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Prison Dog-Training Programs: An Annotated Bibliography [2001-2010]

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Britton, D. M., & Button, A. (2007). "This isn't about us": Benefits of dog training programs in women's prisons. In S. Miller (Ed.), Criminal justice research and practice: Diverse voices from the field, (195-209). U. Lebanon, NH: U. Press of New England. ISBN: 9781555536848.

No summary available.

Britton, D. M., & Button, A. (2006). Prison pups: Assessing the effects of dog training programs in correctional facilities. Journal of Family Social Work, 9(4), 79-95. [PDF](#)

During the past twenty-five years, the number of prison programs in which inmates train dogs has increased rapidly. There are no comprehensive data on the prevalence of such programs, but they are in existence in at least twenty U.S. states, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Italy. Though extremely popular among both administrators and inmates, we have only anecdotal accounts to assess the effects of dog training by inmates. Such programs appear to have the potential to break down barriers of fear and mistrust between staff and inmates; and there is also some evidence, again anecdotal, that they reduce recidivism and behavioral infractions among inmates. Literally no systematic studies exist, however. This research provides preliminary information from data collected in two Kansas prisons (a men's and a women's institution) in which inmates train assistance dogs and dogs made available for adoption by the general public. This paper focuses on the qualitative findings from the interviews conducted at the men's prison, and examines motivations for entering the program, challenges inmates face in their work, and the benefits they believe come participating.

Button, A. (2007). "Freedom from themselves" gendered mechanisms of control, power, and resistance in prison dog training programs. Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University. [PDF](#)

During the past twenty-five years, the number of prison programs in which inmates train dogs has increased rapidly. A lack of systematic studies to address the effects of these programs on staff and inmates has led to limited, anecdotal accounts of the impact of these programs on correctional institutions and their occupants. In addition, an analysis of differences in these effects for men and women is missing. This paper proposes to bridge this gap through qualitative research conducted in two Kansas prisons (a men's and a women's institution) in which inmates train assistance dogs and dogs made available for adoption by the general public. Drawing primarily on the works of Erving Goffman, Michel Foucault, and Jill McCorkel, I focus on the mechanisms of social control and resistance within these programs and their effect on the inmates participating in the program, utilizing a gendered analysis throughout. Using the experiences of the men and women in these programs, as well as those of correctional staff and community members, I propose that these programs provide an important outlet for resistance for the participants.

Currie, N. S. (2008). A case study of incarcerated males participating in a canine training program. Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University. [PDF](#)

The number of animal training programs in correctional facilities has increased in the past 25 years. Anecdotal accounts have informally assessed the efficacy of prison training programs; however, only limited systemic studies have been conducted (Britton & Button, 2005; Furst, 2006). Preliminary information from anecdotal accounts and narratives indicates the potential these programs have to impact inmate behavior, self-esteem, staff and inmate morale, and community perceptions of offenders (Cushing & Williams, 1995; Harkrader, Burke, & Owen, 2004). There is also an indication inmate trainers learn responsibility, patience, coping skills, and vocational skills (Britton & Button, 2005; Merriam-Arduini, 2000; Turner, 2007). This qualitative study presents preliminary findings from the following five participant perspectives on the perceived outcomes of a canine training program in a correctional facility where inmates train assistance, therapy, rescue, and medical alert canines: (a) inmate trainers, (b) former inmate trainers, (c) non-trainer inmates who are not involved in the training program, (d) staff, and (e) the researcher. Once trained, the canines are adopted as assistance dogs for individuals in need. Data collected from in-depth interviews with current inmate trainers, former inmate trainers, non-trainer inmates, and staff, and audio and video recordings, researcher observations, and a researcher developed scale indicated the following themes which emerged from the study: there are positive emotional outcomes and positive practical outcomes for inmate trainers who work with dogs in the training program. Positive emotional outcomes for inmate trainers include the following: (a) providing social support, (b) gaining a sense of pride, (c) serving as a feeling of giving back to society, (d)

increasing personal patience, (e) humanizing the inmate trainers, and (f) improving self-esteem. Positive practical outcomes for inmate trainers emerged in the following areas: (a) improving responsibility, (b) having a positive impact on the prison environment, (c) providing opportunities to help others, (d) using goal setting, (e) gaining employability skills, and (e) having a positive effect on behavior. Results from this study will add to existing literature and research in the field of animal-assisted interventions and rehabilitation programs with human beings, specifically those in correctional facilities. In addition, results from this study will assist correctional administration in the design, implementation, and evaluation of dog training programs in prisons.

