionally as breaking the cycle of recidivism (Antonio et al., 2017; Britton & Button, 2005; Cooke & Farrington, 2016; Smith, 2019; Strimple, 2003; Turner, 2007) or by the personal growth that ensues from participation is a PDP (Andersen et al., 2020; Conroy et al., 2019; Mims et al., 2017; Wesley, 2019). There was a consensus among interview participants that PPP and other such programs have positive influences not only on the incarcerated persons who participate, but also the dogs, the prison environment, and the outside community.

It's a win-win-win. For the people who participate in these programs, it gives everything that a correctional facility by design should give; it gives people the opportunity to grow and to learn and to learn marketable skills and to be responsible and to care and teach us empathy and all that stuff.

When you think about the animal industry, in regards to COVID and in general, the animal industry is very sustainable. Everybody is always going to own pets so you need people with knowledge and experience. People are always going to have disabilities that

> will always need assistance. It is not only good for the environment inside, but also, obviously, when we get out.
>
> And then there was a full service grooming thing. Their goal was obviously to serve this population that, as far as training goes, but it was also to make sure that people were learning something, a skill that they could feasibly use and make a good living, even with a felony. A lot of different aims were going on there.

It is important to note that the dogs also benefit greatly from these programs by finding a purpose and a family. Many dogs from PDPs come from shelters, and many more remain in the shelter for the entirety of their lives. One participant stated, "In this particular program, the animals benefit; these were throw-away dogs, these were dogs that were in shelters and likely going to be euthanized."

Program Participants

Dogs have been shown to positively influence the emotional and psychological health of the individual. Consistent with past research findings, results from this study illustrated the improvement of the overall health and well-being of the individual, including their psychological and emotional health (Allison & Ramaswamy, 2016; Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007, Wesley, 2019; HHS, 1987). In addition, participants learned responsibility and patience – often through the process of training their dog – and were able to regain confidence in their own abilities. Lastly, the development of new coping mechanisms was reported.

Psychological and emotional health

> One of the things that I think is so unique and powerful about this type of program is that when I went to prison, I had built up these walls inside of myself that were impenetrable by human means. You can therapize and counsel me to the best of your ability; I don't care what degree you have, you're not getting through – not that a lot of that was available to me, there was not a lot of mental and emotional health care available to me while I was incarcerated. It would not have worked anyway because of these walls, because of how had I sought to protect myself with them. So, I started working with animals and golly, if the dogs don't just naturally destroy those walls. And I learned how to be vulnerable and all of that.

Responsibility, patience, confidence

Overall, prior explorations of PDPs have found an immense amount of support for positive outcomes of PDPs. In fact, the presence of the dogs in the facility alone have a positive impact. PDPs contribute to an increased sense of responsibility (Allison & Ramaswamy, 2016; Furst, 2007; Harkrader et al., 2004; Minton et al., 2015; Turner, 2007), patience thresholds (Allison & Ramaswamy, 2016; Britton & Button, 2005; Mims et al., 2017; Turner, 2007; Wesley, 2019) and a more positive self-identity through the acquisition of confidence (Conroy et al., 2019; Turner, 2007). One participant described how they learned responsibility through training and working with dogs, "I had to show up and be responsible for both my own actions and those of another being." Similarly, another participant stated, "I mean you are responsible for that animal and their behavior and their training, so that doesn't ever really end." Confidence was another benefit as noted by one participant, "I definitely gained self-confidence."

> It was through working at PPP that I even began to have enough confidence to consider myself capable of going back to school. I worked with an intern who was going to Evergreen at the time and she brought me an application and I sat on my prison bunk and filled that out. To even have to confidence to do that after the experiences that I had had in the world prior to and during this long stretch of incarceration; that was a huge thing I got out of it.

Reduction in negative feelings

Participation in the PPP program led to a reduction in negative feelings, as evident in the following quote, "It is a good program; definitely helps with therapy for yourself, and just learning about yourself and the abilities you have to help other folks." Akin to the findings in the literature, PPP participants described a decrease in negative feelings overall (Flynn et al., 2019; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019), and specifically in regard to anxiety (Flynn et al., 2019; Jasperson, 2010; Mims et al., 2017), depression (Jasperson, 2010) and stress levels (Mims et al., 2017; Turner, 2007).

> I did not realize that in learning to care for an animal, especially one that is in your care 24 hours a day, that I would be learning to care for myself and my community at the same time.

> I saw in them something that was worth working for, I saw in them something that was worth saving, I saw in them all of this potential, but my life experience has really taken my ability to see any of those things in my self away from me and so in pouring into them, I was in turn pouring into myself and learning to see myself the same way.

New coping mechanisms

> One of the soft skills that I learned that I think is really worth mentioning is that so much of the patterns of my life that had led me to go into prison were the result of really not knowing how to appropriately end or say goodbye to something. I didn't have those types of boundaries so I just like, I would run something all the way to the ground.
>
> Having these relationships with these dogs that were never mine, but in order to achieve anything with them, I would have to pour my whole self and my whole heart into them and in doing so I would get very attached and then the time would come for that relationship to end and I would have to go through that process. And going through that process of saying goodbye, of grieving, of letting them walk away and then being willing to do it all over again was so powerful, it taught me so many lessons about myself and about life and about how to show up in the world.

Correctional Facility

It was unanimously agreed upon that the presence of PPP in the facility had a positive effect in terms of reduction infractions, bringing a sense of normalcy to the environment, providing joy by having an animal around, and the new relationships and bonds that developed as a result; all of which are consistent with existing research outcomes; the exception being improved relations with the prison officers and staff (Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Furst, 2007; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015). In fact, the current study derived opposite results: relations between officers and inmates did not improve after joining the PPP program. Two studies have derived similar results. The first was a quasi-experimental field study conducted by Fournier and colleagues (2007), with a sample of 48 inmates (24 in the treatment group, and 24 in the control group) where it was discovered that some prison officers are more

likely to cite an inmate for a minor offense if they are part of the PDP, compared with less citations issued to non-PDP inmates. Second, Collica-Cox and Fagin (2018) found that only one of the 10 female inmates interviewed developed better relationships with the staff once participation in the PDP began.

