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# Partnering Shelter Dogs with Prison Inmates: An Alternative Strategy to Reduce Recidivism and Teach Social Therapy

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Randi Michelle Zimmer

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PARTNERING SHELTER DOGS WITH PRISON INMATES: AN ALTERNATIVE  
STRATEGY TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND TEACH SOCIAL THERAPY

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Approved Academic Dean and Provost

PARTNERING SHELTER DOGS WITH PRISON INMATES: AN ALTERNATIVE  
STRATEGY TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND TEACH SOCIAL THERAPY

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Public University

by

Randi Michelle Zimmer

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

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Charles Town, WV

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## DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this piece of work to all of the homeless dogs that inspired me to research and write about the therapeutic benefits of the animal/human bond. During the course of this project my beloved family dog, Chloe, passed away at age 13. She brought us the gift of love and compassion, just as each of the animal subjects in my research possessed. I also want to dedicate this paper to my two rescued dogs, Charlotte and Heidi, both of whom showed incredible patience while I focused my attention on my studies. We should take advantage of the gifts animals can provide, particularly those who desire a new life away from crime, and reciprocate that gift by giving a homeless animal a second chance.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The greatest appreciation is extended to each of the professors I have had the honor of working with during my two years as a graduate student with the American Military University. In particular, special gratitude is given to Dr. Kerry Muehlenbeck for her unwavering support and motivation as I journeyed through this challenge. She exemplifies a true leader with the greatest level of compassion. I admire her as a leader and strive toward that level of excellence as I continue my educational future as a doctoral student.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

PARTNERING SHELTER DOGS WITH PRISON INMATES: AN ALTERNATIVE  
STRATEGY TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND TEACH SOCIAL THERAPY

by

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December 15, 2013

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This paper assesses the main factors contributing to a high rate of criminal recidivism in the United States. Based on the findings which support a theory of insufficient social therapy programs offered during incarceration, an alternative approach is offered. Animals have long been used as a form of rehabilitation for people suffering from a myriad of physical and mental challenges. Because data suggests that individuals with criminal behavior who re-offend lack a certain level of social competence, the use of animal therapy should be considered as an option. Certain demographics of the prison population, namely those with social and psychological disorders, will be emphasized. And while most companion animals offer the therapeutic qualities necessary to teach compassion, particular attention is paid to homeless dogs. The pairing of homeless dogs with prison inmates poses a unique relationship: both entities have traditionally been rejected by society and are unfittingly misunderstood. Thus, there exists great potential for repeat offenders to reach out to their animal counterpart and seek self-improvement

through social and emotional rehabilitation as a preventive measure for re-offense. Theories are developed through collecting existing scientific data, examining current therapy programs, and hypothesizing the best available strategies. Because of the limited available research on this unique partnership, recommendations will be outlined for further scientific research to be performed. The paper concludes with suggested best practices for maintaining existing programs and establishing new partnerships to achieve the greatest level of success.



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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Villalobos Rescue Center, New Orleans, Louisiana**

Walking through the Villalobos Rescue Center in New Orleans, Louisiana might remind one of a typical animal shelter with the sound of dogs anxiously barking at passersby, hoping to be chosen for a forever home. But, this is far from a typical shelter for homeless pets. The over 200 homeless dogs who reside at the Villalobos Rescue Center in New Orleans, Louisiana have unique caretakers unlike most shelters across the United States: dozens of post-prison parolees. The dogs are unique in their own way as well; the majority of the dogs received are abandoned or stray pit bulls. The partnership between post-prison inmates and pit bulls is so unique that the television station Animal Planet developed a reality-based show to showcase the work of the shelter. The show, titled “Pit Bulls and Parolees” highlights the struggles and triumphs experienced at the rescue facility and has garnered world-wide attention.

Villalobos Rescue Center’s founder, Tia Torres, opened the facility for dual purposes: first, to rehabilitate one of the most misunderstood breed of dogs; and second, to hire parolees who otherwise may not have the opportunity to be employed. Consequently, the shelter grew into a rehabilitation facility for all involved. This is also the center’s tagline: “Saving Man and Man’s Best Friend” (<http://www.vrcpitbull.net>, 2013). What began over 20 years ago on a small desert ranch in California has evolved into several remote facilities around the country with the headquarters stationed in New Orleans, Louisiana. Torres describes the location as the city for second chances as an homage to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and its residents desperate for new beginnings. Likewise, the homeless pit bulls rescued by Torres and her crew, are, by their very nature, in need of a second chance at life. This poetic symbiosis provides a unique opportunity for dual rehabilitation between human and dog.

The Villalobos Rescue Center not only employs parolees, but also current inmates through special work release programs. One of the show's veteran employees, Earl Moffett, is a true testimonial to the success of the program. Moffett was convicted of robbery and served two separate prison sentences totaling 22 years. Upon release, he was hired by the Villalobos Rescue Center and which provided him a second chance at becoming a productive member of society (The Province, 2013). This second chance ultimately resulted in permanent employment at the Center, but more importantly, he learned how to turn his life around and not return to a life of crime. Together the pit bulls and parolees at the Villalobos Rescue Center work to rehabilitate each other for a second chance at life and respect.

While animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is not unique to the world of rehabilitation, this particular partnership and connection with the criminal justice field is revolutionary. The Villalobos Rescue Center is just one of many such agencies to partner criminal offenders with animals for the purpose of mutual rehabilitation. Animals have long been chosen as tools to assist people with various mental and physical disabilities for their gentle, caring nature (Walsh, 2009). Because of the profound emotional and social support animals can provide, this makes them a prime tool in the rehabilitation efforts needed by reoffenders.

With the high rate of recidivism in this country, the question remains as to what is failing. With nearly two-thirds of first time offenders returning to prison, it appears a significant issue within the restorative process exists (Department of Justice, 1994). Current rehabilitative strategies have not addressed one of the core problems with re-offense: many offenders struggle with social and psychological problems that hinder their ability to re-enter society on a successful path (McKendrick, Sullivan, Banks and Sacks, 2006). If these core issues are not

addressed through focused therapeutic efforts, the cycle of re-offense will remain and possibly escalate.

In order to bridge the gap that offenders face and ensure a more successful attempt at re-entry into society, alternative rehabilitative solutions must be explored. With the achievements realized by the AAT model, the use of animals for inmate therapy deserves greater attention. The program established at the Villalobos Rescue Center in New Orleans is evidence that an animal-human connection can result in therapeutic change for both parties. Thus, with the addition of more partnership programs within correctional facilities that utilize animals, particularly dogs, perhaps inmates will be better prepared to re-enter society and live a crime-free life.