Deaton, C. (2005). Humanizing prisons with animals: A closer look at "cell dogs" and horse programs in correctional institutions. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 46-62. [PDF](#)

If correctional education aims to transform individuals and bring about change, we need to consider the whole person who comes with human needs, emotions and attitudes. In order to expand our approach, alternative programs should be explored. A somewhat unusual but very promising approach to address offenders' human needs is the use of animals in institutions. The majority of these programs have a vocational skills component: Inmates train dogs to become service dogs for the disabled, or they work with horses, either wild mustangs or retired race horses in need of rehabilitation. Although vocational training is certainly a major consideration, these programs are also highly therapeutic and rehabilitative. Suggested outcomes can benefit many: The inmate, the institution, other agencies, and the community. The purpose of this article is to raise awareness of selected animal-assisted programs in correctional institutions and their reported benefits.

Demyan, A. (2007). Dogs and dominance: Prison dog programs and their theoretical implications within punishment. *Conference Papers -- American Society of Criminology*, 1. [PDF](#)

Using qualitative data collected during research at a prison located in north-central Ohio, this paper examines the dog program in place at this institution. Specifically, the theoretical contradictions of the disciplinary model of dog training occurring within prison walls. Additionally, this paper will look at discipline models and the idea of humanization, and how (if possible) they can coexist within the institutional setting.

Fournier, A. K., Geller, E. S., & Fortney, E. V. (2007). Human-animal interaction in a prison setting: Impact on criminal behavior, treatment progress, and social skills. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 16(1), 89. [PDF](#)

This quasi-experimental field study evaluated the effects of a forensic human-animal interaction (HAI) program on the criminal behavior of prison inmates. The study assessed the impact of the HAI program using between-subject methods and analyses. A total of 48 male inmates participated in the research by allowing researchers access to their institutional files and completing self-report measures. In general, it was hypothesized the HAI program would result in positive behavioral and psychosocial outcomes for inmates. Dependent measures included the frequency of institutional infractions, inmate treatment level within the prison's therapeutic community, and social skills. Analyses compared two groups of inmates in a pretest-posttest repeated-measures design, comparing a Treatment group with a Control group. Results indicated that inmates in the Treatment group evidenced statistically significant improvements in these dependent measures in comparison to the Control group.

Furst, G. (2009). How prison-based animal programs change prisoner participants. In A. Arluke and C. Sanders (Eds.), *Between the species: readings in human-animal relations*, (293-302). Boston : Pearson A & B. ISBN: 9780205594931.

No summary available.

Furst, G. (2008). Prison-based animal programs through a green criminology lens: Where do PAPs belong?. *Conference Papers -- American Society of Criminology*, 1.

The emerging specialty of green criminology is broadly defined as examining ecological crimes and offenses committed against non-human animals. In considering animal abuse and misuse the issue of animal rights is often discussed. Those in support of animal rights, sometimes referred to as the animal liberation movement, generally adopt a 'no-use' stance toward non-human animals. The development of prison-based animal programs (PAPs), specifically the service animal socialization and community service models, raises unique questions about animal rights and animals' use in prison programming. In service animal socialization programs prison inmates train puppies who go on to advanced education to identify contraband including explosives and pirated DVDs, as well as training to become so-called working dogs to aid people with disabilities. In community adoption programs, in contrast, prison inmates socialize dogs that would otherwise have been destroyed due to their behavioral issues. The merits of these programs, both for the human and non-human animals, will be discussed according to the green criminology paradigm.