> The reality is, in terms of recidivism, I don't have the current statistics, but I know that when I was in PPP, there was a four percent recidivism rate and statewide it was in the 30% and so everyone benefits in that way.
>
> When I went to work it didn't feel like work, I didn't feel like I was at prison. That was the most rewarding thing about the program, and what draws a lot of other folks into the program. When you have the privilege to be able to have a dog in the room, and have that day in and day out, it helps; not just for you but other folks.
>
> Outside of the PPP program I was a also a peer support. I can get called throughout the whole campus if somebody was dealing with a small crisis that didn't necessarily warrant a big crisis for mental health, so I used my dog everywhere I went when I went for peer support. It just really helped and it gave people the ability to be vulnerable and feel a little bit, have that sense of home that you don't often find while you are in prison. Having animals around within the prison gives the environment a sense of normalcy.
>
> You being able to have a dog throughout the unit and somebody is having a hard day; our dog was everybody else's dog. Just to see people that normally you would not interact with or wouldn't really want to talk to; our dog was that buffer, that dog was that person that opened people up to be more friendly and talkative and checking in with them and got a good idea of people's baselines. Having a dog was a really good tool.

> I think that by having pet programs within facilities; going back to and echoing what I said, it brings a sense of normalcy and how having dogs or cats is really big for emotional support for folks. It is a good tool, it's a positive tool for folks.
>
> We didn't have any choice in who got hired there so you are forced to work with people that you maybe wouldn't interact with otherwise, for any given reason. There was a lot of different personalities there. It really made me come to appreciate people who were different than me; in mentality, background, all of it, the gamut. There was a wide array of people that worked there and so it made me start to look at the strengths that everybody brings. It gave me a wider perspective and a greater appreciation of people as a whole, rather than just seeing people who act like me or look like me or relate to me in the same way. It was nice to actually get to be around a diverse group of people and work together, and hate each other sometimes, but at the end of the day we always could prioritize.

Inmate Relations

Formation of New Bonds

Although inmate relations with correctional staff seemed to further deteriorate subsequent to program participation, relations with other inmates in the facility were shown to improve. Regarding the PPP cohort, members developed strong bonds with one another while participating. Past studies obtained similar results; female inmates described the establishment of a strong community, and the overall enhancement of their relationships with inmates, regardless of whether they were participants in the program as well (Antonio et al., 2017; Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018; Conroy et al., 2019; Turner, 2007).

There was definitely some bonding that went on in the program. There were common interests and common goals, for sure. There was definitely some in-fighting that happened and prisons operate in a scarcity model as it is; there is never ever enough to go around and so although PPP did not operate that way, that was still instilled in people so people were fighting to keep what they had or to get more of what they needed; that could be challenging at times. I would say the relationships were improved. We all had something to lose.

We had working relationships together; it is unique and different for most people, even for people out here. Out here, I keep my personal life separate from my work, but in there, there is no separation of the two; so we lived together, we would eat together, and we worked together. There is no separating any of that, so the relationships that we had we were very close. Of course with any job that you work, there are some people get on your nerves and some people that don't, but at the end of the day we all have the same common goal in mind and so you work together. I got to meet new people there, I created really close friendships with people working in the program that I might not even have formed relationships with if I wasn't working with them.

I think we were all working really hard so it was stressful, but at the same time we built such a community – people I am still friends with today. In having worked together, we have so many funny stories; the people actually that I am closest to are the people who worked there. I can run through my list of friends in prison who were in prison with me who I am still friends with; about 90% of them worked with me there.

Beyond Prison Walls

Bridging the gap

A unique aspect of PPP and other PDPs is the connection made with outside community members. Most programs do not allow inmates to interact with members of the public directly. As noted by one participant, "There was a huge bridge between community and prison population because people were bringing their loved pets in to be boarded there." The unmatched bonds pet owners have with their canines magnifies this connection. Results from the current study are consistent with the literature which has affirmed the importance of connecting with the outside community for PDP program participants (Britton & Button, 2005; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007). Beyond this connection, a pattern has emerged displaying the joys of having the opportunity to give something back to the community and to assist in providing a valuable resource for the community (Andersen et al., 2020; Britton & Button, 2005; Furst, 2007; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Turner, 2007).

> And then building that bridge… I made so many connections with community members. Where we had to go to pick up dogs is called public access – it is where people come in to go visiting or the volunteers. Inmates are not supposed to be allowed up there, but we got to go up there and actually talk face to face with people, so having that connection where they remember you and that you are taking care of their dog. That was a really big thing as far as building a bridge between community and prison and really bringing in the humanity aspect of people who are in prison. This helped people be like, "No, that's [name redacted], she takes care of Blackjack, my dog."

Giving back

Training dogs for someone with disabilities when you are an able-bodied person, I think really helps give you perspective. When you are training this dog to brace when I lean on it or walk up the stairs with me and help me stabilize or brace when I need to stand up or sense when I am feeling nervous and lean against me or retrieve something for me because I can't pick something up. We had to go through this training where we had to actually restrict ourselves in the way that the person we were training the dog for was restricted. We had to go a whole week with not being able to bend over. Must consider all the things the dog has to be able to do and be good at in order to do that. It really helps give you perspective on a population that gets erased. That it is really easy to just not acknowledge or not look at. So I think that's one aspect.