This paper analyzes current programs in place like that of the Villalobos Rescue Center, as well as others around the country, to offer correctional facilities an alternative solution to rehabilitating repeat offenders with animals. First, the history of recidivism-reduction strategies will be explored for efficacy through evidence-based research. Failures in the system will be identified and delineated into specific barriers: social and psychological needs of the prisoners that lack appropriate treatment. Best practices and alternative solutions will be offered to alleviate the issues presented in the research. The preferred use of homeless dogs as the second variable in the partnership is offered as an innovative approach to the problem. The paper will later highlight some of the current programs in place as of the date of publication. Further research on this topic is encouraged in order to generate more thorough analyses of these partnership programs.

## **Chapter II: An Evil Cycle: The Current State of Re-Offense**

This chapter will introduce the phenomenon of recidivism which represents the independent variable in the hypothesis structure. The criminal justice system is plagued with an ominous cycle of re-offense. First-time offenders are returning to prison for committing additional criminal acts. This causes the recidivism rate in our nation's correctional facilities to rise beyond a level of control and prevention. Contributing to this conundrum is the inability to provide appropriate therapy to the inmates prior to their reentry into society. This chapter will evaluate the current strategies in place to aid in therapy for inmates, as well as analyze what processes in place are failing to control the rising rate of re-offense and break the evil cycle.

### **Causes for Recidivism**

The current state of our criminal justice system in the United States can be examined through a theoretical lens explaining why crime rates fail to improve. Recidivism, the process of re-engaging in criminal activity despite previous punishment, is often used as a measurement for the state of public safety in the United States (McKean and Ransford, 2004). Various law enforcement professionals use different applications and theories to explain the phenomenon although it is difficult to collect consistent data. The United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) assesses recidivism by the number of criminal acts resulting in re-arrest, reconviction or return to prison during a three-year time period. Most recent data from the BJS analyzing the rate of recidivism show that 67.5% of incarcerated individuals released from prison were rearrested within a three-year time frame (Department of Justice, 1994).

Thus, nearly two-thirds of all incarcerated individuals return to prison. This occurs despite any applicable punishment or treatment received during the incarceration and post-prison experience. This number appears to be staggering and deserves a deeper investigation as to why

it is so high. Perhaps this requires going back further into history to discover some of the precursors responsible for today's high rate of re-offense.

The Pew Center on the States is a nonprofit organization that analyzes data to suggest improvements to public policy. Following a 2008 study conducted by the Center on the increase of prison populations, the group made a strong assertion as to why our recidivism rates are rising: historically, the best strategy for dealing with offenders was prison. Over the past thirty years, American prison populations grew by more than 700%. Statistics cited in this study show that one out of every 100 American adults was incarcerated at any given time (Pew Center on the States, 2011). Additionally, states are spending approximately \$52 billion a year on public safety with the majority being allocated to prison costs (Pew Center on the States, 2011). This is certainly not the most cost-effective solution to dealing with first-time and repeat offenders.

Further, while prison capacities expanded during this time, crime rates proportionately did not. A comparison of two states' prison populations versus crime rates paints such a picture: Both the states of Florida and New York had a prison population of about 70,000 inmates at the beginning of 2000. Over the next ten years Florida added 30,000 inmates, while New York decreased its population by 10,000. With Florida at 100,000 and New York at 60,000, ironically the resulting drop in crime was almost the exact same: Florida dropping by 28% and New York dropping by 29% (Pew Center on the States, 2011). Thus, with such a discrepancy in the number of inmates behind prison doors, no direct correlation can be attributed to the drop in crime.

This can lead one to question the efficacy of the criminal justice process in appropriately dealing with repeat offenders. The Pew Center (2011) asserts that the most significant factor influencing a state's rate of recidivism is the management of post-parole violations. Two states were compared to illustrate this claim. California has routinely taken the approach of punishing

violating parolees with additional, short prison stays. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the state of Oregon uses prison as a last resort for a parole violation, focusing more on community sanctions and alternative programs (Pew Center on the States, 2011). Thus, the recidivism rate of each state can drastically increase when smaller technical violations are met with a return to prison. However, regardless of the standard by which violators are sent to prison or sanctioned to community service, there still exists a core problem: criminals are still reoffending despite the type of punishment received during the first prison experience. There appears to be a significant lack of preventive methods taught within the prison walls to discourage returning to a life of crime.

Theoretically, if a hard punishment is endured during incarceration, one would not want to return. However, with approximately two out of every three released inmates returning to prison, something simply is not working. The degree of rehabilitation efforts may be the culprit. The Center for Impact Research (CIR), on behalf of the Developing Justice Coalition, studied the top five states in the United States with the lowest rates of recidivism. The CIR concluded that despite the lowest rates of recidivism in the country, each state varied drastically from the next on the best formula for success (McKean and Ransford, 2004). However, experts agree that one of the most critical solutions to the problem can be addressed through rehabilitation. The CIR concludes: “Recidivism offers a more encompassing measure of a prison’s efforts to rehabilitate inmates,” (McKean and Ransford, 2004, p.8).

### **Current Recidivism-Reduction Strategies**

As with many current governmental programs, strategies implemented to reduce the number of repeat offenses have succumbed to the budget crisis facing the nation. Simply put, the large number of prison inmates will result in a large number of inmates released back into

society (excluding death row inmates and those granted sentences without the possibility of parole). Nearly thirty years ago, New York's Governor's Special Committee on Criminal Offenders reviewed specific correctional programs that had positive impacts on preventing re-offenses. Dreadfully, the study concluded that rehabilitative efforts thus far in the state of New York have shown no significant effect on reducing recidivism (McKean and Ransford, 2004). Unfortunately this well-known Committee popularized a sentiment among criminal justice professionals that re-offenders could not be helped.

Despite this report, some programs have risen to the level of turn-around, although data fall short of favorable. Some of the more traditional programs correctional facilities provide include the following: substance abuse and mental health treatments; educational programs; and employment opportunities (McKean and Ransford, 2004). However, many inmates struggle with certain barriers that make it difficult to respond well to these types of programs. Mental illness is rampant among prison populations, as is substance abuse (McKean and Ransford, 2004). These impediments often exacerbate criminal activity and thus lead to greater re-offenses.

Some specific factors of correctional facility programs that dictate success often focus on deterrence and rehabilitation. Drug treatment programs vary in their level of success, particularly for high-level drug offenders with long criminal histories. Programs coming out of drug courts can be effective for certain individuals, but research is unclear as to how many offenders have taken advantage of this resource, and have thus used this as a successful way to curtail criminal behavior (Franco, 2011). Treatment for drug-related offenses is often voluntary and the sanctions vary between jurisdictions. According to Franco (2011), research has revealed that only a small number of inmates and parolees actually participate in drug treatment programs. There remains a lack of consistency and eligibility requirements from state to state on



appropriate substance abuse treatment. McKean and Ransford (2004) further the argument of failed drug treatment programs by claiming a lack of such programs exists for current inmates and those released. Subsequently, only 61% of state prisons even offer substance abuse programs to those most needing the treatment (McKean and Ransford, 2004). Because of this lack of a consistent, strategic plan to treat drug offenders, this type of correctional program is not the most effective in approaching the high recidivism problem.