Furst, G. (2007). Without words to get in the way: Symbolic interaction in prison-based animal programs. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 3(1). [PDF](#)

George H. Mead ([1934] 1967) contended a person's sense of self develops from language-based interactions with other humans in society. According to contemporary sociologists, a person's sense of self is also influenced by non-verbal interactions with human

and non-human animals. The present research extends Sanders (1993) work that examined how dog owners relate to their pets and come to develop a unique social identity for them. Through interviews with participants in prison-based animal programs (PAPs), this research explores whether inmates engaged in a similar process of assigning the animals with which they work a human-like identity. The implications of the relationships that develop in terms of desistance, which Maruna (2001) argued requires a redefinition of a person's self-identity, are discussed.

Furst, G. (2006). Prison-based animal programs: A national survey. *The Prison Journal*, 86(4), 407-430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885506293242>

Although animals appear to be increasingly incorporated into correctional programming, the field has failed to systematically study the phenomenon. The present research is an initial attempt to capture the extent to which these types of programs are being administered in U.S. prisons through a national survey of state correctional systems. The research regarding the potential therapeutic effects of animals and what we know about prison-based animal programs (PAPs) are reviewed. Among the results: The programs are in most states, are most commonly of a community service design that uses dogs, are more likely to involve male than female participants, and most were established after 2000. Livestock care/prison farms emerge as a unique type of PAP.

Gibson, M. (2008). Working for CHAMP after hours: The role of volunteers in a prison-based service dog training program. *Conference Papers -- American Society of Criminology*, 1.

Prison-based animal training programs have long been believed to confer benefits on the inmates who train the animals, as well as benefits for the animals themselves. Most evaluations of these programs, however, have relied on surveys of prison administrators and of inmates themselves to demonstrate the benefits for inmates. This paper will explore the theoretical basis for hypothesizing that prison-based animal training programs result in benefits for the inmates (i.e., rehabilitation). Articulating the theory is a prerequisite to designing a program evaluation. Since animal training programs are found at both men's and women's prisons, an interesting criminological question to be considered is whether the benefits predicted are the same for both genders.

Harbolt, T., & Ward, T. H. (2001). Teaming incarcerated youth with shelter dogs for a second chance. *Society and Animals*, 9(2), 177-182. [PDF](#)

No abstract available.

Harkrader, T., Burke, T. W., & Owen, S. S. (2004). Pound puppies: The rehabilitative uses of dogs in correctional facilities. *Corrections Today*, 66(2), 74-79.

Training programs may be for guide dogs, hearing dogs, and service dogs. Guide dogs are used to aid the visually impaired, and hearing dogs provide aid to the deaf and hearing impaired. Service dogs provide assistance to individuals who have physical disabilities that restrict or impair movement. In addition, there are prison animal programs that take animals who would otherwise be euthanized and give them to inmates, who train them in basic obedience skills that will increase their appeal for adoption by families. Through these dog training programs, inmates learn responsibility, patience, tolerance, and skills as animal trainers. The dogs also provide a bridge between the inmates and the guards and reduce inmate-staff conflicts. Successful prison dog-training programs have support from both the community and local dog-training schools. Prison administrators have the responsibility of convincing a dog-training school that the prison is prepared for training dogs and that it has facilities necessary to conduct the training. The prison management staff must work with the schools to obtain professionals to teach the inmates how to train the dogs properly. The training schools must also be convinced that the inmates are sincere and responsible in their desire to work with the dogs. The prisons must have a strong base of community volunteers who will care for and keep the dogs for weekend furloughs throughout the training programs. Each successful program profiled in this article has a careful screening process for those inmates who participate in the training program. Aside from an occasional Federal grant, prison puppy programs depend heavily on community assistance and donations. Several of the programs described in this article receive considerable donations of supplies from guide/service dog programs. Inmates also generate income through bake sales or by selling items manufactured in the prison workshops. Both the community and the inmates benefit from these prison dog-training programs.