One of the most rewarding things I experienced in the program was training service dogs and getting to know the clients that the dog is going to and how impactful that is, and that was my sense of giving back. Not saying I can ever repay or make retribution in that sense of my crime, but trying to do better and making sure that I, in any way possible, was able to impact people's lives for a positive rather than a negative.

Clients and working with service dogs, and even the dogs that we train for service dogs and maybe had career changes and wasn't a service dog. It was still rewarding that I was able to see the family and talk to the family that the dog went to. That is always rewarding and it is just priceless, really.

Valuable resource for the community

> The community benefits from PPP because there is a low cost boarding facility available. The grooming school generated revenue for the program but also was pretty discounted, so they benefited that way. We were sending well-trained dogs out into the community.
>
> With PPP, we were providing no cost service animals to people with disabilities. I mean, how do you go wrong with all of that? There's so much that it offers.
>
> We were having a hard time getting enough shelter dogs that could eventually make it into service, so we were not putting out many service dogs and so we tried something new and started doing some 'bred for purpose' puppies.

Vocational

Critical to one's success in society, whether formerly incarcerated or not, is the attainment and sustainment of legitimate and stable employment. The disruption that loss of, or lack of employment can have on someone's life is momentous. PPP appears to be one of the few programs available in Washington State prisons that provide tangible skills that can be utilized upon release. Of note, PPP is one of the few PDPs to provide substantive training and opportunities for female inmates. In addition to providing tangible skills for the job market, PPP also assists in applying for and attaining these jobs. Many examples of these actions are evidenced in the quotations below.

Marketable job skills

> Marketable job skills were huge. As you are probably aware, it can be pretty unkind in the job market for folks with a felony conviction, especially for folks with violent felony convictions.

When you get out of prison that is your big worry, that is a lot of the reason people go back to prison, they have no way to get fruitful employment that is actually solid employment that pays enough to live.

I actually stepped out of prison with a job. I had a grooming job set in place that pays really well. Being able to release from prison even after so many years, and know that I could make a living, and a good living, not just slaving day in and day out and making minimum wage. I can support myself, so that is monumental; especially in the job industry right now, a lot of people are struggling.

As far as employment and getting in the door in of the animal industry – it is a difficult industry so I wouldn't have gained the same skills I did and knowledge if I wasn't in the program. As far as my personal effectiveness skills and personal interactions with other folks; I gained those, but as far as my skills and my experience, I could not have done it without PPP.

There is not a lot of access to things inside of prison. The programs there are not aimed at really… they say that their goal is to teach you something you can do outside of prison, but most of the time you come up against barriers. The things that they teach you in prison, they say you could get a job as an office assistant (which is super sexist to assume that women would want to do that) but also jobs as coders, horticulture, computer-aided drafting; there aren't really jobs that are willing to hire felons in these fields. PPP was the one place that actually taught you to do something that there was not a barrier.

Using myself as an example, it is a passion of mine that I am able to utilize and come directly out and get to work. Whether it is at a hospital, or in my case, I even do side

work; I do grooming on the side, I do training on the side. The skills I gained provided me the ability to do that.

The main thing is being able to get out and support myself. Of all the things I think about, just knowing that I stepped out of prison and had a job I feel really good about. There are lots of things that I got from it, but that one thing, the stability of that, I don't think there's anything greater than that; especially seeing other people struggle, I am super grateful to have the skill and to be good at and enjoy what I do.

Job search/placement assistance

I was able to gain these skills and then I actually worked with staff to get myself out there prior to my release. I put together a portfolio of some of my work and I had the staff members send that out to groom shops in the area I was releasing to. One of those groom shops responded and actually came to the prison and met me prior to my release and offered me a job for when I got out. Obviously, I still had to do like a working interview on site when I got into the community, but they hired me and I stayed there for two years.

For our particular program, if you do the grooming track and you do find employment after release they also have a scholarship fund that will buy you the tools you need to get started in that career and so I was able to get tools to start working through the program.

They have another scholarship for education that is animal field related and even five years later, they have paid for this applied animal behavior certificate program at UW for me; far-reaching benefits.

> The first hospital I was at is partnered with PPP and I was one of three to be a part of the program. Although it didn't end necessarily well for me, I am very appreciative of going to that hospital and learning the skills that I did and I am very thankful for PPP's support and making sure that I got my foot in the door.
>
> I totally rave about that and having resources and being supported in my transition, even still today; they check in on me and see how I am doing, which is phenomenal.
>
> The most impactful part of the program was the follow-through upon my release; PPP is hands-down the number one program that I participated during incarceration that had the best follow-through. I am not just saying that, I participated in many programs there and many programs that say they are going to do 'this' and 'that,' but PPP actually followed through on everything they said they would do for me. They made sure I had my grooming tools when I got out, made sure I had employment.

Inadvertent Skills and Benefits

Beyond gaining skills and knowledge pertaining to achievable employment, program participants also gain indirect skills and knowledge. One participant notes how the program assists in, "making sure that you are prioritizing; that's a skill that you learn, and time management, a skill that you learn;" both of which are crucial in society for job attainment and generally.

> I am an artsy person, I like to paint and so getting to do something like grooming, which is very artistic and creative was really tuned into something I feel like I needed and had never had in a job before.

> It made me assess all the little things that you could potentially get in trouble for that you don't think anything about, like having extra socks in your room; they are miniscule things, but you can get in trouble for them. It really made me assess the decisions that I made on a day-to-day basis. I am not really willing to risk losing my job over something small like this. It made me reevaluate my behavior, it made me really cognizant of the decisions that I made and I think that that is really important.

> I got into some trouble the first two years of my incarceration and then I straightened things out. I realized that if I didn't get it here, I wasn't going to get it anywhere. So, I started working hard to be on the straight and narrow and to follow even the most arbitrary of rules.