Mental illness programs are similarly utilized as rehabilitation efforts for repeat offenders. However, many of the current programs for inmates with mental illness lack a fully-rehabilitative process to best prepare the individual for a life without crime. According to McKean and Ransford (2004), only two-thirds of correctional facilities provide released inmates with referrals to mental healthcare professionals. In addition, parole and probation officers rarely follow up with released inmates to track their progress with these treatment programs. Without thorough placement and tracking procedures in place, the traditional design of mental illness treatment for released inmates will inevitably fail.

The third traditional form of rehabilitation and treatment programs that many correctional facilities provide is education. Researchers place high importance on providing inmates with a variety of educational programs because of the benefits of self-efficacy and working to become more employable. While the numbers are rather staggering—41% of state and federal inmates lacked a high school diploma—not enough research exists to determine the true effect of a prison education on reducing recidivism (McKean and Ransford, 2004). Another complication of a prison education program is the inconsistent nature of a curriculum among jurisdictions, as well as poor follow-up assistance for testing and GED completion. Similarly, work programs are regularly included in rehabilitation efforts for inmates and are intended to reduce the likelihood

of returning to a life of crime. However, again, there lacks a consistent, nation-wide program for best practices. Additionally, many inmate work programs are not designed specifically with the intention of reducing recidivism rates. Some programs operate through a self-selection process which is voluntary in nature and not necessarily those in the higher-need category. The theory behind using employment programs for prison inmates is the ideal that upon release, these individuals are more likely to become hired and receive a living-wage salary, thus discouraging the desire to turn to crime for financial gain (McKean and Ransford, 2004). However, as illustrated by former rehabilitation and treatment programs, again there lacks a consistent protocol for administering employment programs for the greatest level of success. Inmates need specialized instructional programs to best meet their competence levels. If an inmate is not highly educated, employment may be harder to find. McKean and Ransford (2004) further their assertion that only high-quality jobs that pay a substantive wage or lead to long-term careers have the potential to reduce recidivism. And unfortunately, there remains a gap between sufficient wages and available jobs. There may also be a stigma attached to recently-released inmates seeking employment, making the reentry into society even more difficult.

### **Theory of Recidivism: Failure is Evident**

Research has identified several basic inefficiencies within our prison systems that have resulted in increased recidivism rates. The most significant trend identified through existing research is the lack of universal systems to assess and treat high-risk prisoners during incarceration. Without appropriate programs designed to improve the mental and physical health of the inmate, the cycle of re-offense cannot be broken. Traditional programs focused on mental illness, substance abuse and education can potentially serve to break this cycle, but research has suggested inconsistency among basic protocol, and likewise, results.

Another common trend identified in the inefficiencies of these traditional programs is the lack of cognitive and behavioral programs used in rehabilitation efforts. Day, Bryan, Davey & Casey (2006) argue those offenders who have low social awareness and problem awareness are at increased risk of failing treatment. If traditional programs do not address specific social inadequacies among prison inmates, then the transition back into society will be highly flawed and may lead to a greater likelihood of returning to criminal behavior.

Another theory why recidivism-reduction efforts have failed is the psychological labeling of felons and the associated attachment to such a title (Chiricos, Barrick, Bales, & Bontrager, 2007). Traditional post-prison programs often stigmatize the offender for quite some time because they need constant supervision from less-than-forgiving probation officers. Lutz (1935) concurs with this assumed stigma, claiming the government should provide readily-available rehabilitation programs for inmates who possess great potential as a useful citizen. Lutz's sentiment is to focus on the right of the human to receive compassionate care before reentry into society, not simply treating the prisoner as a misfit in society (1935).

Carrying around such a label has a true effect on the individual's psyche, and may prevent the offender from turning his or her life around. For example, Florida has a law allowing convicted felons to avoid being labeled as such by withholding the adjudication of guilt for felons on probation (Chiricos, Barrick, Bales & Bontrager, 2007). The association of being a convicted criminal may contribute to greater difficulty in applying for work, obtaining loans, or even being accepted back into one's family. Re-establishing oneself as a productive member of society may be dependent upon this kind of labeling. And it can also be psychological. Chiricos, Barrick, Bales & Bontrager (2007) argue that the effects of labeling offenders can be more devastating to individuals with low self-esteem, social deficiencies and mental illness.

Thus, if released prisoners are given non-criminal labeling, this has the potential to crush the stigma attached to being incarcerated and thus reduce the likelihood of returning to criminal behavior. This is a difficult process and ideally would be addressed at the beginning of one's prison sentence. It requires a long-term commitment between treatment counselors and the offender, as well as future follow-up meetings to check in on the offender's progress. However, very few rehabilitative programs available to inmates provide such a thorough process. As Lutz describes, "You can't transport a man from a cell of steel into society, and expect a miracle overnight" (1935, p.917).

Constant, on-going treatment for the most emotionally-disturbed inmates appears to be a necessity. However, as described earlier, many traditional programs in place around the country lack the necessary rehabilitative strategies to adequately reintroduce offenders back into society and deter them from becoming a recidivism statistic. This supports for the theory that alternative approaches need to be taken in order to break the cycle of recidivism.

## **Chapter III: Animals as Therapy**

*“Companion animals should be integrated into social work research, education, and practice because of their interconnectedness with humans” (Risley-Curtiss, 2010).*

This chapter will explore the benefits of utilizing animals for therapeutic purposes. There exist scientific, evidence-based results of the human-animal condition that will serve to support the overall thesis. Delving further, this chapter will also use one specific variable as a focus, that of homeless dogs. The properties observed from homeless dogs in their behavior alone and with humans qualify this species to be best suited for a partnership with socially-susceptible individuals.

### **Animal Rehabilitation Through Scientific Research and Anecdotal Observation**

The therapeutic properties of animal and human interactions have been widely researched by experts in several different fields. Many of the overarching themes in the research underscore the special bond created when human and animal have the opportunity to relate to one another. Risley-Curtiss (2010) describes the interaction between humans and companion animals as a mutually-beneficial relationship, providing a sense of security with an undisputed unconditional love. This mutually-beneficial relationship has been studied in various formats. For the purpose of this study, both scientific evidence and anecdotal observations will be taken into consideration to produce the most thorough findings.