Nurturing

> That dog was the whole world to me, being able to have both the early learning and the dynamic training aspect of it, and also the nurturing – I have children that I lost custody of as the result of my incarceration – so being able to nurture and raise a puppy also was just unbelievable.

Prison Pet Partnership Staff and Volunteers

All interview participants wholeheartedly agreed that the PPP staff and volunteers were exceptional and played a critical part in making the program a success. All claimed that they "felt I was treated fairly and supported throughout my program." And that "the staff was very very supportive." The support from PPP staff existed throughout the program and afterwards. As one participant stated, "when I got out, they bought all of my tools for me; they helped me make a resume, they were really great. There was lots of support to flourish."

> The volunteers, amazing, phenomenal people. They are not just invested in the program, and the mission statement of the program, but they are also invested in each one of our success upon release.
>
> Our volunteers were absolutely phenomenal, amazing people; and not only were they invested in the program but they were invested in each individual person that was in the program and we worked with them very closely, side by side. That was just the relationship, you had to in order for the program to work.
>
> The people that ran the program didn't treat us like inmates and so there wasn't that power play/power dynamic going on where you always thought of authority and being watched. And then they also encouraged you in the things you seemed like you seemed like you were good at or that you enjoyed. There was a lot of freedom inside a very restrictive place.
>
> One of the things I didn't account for was the relationships I built with the [PPP] staff members that worked for the program; they saw as humans, they didn't see us as numbers.
>
> The clients, the animals, the skillset, my coworkers, the volunteers; the people in the program is what made the program and I still believe that. I think that is with any job or anything that you do, it is the people that make it.

Difficulties and Challenges

Difficulties and challenges experienced by participants of the Prison Pet Partnership program included: (1) high turnover rates among PPP staff, (2) a dislike for the training portion,

(3) prison environment dynamics, (4) lack of transparency, (5) separation from the dogs, (6) lack of agency, (7) official policies, (8) the prison administration, (9) and not always being able to share the joy of a dog with others.

Staff Turnover

Although the participants all felt the staff they worked with at PPP was exceptional, job retention rates among the PPP staff members were poor. One participant noted, the "staff retention rates were low, there was a lot of turnover with support staff, so that was super challenging." Constant changes and rotations do not lend to a stable environment.

Did Not Enjoy Training

> I would say I was pretty good at training, but I did not enjoy training a lot. Some people were really great and that was their passion, I think I had so much [going on]; I was going to school while I was in there and I was working as groomer (those were the longest days). Having to then turn around and have a dog that you are responsible for; and it's not just like having a pet, which I absolutely love (and I loved my dog so much).

Difficult Dynamics

> The dynamic could be difficult. There was a lot of that catty kind of behavior, gossipy, a little bit of backstabbing, power plays that were happening. It was complicated sometimes to navigate that and the emotional strife. There is nothing normal about living and working and eating and existing with the same people every day, which is like the prison dynamic, and then stepping into the workplace and having that same thing; where you know everybody's personal life. It is a weird dynamic to navigate.

Lack of Transparency

> I would say that there were some things where there was not a lot of transparency. Bigger decisions were made a lot of the time that we had no clue about. I think transparency is really big. The fact of the matter is we find out other ways and then you lose trust when you feel like somebody has withheld information from you.

Giving Up the Dogs

As one would expect, when it came time for the canines to permanently leave the prison, the inmates had a hard time. Britton and Button (2005) found giving up the dog to be a challenge from participants who were in the PDP. However, in the current study, one participant stated, "the process of separation was terrible, really painful, really hard, but also necessary. I needed that so much. It taught me so much." Although this is a challenge, it may not necessarily be a negative aspect of the PDP or a reason to discontinue the programs in the future.

Loss of Agency

> In the relationship between my dog and I, I had agency and there was a certain level of autonomy, but that was really the only place that existed. While I could give input into what I think should happen with the dog, or with the program, or any other thing, I didn't have any way to control things. Having no agency was difficult.

Policies

Long Working Hours

> The most difficult aspect is mostly with grooming. Before COVID actually hit, we dealt with some policy challenges with DOC. PPP became very short-staffed as far as offenders go, so I was becoming the only groomer. Meeting those demands of clients and

getting dogs groomed was the most challenging thing. So when COVID hit, I thought I'd get a break for maybe a couple weeks to maybe just refresh and restart. My days were becoming very long and exhausting, both physically and mentally. When you are dealing with big dogs or all sorts of dogs, it is a physical job.

Job Loss at PPP

I had eaten this hazelnut bread and full of poppy seeds that my dad brought. You had to take a UA to go into the trailer and then you would take a UA when you came out of the trailer. When I took my outcoming UA, I tested dirty for opiates which resulted in a major infraction which resulted in me losing my job at PPP (5 years in) and then again there is this 2 year span before you could be eligible for employment from the state of the major infraction. I tried to fight that major infraction all the way, it ended up sticking.

One Size Fits All

A year later, the program, knowing my value as a program participant, created an exception to policy and hired me back a year early so that I could finish out my time there. That was super difficult, just the policies governing employment in the program. It was challenging; everything is so 'one size fits all' in that environment and there is no room for nuance or individual circumstances, it is what it is.

The restrictions were not helpful. They were not in the favor of safety and security which is the platform that decisions are often made on. It was more like they didn't like that this was flourishing and that they don't have an ability to control that or make money off of it.

Job Rotation Policies

It got even more restrictive towards the end of my time working there; it changed to two years. You can't even learn everything that you would need to know in two years. It took me almost four years to be really proficient at grooming to where I could step out and I knew all my breed cuts and I was a couple tests from being a master groomer. I knew all of those things, which are necessary. You could do one haircut all the time, but you are not going to be that employable. Learning training, that is another year or two and then you are constantly using the ideas of animal behavior to learn to run a kennel and learn about nutrition; that's another year. You need all that time working in a place like that, especially if you are planning on being really employable when you get out.