Companion animals are often thought as members of a human family. Most commonly-identified companion animals are dogs and cats, but birds, rodents and reptiles are gaining popularity as close members of the family (Walsh, 2009). Various figures have been published on the amount of American households who own animals, but the majority of the data reports that 62% of own a companion animal, with 85% regarding their pets as members of the family

(Cohen, 2002). The reasons a household decides to own a pet or companion animal varies across the board. Walsh (2009) embrace this notion by describing companion animals as providing value through pleasure and affection and offering unconditional love. Additionally, animals can offer “nonthreatening physical contact in holding and petting—crucial human needs” (Walsh, 2009, p.482). Taking these researchers’ conclusions further, it is important to review the scientific research that has been conducted. Both social and psychological effects from animal contact will be discussed.

Loneliness is one of the emotional disturbances that animals have been found to relieve. While this particular assertion has not been rigorously tested, some empirical studies have been performed. Gilbey, McNicholas and Collis (2007) cite one such study conducted by John Goldmeier which associated the effect of a companion animal on the health of elderly women. A test called the Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale was used to score the level of morale in each of the women. Goldmeier’s results indicated that pets had the ability to soothe the sense of sadness and feeling lonely from a lack of human companionship (Gilbey, McNicholas and Collis, 2007). With the absence of human contact, companionship through animals can alleviate the burden of loneliness.

Furthering this notion, anecdotal observations have also been documented. Because of the strong emotional bond between human and animal, companion animals have also been studied as adjuncts in the treatment of patients with mental and developmental disabilities. Pet-oriented therapy has been applied for centuries. The theory that animals, particularly dogs, are true companion animals comes from centuries of incorporating pets into the family (Walsh, 2009). Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) has been observed back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century where animals were brought into psychiatric wards to ease the patients’ mental ailments. AAT can be

used in various manners, from group therapy to intensive individual counseling. Dogs are the primary species used in AAT because of their healing abilities and gentle temperament (Walsh, 2009). AAT has also been used in psychotherapy to aid victims of traumatic stress who have experienced major grief. This avenue of therapy can also replace modern medicine for certain individuals who do not respond to chemical treatment.

Children have often been studied in relation to the bond they create with companion animals. Families have credited educational and social benefits derived from such a relationship because of the empathy easily shared between both entities (Walsh, 2009). The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) analyzed the benefits of psychotherapy with children, or talk therapy, through the aid of an animal. The NIMH discovered that by working with certain animals, mainly companion animals to include horses, can provide a coping mechanism to the child when enduring some kind of trauma. Additionally, the NIMH theorized the use of companion animals can help children develop empathy and encourage open communication in a safe environment (NIMH, 2013). This kind of animal-assisted therapy has also been studied in easing behavior disorders in both children and adults.

Barker, Knisely, McCain, Schubert and Pandurangi (2010) studied the patterns of stress-buffering responses during interactions between humans and therapy dogs through evidence-based research. In one of the researchers' trials, they conducted a stress test using the Stroop Color Word Test which induces stress in a clinical setting by showing participants challenging cognitive puzzles. Participants were hooked up to an electroencephalograph (EEG) monitoring device to track the stress levels throughout the procedure. The first part of the test involved a five-minute Stroop Test. Following the test, participants were allowed to mingle freely with a

dog trained in therapy for 30 minutes. At each stage of the process, stressor indicators were taken: blood pressure, heart rate and salivary samples for cortisol levels and alpha-amylase.

Data was captured by measuring cortisol levels, a regular reactor to stress. The chart separates the findings between two types of therapy dogs, although the results are primarily the same. One set of therapy dogs are non-familiar and the other is known to the participant. Conclusive findings show a significant drop in not just cortisol levels, but in blood pressure and heart rate following the initial stressor. Barker, Knisely, McCain, Schubert and Pandurangi (2010) assert that the intervention of a dog during a high-stress incident can significantly ease the level of stress in the individual. Patterns are quite apparent for increased relaxation as a direct correlation to interaction with a dog. The greatest drop in stress levels were present immediately following the first few minutes of interaction, but consistently continue to fall thereafter. This is a profound scientific study that supports the theory of animals providing stress and anxiety relief.

## **Case Study Analyses**

### **Case Study #1**

The first case study examined links members of military with animal therapy. The first coordinated effort to utilize AAT in the United States/Iraqi war began in December, 2007. Fike, Najera and Dougherty (2012) document the deployment of dogs as part of the 85<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment Combat and Operational Stress Control Unit (COSC). Army occupational therapists initiated a brand new program that utilized dog therapy for soldiers enduring combat stress. Two dogs, Sergeant First Class Boe and Sergeant First Class Budge, came from Guide Dogs of America and were the first to be deployed. The dogs were extensively trained prior to deployment to be able to handle all extremes of the war environment. Unlike military dogs who



are working around the clock and kept in separate quarters, these therapy dogs lived with the soldiers in their living quarters and next to the main dog handler.

The COSC had to overcome some initial growing pains due to the newness of having dogs around for the strict purpose of therapy. Mental health professionals are routinely onsite during warfare and the dogs of the COSC began attending sessions with the soldiers. Initially this was an intimidating addition to an already uncomfortable process. However, therapists began to notice an increasing feeling of invitation from the patient to have a dog present during their session. Having the therapy dogs as an intermediary between mental health professional and soldier provided an extra role in the restorative process (Fike, Najera and Dougherty, 2012).

Although this case study was only observed and analyzed for a few years, significant findings resulted. Service members felt at ease with a therapy dog present during difficult warfare environments. The dogs provided a sense of family to the soldiers who often spent months and years away from familiar loved ones; the dogs acted like a surrogate family member during a time when affection is rarely experienced (Fike, Najera and Dougherty, 2012). The COSC provided an alternative way for soldiers to cope during the stress of war as evidenced by their feedback. One soldier described “just needing a hug from a therapy dog” while another described how the activity of petting a dog made his day bearable (p.54). This study is an prudent example of how one of the most stressful environments like warfare can be alleviated through the use of therapy animals.

## **Case Study #2**

Another more scientific study was conducted by Britton and Button (2005) at a men’s and women’s correctional facility. The methodology involved interviewing men at the Ellsworth Correctional Facility (ECF), in Ellsworth, Kansas, and women housed at the Topeka

Correctional Facility (TCF) in Topeka, Kansas. Both facilities partner with local animal rehabilitation agencies. For the male inmates at the, ECF, participants were partnered with Canine Assistance Rehabilitation Education and Services (CARES). Inmates are given the responsibility of training a puppy for a year and a half, teaching the animal numerous obedience commands. The CARES program is the sole educational responsibility for the participating inmate as a prisoner at the medium-security facility. After about one year of raising the puppy and teaching it obedience, the dogs are placed in homes as assistance animals. Similar to the ECF, the TCF women's correctional facility also pairs young puppies with prison inmates in an effort to teach the animal basic obedience commands (named the "Blue Ribbon" program). The women who participate in this program are either housed in the medium or maximum custody sections of the prison. Additionally, what makes this partnership so unique is that the dogs brought into the prison are taken from high-kill shelters and may otherwise have been euthanized if not for the program. According to the organizers of the Blue Ribbon, almost all of the dogs who enter and leave the program are placed in loving homes as either companion animals or assistance animals, all due to success from the program (Britton and Button, 2005).

To further illustrate the effects of both the CARES and the Blue Ribbon programs, Britton and Button conducted in-person interviews with prison inmates as well as recipients of the adopted dogs. 38 inmates and seven staff members were selected for the formal interview. It is important to note that selection of participants in this study was not based upon conviction type. However, most of the inmates happened to be incarcerated for sex offenses which was a disproportionate amount compared to the entire population (Britton and Button, 2005).

The researchers' analysis of the programs entailed three main assessments: inmate motivation for participation in either program; challenges faced with other inmates and staff during the training period; and the reported benefits of the program as voiced by the inmates.

Figure 1 shows the preliminary impetus for men in the ECF choosing to participate in the CARES program.

	N
Likes dogs	10
Freedom of movement in institution	9
Giving back to community	5
Easy work compared with other jobs	4
Desire to keep busy	4
Dog as therapy	3
Learning opportunity	3
Previous exposure to program	2
Previous dog-training experience	2

*Figure 1.* Motivators for participation in the CARES program. Reprinted from “Prison Pups: Assessing the Effects of Dog Training Programs in Correctional Facilities” by D. Britton and A. Button, 2005, *Journal of Family Social Work*, p.85. Copyright 2005.

The majority of the men desired the opportunity to train the dogs because of an inherent love for animals. Interestingly, very few of the participants had previous experience in dog training. Some of the challenges faced by the inmates during the course of their training were the negative perceptions received by non-participants at the correctional facility. Some of the inmates not paired with dogs reported having a dislike toward animals and thus raised concerns with the facility administrators. However, these claims were few compared to the overwhelming adoration the participants expressed for the dogs they were given to train. Additionally, the dogs literally lived with the inmates and became residents themselves during the approximate one-year program. This helped create an even greater bond between the prisoner and his or her dog.

Another interesting challenge that came up during the assessment of the program was the protective nature of certain inmates to their dogs. For example, one inmate (name unknown) recounts an incident he had with another inmate who was not fond of dogs and presumably was going to do something harmful:

“Just one guy . . . I guess he doesn’t like dogs, he’s scared of them. I kind of got angry because Buddy, he’s not the type of dog that’s going to bark at you or growl at you, he just wants to be petted, he’s like a big kitty, he just likes to be petted. I guess that’s all he wanted from Dude, and Dude raised his foot up like he was going to kick Buddy. I told him that if he kicked my dog we were going to have a real serious problem. If he had kicked him, I probably wouldn’t have Buddy, and we wouldn’t be having this conversation” (Britton and Button, 2005, p. 88).

This inmate was so protective of his dog that he was willing to engage in a fight with the other prisoner who was about to hurt his animal. This supports the notion that strong bonds were certainly developed during this time period and risk was taken to ensure the animal was protected.

And finally, the authors depict their observed results of the program, delineating out the benefits into three areas: positive changes in inmate behavior; perceived change within the prison environment; and the urge of inmates to want to give back to the community (Britton and Button, 2005). According to the researchers, true emotional elevation was felt and observed in the inmates paired with dogs. Simply stated, “For these men, the dogs are truly therapeutic” (p. 90).

Further interviews following the program corroborate this. “Mister Jackson” is an inmate with a violent past and specifically requested to be part of the program because he felt it would make him stop fighting. He eventually became one of the teachers in the program, leading other dog handler inmates. The researchers’ analysis indicated Mister Jackson went from being a very hostile, angry individual to a caring, dedicated trainer who wanted his dog to succeed. He truly was influenced by taking care of another being, while learning the responsibility of performing

real-life work duties. This case study ended with a touching tale of one recipient of the program to take home an assistance dog:

“When I got in there and they started introducing themselves and their dogs, it was just like everything just went away. I was relaxed. I was comfortable being around them. [This program] helps them to have a second chance at life, to get their stuff straight. I really believe that these dogs help them. I believe that whole-heartedly. It gives them a second chance, and it gives them a sense of responsibility” (Britton and Button, 2005, p. 93).

While this case study was primarily a qualitative research project, the authors seek to further their research by tracking the recidivism rates of the inmates in future years to assess the results of these inmate-dog partnerships through quantitative measures.

These former two case studies are examples of a growing trend of animal therapy programs being initiated into correctional facilities. However, the lack of secondary research available is sparse. With the overwhelming benefits observed through interviews and observational analysis, greater attention deserves to be given to these programs. Rehabilitation is a likely result of the inmates who participate in such animal partnerships. This population has a great need for social rehabilitation due to the lack of social and emotional aptitude. Unfortunately, with the minimal amount of evidence-based research to justify implementing these programs, it may take years for the trend to become commonplace among the law enforcement community.

## **Chapter IV: Combination of Two Variables: Animal Therapy and Repeat Offenders**

This chapter bridges the two variables introduced in the previous chapters: animals as rehabilitative tools and repeat offenders. These two otherwise distinctly different entities have a meaningful similarity. When compared, the demographics of both variables have such complementary properties that pairing the two is worth exploring. The social and psychological issues that appear to plague the majority of prison inmates will be examined. To delve further in the animal therapy model, one specific species is selected to profile: homeless dogs. Homeless dogs and prison inmates exhibit unique parallels in the manner in which they are often perceived and treated by the public. Additionally, by partnering loving dogs with socially-distressed inmates, benefits can be had by both sides. This is the theoretical platform for success that is later suggested in the findings and recommendations section of the research.

### **Prison Demographics and Populations Best Suited for Animal Therapy**

In order to reach the highest level of success, certain demographics within the prison population should be identified. For reoffenders, the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that among released prisoners, the most common re-offenses in 2004 were primarily violent and drug-related crimes and is also depicted in the following chart (Department of Justice, 2002). Theories for what influences these particular types of re-offenses abound. Some researchers argue that the impetus behind engaging in drug activity is linked to acute psychological and social deficiencies (Bitar and Gee, 2010). Thus, reoffenders with social and emotional disorders, whether from drug dependencies or mental illness, should be used as the main focus in this collaboration.