To have that really weird distinction that says well you can only work here for two years and then you have to figure something else out and then you can come back if you want after two years. You are talking about a six year time span where I can work there for four years, none of it makes sense. I think really addressing programs like that in a sensical way, like what actually best serves the prison population and the community at large. Don't you want people to learn to do things that they can work at and feel good about? I don't know, what is prison for? Not often that I think.

Administration

You always have the challenge of custody staff, custody policy, and rules versus the goals and intentions of the program. Those can conflict with each other and kind of puts a setback in progress in certain things with day-to-day operations of the program and things that they would like to do.

PPP as a whole got a lot of pushback from administration. Not the administrative staff for PPP, but the administrative staff for the prison. While I worked there I saw a lot of targeting by staff like making it difficult to get to work or providing staff to open the building or providing our movement to be able to go from the building to pick up dogs and public access. It definitely got more and more restrictive. I think because the administrative staff didn't like that they didn't have very much control over the program; it wasn't run by correctional industries, there was no money coming into the prison for it, it just existed inside the prison and that was not always fondly looked at.

Once the administrative staff began targeting the program, it became really uncomfortable to be working there because you always knew that at any time, if they came into the unit your room may be the one that gets targeted because they know that you work for the program and so they are always looking for little things. Or if you are like walking around campus and you have a dog, they might pull you over and want to talk to you about something that is punitive.

One of the challenges for our program in particular is when you have new administration happening. New administration has their own intentions, they have their own ideas or their own way of interpreting policy or changing policy so that also creates some barriers. That kind of happened close to the end of me getting released. We had a turnover in our administration so now the new people there, the folks that are there are new from when I started.

Working Dogs

Many members of the prison population enjoyed the presence of the dogs. Accordingly, many individuals sought to interact with the dogs. Socialization was one aspect of training for the canine, however, behavioral modification, or a focus on assistance training may be in progress. Service and assistance dogs and those training for these positions, spend a portion of their day solely focusing on work. One participant described their discontent having to impose these restrictions:

> Always having to make sure they were minding all the time and a lot of people (who don't work for the program or don't train), they don't understand that. When they asked if they could pet my dog, I hated having to be that guy that is like, 'no, sorry, he's working.' It is such a terrible feeling to have to take that joy from people; all they want is to have that connection too. That always sucked.

Favorite Aspect of Prison Pet Partnership

Dogs

When questioned as to their favorite part of the program, one participant excitedly and without hesitation responded, "Oh geez, the dogs, for sure the dogs, always the dogs."

Rewarding Work

> Learning to do something that I was really good at. I think you don't know what you're good at until you have tried everything. I am sure that I have other skills out there that I haven't learned yet, but I feel like once I started to learn, really to work with dogs, which I had no clue I would be good at and then I found out I was good at that and then to find

> out that I had this knack for grooming, like a natural knack, and I really enjoyed doing it, that is super rewarding.

Human-Animal Bond

The uniqueness of the bond between humans and animals remains prevalent in the extant literature. It has become clear that working with canines and other animals may be a unique and unparalleled means for therapeutic treatment. As noted by Deaton (2005), "The animals can facilitate a change within the individual which cannot be easily matched by traditional methods" (p. 59). Participants in the current study echoed this sentiment and provided the following accounts of their own experience with the human animal bond:

> And then also just to get to create this – I had no idea, you hear about it, but not experiencing it – the human animal bond. There is something to getting to be with animals every day that is really peaceful and also so much less stressful than having to deal with all the prison [redacted]. We always called PPP our oasis. Even though you are going to work, and the work is hard, the expectation is high, but it was like an oasis because it didn't feel like you were in prison.

> The second group of 'bred for purpose' puppies that came into the facility, I got one of. She was nine weeks old when I got her, she was the final dog that I trained through PPP, she was brilliant. By the time she was four months old she knew 60 commands, and she was just amazing. Harper was her name; she was about to go out into her foster as I was getting released so she left and I had to say goodbye, it was the worst of all the goodbyes. I was now in the position to start working with her in the community, to train in the community, real world stuff. She would come and stay with me and we would work

> together and then I would take her back to the prison. I just knew that this was my dog, we had this bond that was pretty hard to imagine ever being replicated. I would take her back and she would just not perform for anybody, they couldn't even get her to sit on command. She was perfect in the community. I ended up adopting her and I have her to this day. That is the biggest gift that I got from the program.

Advice for Future Participants

One of the questions sought to gather advice and guidance for individuals who may participate in PDPs in the future. The first and simplest piece of advice offered for future participants was, "Whatever it takes, just do it; just do it to get in there and keep doing it." Other more detailed recommendations are provided below:

> Don't squander your chance to work there. People sometimes would squander their opportunity to work there and then you don't get a job there again. Most people that lost their job there spent so much time trying to get their job back. It was on a daily basis; when I would leave work people would come up to me and be like, 'Can you talk to your boss for me? I am just trying to get my job back. I have been doing good. I did good for the whole year. Can I get my job back?' That's what I mean when I say oasis, you work there, it's an oasis and when you lose that you feel that loss for sure.

> Take advantage; what I mean by take advantage is take advantage of all the knowledge that is put in front of you and gain that knowledge and ask questions, refine your craft. If there is something in particular that you really feel passionate about, really focus on that. There are a few participants I can think of who I am really close friends with; they are groomers and they're doing their thing and they do phenomenal work. That's their thing.

> The animal industry is so large that you can find a place if this is something that you really love doing, it's your passion. Really just find that niche in that area that you really enjoy and hone in on that skill. There is always a place for everybody when they come out.