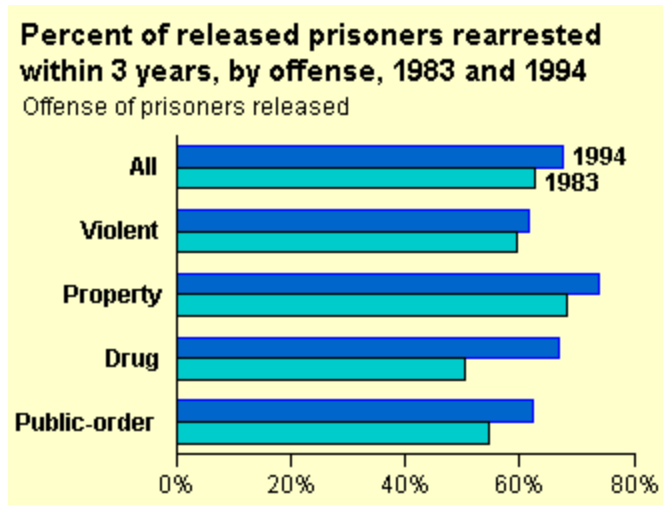


Figure 2. Types of crimes most committed by repeat offenders as reported in 1983 and 1994. Reprinted from *The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) - Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. Retrieved from <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1134>. Copyright 2002.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) cited findings produced by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics that 64 percent local prison inmates and 56 percent of state inmates have some form of mental illness (NAMI, 2006). Certainly the implications of prisoners with mental illness can be endless. However, for the purpose of this research, the consequence studied is the tendency toward re-offense.

Mental illness can run the gamut from depression to schizophrenia. Skeem, Manchak and Peterson (2011) describe the prevalence of mental illness within the criminal justice system as “grossly overrepresented” (p.110). Inadequate treatment for these offenders can be the reason why they cannot break the cycle of reoffending. Several programs have been created to mitigate the effects of mental illness on reoffending, although there does not appear to be one true resolution. Incarceration is typically not the most effective form of treatment for mentally ill inmates (Skeem, Manchak and Peterson, 2011). Like inmates with other physical disabilities or drug dependencies, alternative programs are better suited for these individuals. However, the status quo on specialty mental health programs is bleak. Many internal and post-prison mental

health treatments rarely specialize in re-entry prevention which is at the crux of this issue (Skeem, Manchak and Peterson, 2011). These authors further substantiate their claim by asserting traditional recidivism reduction strategies that are mediated by counseling services are of low quality. They go on to claim that little evidence can be found to support a correlation between symptom improvement and a lesser chance at reoffending.

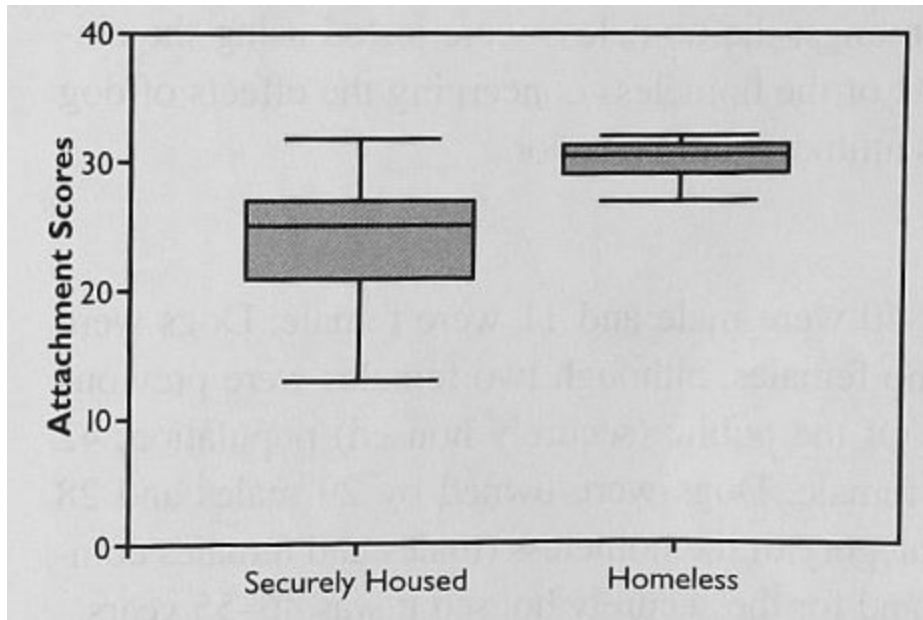
Like mental illness and psychological disorders, anti-social behavior may also be a precursor to future criminal behavior and possibly repeat offending (Ginner Hau and Smedler, 2011). Ginner Hau and Smedler investigated the recidivism rate of teenage Swedish males who were diagnosed with behavioral problems and were referred to alternative, community-based rehabilitation programs as disciplinary action for their offenses. Following a period of a year and a half, nearly 60% of the men engaged in another criminal act. Because of this staggering result, the authors question the appropriateness of the rehabilitative programs available to male youth with these types of anti-social behaviors. The authors state that while the focus on rehabilitation is evident, the specific type of treatment is unmatched to the need of the offender (Ginner Hau and Smedler, 2011). The young men in this particular study were sent to community-based programs run by local social service agencies. Poor documentation of the kinds of activities performed in the treatment center was one failure. Another component was mixed and inconsistent counseling sessions for each of the men. Ginner Hau and Smedler claim this is not unique to many other rehabilitative programs young offenders participate in, and most are wrought with failure. Additionally, young offenders with acute social disorders need more intensive medical and therapeutic treatment than what is often offered through community-based centers (Ginner Hau and Smedler, 2011).



The themes garnered from case studies and existing research cast doubt that current programs offered to inmates with social and emotional problems reduce recidivism. With the majority of these offenders suffering from social and mental disorders, it is imperative that these demographics are given special attention for therapy. Perhaps therapeutic avenues utilizing non-human players can provide this demographic a more successful end.

### **Homeless Dogs as Specific Variables**

As analyzed earlier, animals have many therapeutic qualities that can be of use in rehabilitation efforts. While several different species of animals have been researched with therapeutic qualities, dogs appear to be the most commonly used. Taylor, Williams and Gray (2004) suggest that inmates with drug dependencies often have a long history of suffering from emotional disorders. Because of this set-back, the ability to form human-contact attachments with friends and family is hindered. The authors cite a claim made by Charnaud who found that dogs in particular are better at providing transitional assistance to drug-dependent offenders than humans (Taylor, Williams and Gray, 2004). Animal empathy has also been studied in certain populations, both inside and outside correctional facilities. More specifically, a recent study in Cambridge in the United Kingdom assessed the level of animal empathy in homeless individuals. Figure 3 shows a comparison of animal attachment scores reported by homeless individuals and those who lived in a secure home.



*Figure 3.* Reported scores of attachment to animals for individuals securely housed and those without a home. Reprinted from “Homelessness and dog ownership: an investigation into animal empathy, attachment, crime, drug use, health and public opinion,” by Taylor, H., Williams, P., & Gray, D., 2004, *Anthrozoos*, 9, p. 360.

Interestingly enough, a much greater attachment to animals was reported by homeless individuals than with those securely housed: a 75<sup>th</sup> percentile to 25<sup>th</sup> percentile score (Taylor, Williams and Gray (2004). What can be deduced from these findings is that the anxiety and insecurity of not having a stable home environment can be relieved through the assistance of an animal. And further, homeless individuals appear to be drawn to owning an animal for the emotional support and ease at which they can become attached to the animal.

Although the previous study was used to examine relationships between homeless people and dogs, the corollary can likewise be effective. Homeless dogs have been described as having certain characteristics of endless love and affection that are unlike dogs in settled homes. More significantly, Hens (2009) believes there exists an environmental ethic base that provides dogs with a moral significance. This morality lends a certain responsibility to humans, because as Hens (2009) asserts, we should provide the appropriate opportunity that fills the needs of the

individual species. This notion can be translated to the special needs of dogs without homes and are placed in shelters. This very specific type of animal makes for a unique match with prison inmates. Both inmates and shelter dogs live in similar quarters: segregated, behind bars, and without regular social interaction. Perhaps these similarities are far more aligned than what appears on the surface and be of mutual benefit to rehabilitating one another.

As profiled at the beginning of this paper, the Villalobos Rescue Center specializes in rehoming homeless pit bulls for a specific reason: “their loyalty and devotion make them the perfect victim” (<http://www.vrcpitbull.net/>, 2013). Many homeless dogs like the pit bulls at the Villalobos Rescue Center have lived a life of perpetual abuse and misunderstandings. The bully title often attached to the breed weakens the opportunity that these dogs will find homes, and subsequently, love. Ironically, this situation is almost parallel to the life of a repeat offender. After the first instance of a criminal offense, the individual is given the title of a “criminal” and stigmatized for the rest of his or her life. Similarly, a pit bull not raised with proper discipline can have the propensity for acting out and causing harm. But most of these observed behavioral problems can be remedied through rehabilitation. Some of the best therapy for dogs with social disorders is human contact (Harbolt and Ward, 2001). And likewise, rehabilitation can be offered to the human through animal contact.

Leaser (2005) describes dogs as mediators who can understand conflict. This makes them the most appropriate type of animal to use in animal-assisted therapy (AAT). Leaser continues to describe the experience that results in a human-animal therapy session. When partnered, both the animal’s and human’s needs are met, particularly the distressing emotional issues present. Leaser (2005) describes dogs as having a naturally calming nature, which is an appropriate therapeutic tool for people with deep psychological sufferings. Leaser (2005)

further this notion by suggesting that dogs can be channels for communication for timid or shy people who would otherwise not feel comfortable opening up their feelings in front of another human being. Using Leaser's analysis of the therapeutic properties dogs encompass, it is only appropriate to translate this model over to the inmate-dog partnership and further support the theory that dogs should be used for offender therapy.

Risley-Curtiss (2010) corroborates Leaser's depiction of dogs as the best-suited animal in the AAT model. The bond created from interacting with dogs is unlike that of any other species. Risley-Curtiss' main application supports the use of dogs in social work, particularly in child welfare and domestic violence upon women. The author even addresses the issue that some people may be fearful of dogs or have developed a hatred toward them from a previous life experience. However, because of the therapeutic qualities discussed repeatedly throughout this research, dogs can help people overcome this fear and gently change that perception through long-term exposure (Risley-Curtiss, 2010). These theories can easily be translated to homeless dogs coming from troubled beginnings; both animal and human in the social work setting have experienced similar levels of neglect. This again makes the use of homeless dogs a particular niche in the inmate/animal partnership application.

This chapter depicted the two main variables in the construct of the original hypothesis: homeless dogs and prisoners with specific social and psychological complexities. The research supports these two entities as the best pairing for greatest success in rehabilitation, and for both parties. Because the majority of inmates who re-offend exhibit acute mental and social disorders, this segment of the prison population should be the primary focus in animal/inmate partnerships. Likewise, although most dogs can be utilized for therapy, homeless dogs in particular appear to exhibit the unique qualities to which prison inmates can best relate.

Therefore, the two variables described in this section are best suited to provide social therapy in to generate mutually-beneficial outcome.

## **Chapter V: Findings and Recommendations**

### **Proposed Policy and Procedure Implementation: Best Practices**

Research is extensive on the therapeutic nature of animals. Analysis runs the gamut from all types of species and applications. From the analyses performed for the purpose of this paper, the most suitable pairing of variables is between prison inmates with mental and psychological conditions and homeless dogs. It should be further underscored that the purpose for this pairing is to maintain better control of the growing recidivism rate within the criminal justice system. Without a proactive, innovative approach that utilizes alternative strategies, criminals may not have a change of course and continue to re-offend. Therefore, a system of best practices should be put in place where applicable programs can be implemented.

The program described at the beginning of this paper at the Villalobos Rescue Center in New Orleans, Louisiana is a model partnership that deserves to be followed by other correctional facilities. This rescue center employs both current inmates and post-prison parolees for long-term educational purposes and social therapy incentives. But careful attention needs to be included in the design and implementation of any such programs. The following list is a recommended course of best practices to ensure the greatest possibility of success:

#### **Practice #1: Develop sound policy tailored to the structure of the individual correctional facility.**

Each jail system has its own unique set of policies and procedures that are vetted through management and protected by legal standards. Thus, any additions or changes to current policy must follow the institution's guidelines for adoption of new programs. The purpose of the policy should be clearly identified as a recidivism-reducing strategy. If the new program is not

explicitly identified and designed to best suit the needs of the individual agency, then even the policy with the most reliability will fail (Skeem, Manchak, and Peterson, 2011).

The correctional facilities that potentially can benefit the most by such policy would be lower-security agencies where socialization with external entities is allowed. While some of the existing programs analyzed in this research took place at medium and maximum security prisons, the success rates vary (Britton and Button, 2005). The ability for inmates to work at off-site training centers is necessary. Some of the therapy dog programs offer training at the rescue site, as with the Villalobos Rescue Center. However, as with the case study depicted through the CARES program at the Ellsworth Correctional Facility in Ellsworth, Kansas, dogs were given to higher-security inmates to live within their cell quarters on a 24-hour basis. This constant, one-on-one companionship led to the development of a greater bond and the inmates took greater ownership of the animal (Britton and Button, 2005).

These programs can also be used for rehabilitative efforts of active duty service men and women as highlighted in the case study with the 85<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment Combat and Operational Stress Control Unit in Iraq (Fike, Najera and Dougherty, 2012). Both models utilize dogs as therapy to overcome the stressors of being imprisoned or working on the battlefield.