Recommendations

Stemming directly from past experiences, study participants proposed a variety of substantive suggestions for ensuing PDP implementation. This included: (1) the need for wraparound care, (2) the addition of a mental and behavioral health component, (3) more involvement from PDP graduates and other stakeholders, (4) do away with job rotation policies, (5) and a commitment to perpetual adjustments of program policies and practices.

Wraparound Care

> The PPP staff will work with you, will pour their whole selves into you, until you hit that gate and when you hit that gate you are on your own. So the people that I had received feedback from, who I trusted, became unavailable to me. Developing a model and policies that make the wraparound care, the care through reentry possible, is imperative.

Mental and Behavioral Health Component

> If a program like this existed and had a mental/emotional/behavioral health component, if there was somebody that worked on staff that could like bridge it, tie it together, while the walls are down, let's do some work; that would be so incredible.

Program Graduate Involvement

I think that we need more involvement from graduates within the program either in design and implementation of these programs, or even just in providing that point and source of hope for the people who are currently in the program.

When you are dealing with any kind of program that you are trying to implement, you need buy in; you need buy in from the inmates, staff, administration, as well as the community. Buy in requires everybody to be at the table listening and communicating effectively and openly.

Eliminate Job Rotation Policies

Job rotation policies is something that shouldn't be in place. If you are working for a place and are doing really well, (that is also keeping you out of trouble and you are learning to be really great at your craft, whatever that is) in the real world, you don't work somewhere for seven years and then have to do something else. It doesn't make any sense.

Regularly Revisit Policies and Practices

You have to constantly continue to go to the table of how you can improve, how things can be better because every institution is different. Even though people are used to operating one way and something changes; we should look at that change and embrace it and how can we take this change and it could be better, or at least try it and if that doesn't work, go back to the drawing board.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the qualitative themes which emerged from the analysis of the interviews that were carried out. It is clear from the findings of this research that PDPs offer a broad range of benefits to the dogs, the participants, the prison, and the outside community. PDPs provide a unique opportunity for inmates to acquire an abundance of skills and benefits that lend to an improvement in psychological and emotional health, as well as future employability, as emphasized in the literature review. Both the canines and the inmates are provided with a second chance. The presence of PPP at the Washington Corrections Center for Women aided in reducing infractions, lessening the tension common in such environments and by providing a foundation upon which new alliances and trust may be built. Contrary to past findings, however, inmate relations with officers did not improve following the acceptance into the PPP program. Extending beyond prior research, further examination of employment outcomes revealed that all participants (n=3) were employed upon release. Moreover, all interview participants were employed in an animal-related field; and in a position to support themselves with that employment. Furthermore, this study obtained valuable information regarding future implementation suggestions directly from participants who have experienced a PDP first-hand. Challenges faced most often by inmates while participating in PPP stemmed from prison policies and administration. Accordingly, two of the five recommendations for future practice and policy were the diversification of the pool of individuals who contribute to the development and implementation of PDPs and another, the elimination of job rotation policies. In sum, current and past findings illustrate the extensive positive influences these programs can have on all involved parties. Beyond simply that, detailed accounts derived in this study of what is currently working and what needs improvement has the potential to directly influence the

future implementation and expansion of PDPs. Chapter 5 will present a discussion, conclusion, and implications for future research, practice, and policy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The correctional system as it is currently structured and operating does not allow for rehabilitation and may actually further hinder reintegration into society. High prison populations and recidivism rates are direct reflections of this problem. This study sought to obtain information regarding PDP experiences and reverberations from those who successfully completed such a program with the goal of expanding current knowledge regarding current executions of these programs, complications and long-term effects on PDP participants. Whilst the current investigation is preliminary and exploratory, knowledge derived can be utilized to continue improving, expanding, and standardizing PDPs in prison facilities across the nation.

Key Findings

Results of this thesis demonstrate the considerable effects these programs have on the many parties involved. These findings are consistent with the preceding literature, which offers that PDPs are advantageous for the inmates and the prison environment as a whole (Allison & Ramaswamy, 2016; Antonio et al., 2017; Britton & Button, 2005; Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018; Conroy et al., 2019; Flynn et al., 2019; Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Harkrader et al., 2004; Jasperson, 2010; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Strimple, 2003; Turner, 2007; Wesely, 2019; Wormer et al., 2017), the program participants post-incarceration (Andersen et al., 2020; Antonio et al., 2017; Conroy et al., 2019; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Strimple, 2003), and the outside community (Andersen et al., 2020; Britton & Button, 2005; Furst, 2007; Han et al., 2021; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015; Smith, 2019; Turner, 2007). Further, the burden of cost to operate and maintain the PPP program does not fall on the correctional facility, but rather, the program itself (Conroy et al., 2019; Cooke, 2019). Extending beyond prior research, it was discovered that for the current sample, employment

prospects improved considerably following training in the PPP program, and ultimately, all participants were employed in an animal-related field – specifically as a groomer.

Inmates who participate in the PPP program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women have the opportunity to earn multiple certifications in grooming. Scholarships are provided to purchase grooming instruments and accessories needed for employment, ensuring individuals have the tools needed upon release. Moreover, funding is available for education in animal related fields. One interview participant received funding from PPP five years after being released for a certificate in applied animal behavior. Other training commonly provided in prisons – if any – consistently have barriers concerning criminal history, barring individuals with certain charges from working in the industry. Cosmetology is a common program offered for women in prison, yet this industry is not willing to hire these women (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Gunnison et al., 2016). The staff working for PPP was noted as going above and beyond their duties by assisting with resume creation, for example. The employees and volunteers provided assistance surpassing what PPP required of them.

Results beyond technical skills were determined as well. Of note, long-term satisfaction and happiness post participation in the PPP program was noted by all interview participants. The program offers skills that are directly useful to the individual. Not only that, but the education and practice to obtain these skills were enjoyable and rewarding. What's more, the employment acquired was described as "not just a job," but instead, a rewarding career. One participant was able to adopt the last dog that they trained in the program and now have a lifelong friend and bond with the animal; another indication of long-term and far-reaching benefits.