**Practice #2: Identify current inmates at higher risk for re-offense, particularly those with social and psychological complications.**

Not all inmates who enter the criminal justice process will benefit from an animal partnership. Evidence-based research has suggested that offenders with acute social disorders and mental illness are in greater need of alternative therapy solutions (McKendrick, Sullivan, Banks and Sacks, 2006). The majority of inmates also suffer from drug dependencies which lead to a propensity to reoffend (Department of Justice, 2002). Traditional counseling offered within

the prison system as well as following release has shown to be ineffective. Many of the non-animal therapy programs practiced are ill-designed, have poor accountability, and lack follow-up (McKean and Ransford, 2004). In addition, much of this failure can be attributed to the wrong segment of the prison population that is given therapy options. Because of this gap, it is essential that the appropriate demographics utilize the dog therapy programs.

**Practice #3: Select the right animal rescue group to form an appropriate partnership.**

As with the individual correctional facilities, not all animal rescue groups are suitable for this type of partnership. Therefore, it is essential that new programs be carefully set up with the appropriate pairing of entities. For existing programs, this is a fairly easy task. But for rescue groups beginning the implementation of an inmate/animal partnership, certain assessments should first be taken. Working with the managers and volunteers at the rescue group to discuss resources available could be the first phase. Discussion should take place on the availability of dog trainers who can commit adequate time to assisting inmates and jail staff in the implementation of a new program. Using the model of therapy dogs in hospital and retirement home settings, there needs to be adequate support through a skilled trainer who can offer on-site tutoring for both human and dog (Cipriani et al., 2013). Once these discussions have been organized, the execution of the program can commence.

As outlined in Appendix A of this paper, there exist numerous inmate and animal rehabilitation programs. For new agencies seeking to implement a program for the first time, it would be wise to contact these organizations for insight on best practices. Perhaps the most significant outcome that should be part of the planning process is the benefit that both inmate and



shelter animal will receive; rehabilitation of both parties is inevitable through the right partnership.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Further Scientific Research**

While an abundance of research exists on the therapeutic qualities of animals in human rehabilitation, the application of this treatment within the criminal justice field is limited. Scientific data is available on social therapy for inmates with psychological disorders, but very few incorporate animals into the equation. And further, it is difficult to find scholarly research on the mutually-beneficial effects of using homeless dogs in the partnership. Because of these limitations, the analysis performed in this paper was limited to bridging scientific research from like-programs and applying it to a theoretical pairing of homeless dogs and prison inmates.

Anecdotal findings can be found for existing programs but this makes the research incomplete. Therefore, it is suggested that in-depth scientific testing be performed. This will require a long-term investigation from all parties involved in the program. The offender should be tracked over a multi-year period to see if re-offense takes place after receiving the animal therapy. This poses an inevitable challenge depending on the originating correctional agency's ability to follow the individual, available resources for staff time and funding, and proper database management. Perhaps the use of a web-based database could be put into practice for nation-wide access. In conjunction with the tracking of the offender's behavior, it is important to likewise track the progress of the animal used in the therapy partnership. This would fall on the responsibility of the rescue group to report on whether the animal was successfully adopted out for use in therapy or as a family pet. Again, this requires consistent reporting protocols to accurately track the results of the partnership and decipher the success of the program.

The criminal justice field has made much advancement in addressing the growing trend of repeat offenses. But research has proven that the traditional methods in place to reduce the rate of recidivism are ineffective. By investigating and implementing alternative solutions like those that incorporate animals as therapeutic tools, greater success can be achieved. Prison inmates with specific social and psychological disorders parallel the challenges many homeless dogs face. Therefore, a profound partnership can be formed by pairing the two entities together in a symbiotic relationship. Rehabilitation for both human and animal is of great potential when inmates and homeless dogs can work in tandem toward a better life.

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## APPENDIX A

While the Villalobos Rescue Center has gained international attention from its television show, there are also a plethora of similar programs around the country that deserve acknowledgement.

The state of Florida is one of the leading innovators for animal/prisoner partnerships in correctional facilities as several exist throughout the region. The following list is just a sampling of the various programs in the state. All are in business at the time of print (Florida Department of Corrections, 2013).

- The Canine Assist with Re-Entry (CARE) program pairs homeless dogs from the Humane Society of Northeast Florida with inmates at the Baker Correctional Institution's Work Camp.
- Developing Adoptable Dogs with Good Sociability (DAWGS) partners homeless dogs from the St. Joseph Bay Humane Society in Port St. Joe in an intensive eight-week work camp program.
- Heartworm Assistance Rehabilitation Training (HART), a one-of-a-kind program, transports dogs sick with heartworm disease to the Wakulla Correctional Institute for recovery. Inmates help nurse the dogs back to health, then transition to a training program with the dogs.
- Hardee Hero Hounds is a unique organization that places retired race track greyhounds with inmates at the Hardee Correctional Institute in Bowling Green, Florida to help nurture and acclimate them to a life of normal living. The greyhounds are eventually placed for adoption with a second chance at life.



- Paws on Parole is a program that pairs inmates at the Gainesville Correctional Institution Work Camp with homeless dogs to train them as service dogs for people with disabilities, learning difficult, technical tasks.
- Prison Pup Programs is a partnership between the Sago Palm Work Camp and the New Horizons Service Dogs, Inc. agency. This training lasts for 18 months and is part of the correctional facility's Re-Entry initiative to help rehabilitate and prepare inmates for re-entry into society.
- Women Offering Obedience and Friendship (WOOF) partners the Lowell Correctional Institution Work Camp in Ocala, Florida, an all-female inmate population, with the Marion County Humane Society. All the dogs leaving the program are tested to be part of the Canine Good Citizen program.

Other nationwide programs:

- New Mexico: Animal Humane Association of New Mexico, Inc. has a partnership with the Youth Diagnostic and Development Center of New Mexico to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents (Harbolt and Ward, 2001).
- Washington: The Prison Pet Partnership in Tacoma partners with the Washington Corrections Center for Women to teach inmates vocational skills and train the dogs to become therapy dogs (<http://www.prisonpetpartnership.org>, 2013).
- Colorado: The Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI) works with the Prison Trained K-9 Companion Program (PTKCP) to teach inmates how to train dogs for specific tasks, including hunting and therapy, for eventual adoption (<https://www.coloradoci.com>, (2013).

- New York: Puppies Behind Bars (PBBP is a state-wide program located at various men's and women's correctional institutions. The dogs are housed together with each inmate within his or her cell block for more intensive training. Dogs are also trained to become service animals for soldiers returning from Iraq ([www.puppiesbehindbars.com/home](http://www.puppiesbehindbars.com/home), 2013).
- California: The Pathways to Hope Prison Program was one of the first of its kind and has grown across the country and internationally to other animal and prisoner partnership programs ([http://www.pathwaystohope.org/pth\\_002.htm](http://www.pathwaystohope.org/pth_002.htm), 2013).