One of the questions posed during the interview process inquired as to the status of the relationship with correctional employees following acceptance into the PPP program. Current

literature on relations with officers and inmates at facilities with PDPs has exhibited mixed results. Four previous studies have found that relations with the officers had improved (Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Furst, 2007; Mims et al., 2017), another found mixed results, where only 57% of the participants indicated that their relations with the officers improved (Minton et al., 2015), and finally, both Collica-Cox & Fagin (2018) and Fournier and colleagues (2007) discovered that relations between officers and inmates were affected negatively following the acceptance and participation in the PDP. Participants of the current study indicated that overall, relationships with correctional officers were impaired following the presence of the PDP in the facility, and more specifically, regarding the individual inmates participating in the program.

Discussion

The main conflict between the findings of this study and prior research are the results regarding relations with officers (see Britton & Button, 2005; Conroy et al., 2019; Furst, 2007). Former studies derived assorted results (Britton & Button, 2005; Collica-Cox & Fagin, 2018; Conroy et al., 2019; Fournier et al., 2007; Furst, 2007; Mims et al., 2017; Minton et al., 2015), while this study found only negative relations following PDP implementation and participation. The difference in results may be attributed to the fact that the most recent former studies containing this information were conducted five years ago. It must also be considered that results from seven research investigations may not provide a comprehensive understanding or be representative of a larger population. Participants willing to be interviewed or questioned are often more inclined to have a positive viewpoint regarding the PDP. It is critical that future inquiries concerning these relations are obtained from both the officers and the inmates within the facility; considering their differing roles and status within the prison. It is anticipated that

future research investigations will derive results coinciding with a more unfavorable relationship dynamic. The controlling environment in the prison may in large part be attributed to the correctional officers who directly interact with the inmates and enforce administrative polices.

As for the numerous parallels between past and present findings, it is speculated that additional inquiries will derive similar results. A review of the extant literature and the current findings reveal a multitude of positive outcomes regarding PDPs and no considerable findings in opposition (e.g., see Britton & Button, 2005; Cooke, 2019; Owen, 2019; Smith, 2019; Wesley, 2019; Wormer et al., 2017). It appears as though PDPs may in fact be an effective solution to recidivism reduction and a cost-effective means of increasing the success of reintegration into society following incarceration. Further inquiry into PDP implementation and aftermath continues to bring new benefits to light. What's more, no notable negative findings currently exist to provide valid arguments against the continued execution and expansion of PDPs. The limited information currently available must be further investigated in the future to determine opposing viewpoints. Data presented in this study demonstrated how PDPs can profoundly affect the lives of participants post-incarceration; and explored and examined current implementations to assist in standardization of programs going forward.

Limitations

Although a plethora of valuable information was obtained, it is important to recognize this study is not without its limitations. First and foremost, a sample of only three individuals does not allow for generalization of findings across correctional facilities in Washington State nor the PDPs and facilities operating in other states (Bachman & Schutt, 2011; Fowler, 2014). Likewise, not all problems and concerns have been addressed through the present interviews. Obtaining eligible participants for the current study through the utilization of snowball sampling

presented its own set of obstacles. This sampling method requires that each subsequent participant has a relationship with the previous participant. The third party who initiated contact with the first potential participant is not familiar with individuals from all twelve correctional facilities. Furthermore, inmates and formerly incarcerated individuals tend to build relationships with those at their respective institutions, rather than with individuals housed at other institutions. Resulting data was thus only obtainable regarding the Prison Pet Partnership Program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. Even with the small sample size, findings were consistent with the current literature indicating the nature and extent of the problems affecting PDPs may be more widespread than anticipated. The trend will likely continue across larger sample groups. Only participants from one state, more specifically, one program does not account for all the variations across programs we know to be the case since there is no standardization. Further, the PDP in question is the longest operating PDP in the country, allowing the most time for execution and adjustments, as needed. Lastly, all participants in the sample were female. As highlighted in the literature review, men and women have different past and current experiences (Belknap, 2007; Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018; Cowan, 2019; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Gunnison et al., 2016; Helfgott & Gunnison, 2020; Minton et al., 2015).

Qualitative research suffers from the limitation of self-reflexivity (Patton, 2015). The researcher is a white female who has a stable government job and is earning a master's degree from an elite institution. Growing up in mostly middle-class neighborhoods with a permanent network of support, it may be difficult to understand the full extent of the prison subculture and how its existence remains perpetual and seemingly inescapable. Information and theoretical ideas presented in this paper stem from academic research and positive interactions with authority

figures (i.e., correctional officers). The persistence of incarceration so clearly evident in the United States is understood through prior research studies, statistical comparisons of crime rates and other graduate study pursuits. None of the information has been ascertained by personal experiences. The researcher's educational background is in philosophy and criminal justice, which has resulted in a deep appreciation of ethics and equality, and a focus on the populations targeted and mistreated by the criminal justice system. The first step to solving the problem is understanding it from the view of those it affects most. In this case, the participants of a Washington PDP. Those closest to the problem are the ones which can provide the most salient details, thus potentially leading to a solution.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Substantively significant data were derived from the interview process, lending to recommendations for improved practice and modified policies. In order to assist in future implementations, an understanding of current benefits and disadvantages must first be developed. It is suggested that the correctional system develop and expand alternative programs to help bridge the gap between incarceration and successful reintegration into society. Taking into consideration that these individuals are already in the facility, it seems logical for administration and correctional officers to support these individuals in their life endeavors to minimize future strain or involvement in the criminal justice system. Criminality is not simply a choice, but a path that is taken as a result of complicated histories. With this in mind, not every criminal is equal, and perhaps the punishment should reflect this.

Correctional administration needs to reevaluate their policies and regulations as they caused the preponderance of the complications and difficulties experienced by the current research sample. Prison administrators and PPP program staff intentions and actions remain in

conflict with one another. PDPs derive more favorable results compared to investigations and outcomes of the current correctional system. Needless to say, prison administrators may want to consider a modification to the current configuration of United States' prisons. Fournier and colleagues (2007) discovered that in addition to a deterioration of the relationships, officers directly targeted the individuals in the PDP. Similar results were found in the current study; participants described instances of being questioned or cited for trivial reasons, i.e., targeted.

Fundamentally, the difficulties and challenges faced by participants in the PDP stemmed almost exclusively from the policies enacted by administrators and carried out by the correctional officers. The domineering and controlling atmosphere and actions within the prison overrun the opportunity for growth. As demonstrated in the literature review, this method of incarceration has been shown to have adverse effects. Policies specifically regarding employment in the prison serve no discernable benefit for the prison or the inmates. These policies only serve to interfere with the learning opportunity for the inmates, which effectively could damage their future ability to find stable employment in the animal field. A less restrictive approach that creates more transparency but less regulation may be a more effective course of action.

Participants in the current study noted challenges of losing their support system once they left prison. The PPP staff who provided assistance and support throughout incarceration were no longer working with the individual. Wrap around care would provide continued support post-incarceration, alleviating some of the stress that occurs once back in society given the importance of social support (Cullen, 1994). Another suggestion was to revisit past policies and practices of the prison and the PDP regularly. There is always room for growth, adjustment, and

expansion. Lastly, prison administrators should expand the pool of individuals contributing to these decisions to include at least the graduates of PDPs.

Future Research Implications

Both prior studies and the current study are precursory. However, we cannot move beyond this restriction until more data is obtained to help provide an understanding of what needs to be studied. In order to define the quantitative data to be analyzed, insight must be gathered through qualitative means (Belknap, 2007). Consequently, this research adds to the scholarly literature by providing examples of the circumstances and experiences within PDPs through narrative accounts of the program participants. As there is a deficit of extant literature on this population, the findings of this study provide a much needed foundation for future research. Complex qualitative data is difficult to standardize, but this research attempts to provide a foundation to do so. It is suggested that future research focus on larger sample sizes, the utilization of a control group, and long-term data to be obtained in a standardized format and analyzed in depth, as well as cross-referenced with a variety of similarly situated studies. More specifically, it is imperative to examine more PDPs and facilities statewide and nationwide. The use of longitudinal studies allow for a more substantive comparison across time and individuals. Additional factors that may influence the outcomes of PDPs must also be considered. The results of this study are limited by the scope of research questions; many other data points have yet to be determined and subsequently, further examined. PDPs are a relatively new phenomenon in the correctional industry, thus requiring an abundance of research.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Participant Interview Questions

A Formative Evaluation of Washington Prison Animal Programs: Interview Instrument – Program Participants

CONSENT & INFORMATION

Interview #: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Do you have any questions at all before we cover consent? _____

Do you provide your consent to participate in the study? _____

Do you provide your consent to be recorded and for the interviewer to take notes during the interview? _____

QUESTIONS

Question #1: What is your educational background?

Question #2: Please explain any work history and/or training received.

Question #3: What charges have you been convicted of in the past? What was your sentence and how much time did you serve?

Question #4: What is the name of the prison animal program that you participated in?

Question #5: What kind of animals were part of the program?

Question #6: When did you begin the program, and what was the total duration of the program?

Question #7: How many days a week and how many hours a day did you participate in the program?

Question #8: Were there any inclusion or exclusion criteria? If so, what were they?

Question #9: What were the aims and goals of the program (i.e. obedience training, grooming)?

Question #10: What were your motivations/reasonings for participating in the program?

Question #11: What have you gained or achieved by participating in the dog program?

Question #12: What hardships did you experience during your participation in the program?

Question #13: Do you believe the program helped address your individual goals (short term/long term)? Do you believe you could have addressed these goals without participation in the animal program?

Question #14: What was your favorite or most rewarding aspect of the program?

Participant Interview Questions Continued

Question #15: What was your least favorite or most difficult aspect of the program?

Question #16: Was participating in the program as you thought it would be? The same/different?

Question #17: What are your thoughts on the good these programs can do for inmates, the prison, formerly incarcerated individuals, and the community?

Question #18: Do you have any thoughts on improvements for implementing these programs in the future?

Question #19: What would you say to future participants of these programs?

Question #20: What was your relationship with the staff like? Is there anything the staff could have done to improve or enhance your opportunities for success?

Question #21: What was your relationship like with the other inmates while you were a part of the program? Is this the same or different as the relationship you had with other inmates prior to you entering the prison animal program?

Question #22: Do you feel you were treated fairly and offered adequate support during your time in the program?

Question #23: Were you able to find employment upon release? If so, are you currently employed in any capacity working with animals (i.e. grooming, training)?

Question #24: In sum, what would you conclude to be the greatest benefit you have received from participation in the animal program?

Question #25: Are there any additional thoughts/comments/suggestions that you have?

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: _____

Race: _____

Gender: _____

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

RESEARCH STUDY: WA PRISON ANIMAL PROGRAMS

WHAT

Have you completed a prison animal program at a WA correctional facility?
Are you interested in participating in a short interview to discuss your experiences?

WHO

Individuals who have completed a prison animal program and are no longer under the jurisdiction of the Washington Dept. of Corrections are eligible to participate.

HOW

If you wish to receive more information or participate in the study please contact:

KIM SATTERFIELD
Graduate Student, Seattle University, Department of Criminal Justice, Criminology & Forensics
Email: satterf1@seattleu.edu
Phone: 206-280-3523