Hennessy, M. B., Morris, A., & Linden, F. (2006). Evaluation of the effects of a socialization program in a prison on behavior and pituitary-adrenal hormone levels of shelter dogs. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 99(1), 157-171. [PDF](#)

This study examined outcomes of an ongoing socialization program for shelter dogs conducted at a local prison. Dogs residing at a Humane Society facility were assigned to either a "Control" or "Socialization" treatment. Dogs assigned to both treatments were administered a pretest at the Humane Society consisting of blood withdrawal for hormone analysis, assessment of responses to commands, and observation of behavior in a novel situation. Dogs assigned to the Socialization treatment were then transported to the prison where they lived with, and were trained by, inmate handlers. Dogs in the Control treatment remained at the Humane Society and received no explicit training. Three weeks later, dogs were administered a posttest identical in form to the pretest. Dogs provided the Socialization, but not Control, treatment exhibited significant improvement from pretest to posttest in compliance

with commands. In a novel situation, Socialization dogs showed significantly less jumping on an unfamiliar human and vocalizing, and significantly more yawning, in the posttest relative to the pretest than did Control dogs. Whereas plasma cortisol levels did not vary from pretest to posttest in either group, ACTH levels unexpectedly increased with time in both groups. Moreover, cortisol and ACTH levels were significantly positively correlated with each other at the posttest, but not the pretest. These results provide evidence for positive behavioral outcomes of prison socialization programs for shelter dogs, as well as further support for the notion that shelter housing results in a dysregulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis.

Hershman, C. L. (2008). Inaugural marine prison dog program assists wounded veterans. *Corrections Today*, 70(6), 46-48.

In October 2007, brig personnel were approached by the Carolina Canines for Service, Inc. (CCS) about the feasibility of using the brig and its post-trial inmates in training service dogs for the disabled. A plan of action quickly developed under the CCS's established dog training curriculum. Over a period of 3 months, the program was developed, approved, and started. The dog training area was created by shifting 1 of the brig's 24 inmate dormitory areas and reducing the brig's operational capacity to 264. Written policies and procedures were developed, including procedures for inmate selection to become a dog handler. CCS and senior brig personnel cooperated in developing criteria based largely on willingness to participate in the program and an inmate's time remaining until release. Five primary and five alternate dog handlers were initially selected. Dogs to be trained were selected primarily from local pounds and the base animal control shelters. CCS personnel conducted health and temperament evaluations for the dogs and made the final selection. CCS assigned a dog to a particular handler in consultation with a Marine correctional specialist responsible for overseeing the program. The program is funded through donations to CCS. Costs include dog procurement, supplies, veterinary care, medications, and all other expenses. The program provides inmates with a productive means of rehabilitation through responsibility for the dog's care and training, and disabled military veterans are given priority in the placement of the service dogs at no cost to them.

Hogle, P. S. (2009). Going to the dogs: prison-based training programs are win-win. *Corrections Today*, 71(4), 69.

Many of these programs work with service-dog training organizations to train assistance dogs for community members with disabilities. Others rehabilitate retired racing greyhounds and dogs from area shelters, teaching them skills and manners that will enable them to be placed with adoptive families. Proponents of these programs cite their "win-win" benefits. Not only do the dogs get attention and training, but participating inmates have the chance to learn important life skills while making useful contributions to their communities. Inmates learn nurturing skills in caring for and training the dogs and enjoy a reciprocal caring relationship in which the dogs accept and respond positively to them without regard for their criminal status. This can bolster inmates' self-esteem, an important factor in the development of positive behaviors. Service-dog organizations have found that a single trainer can oversee inmates working with dozens of dogs and that the dogs learn reliable skills while spending time in the prison environment. Administrators in facilities that host dog-training programs often report benefits that extend far beyond the small number of inmates who directly participate in the program. These benefits include reduced tension and violence throughout the facility. Nearly all the prisons with dog-training programs have strict behavioral criteria that inmate applicants must meet, such as no discipline tickets for 6 months or a year. Once an inmate is in the program, he/she can ask to leave, although this is rare. Inmates might also be removed from the program if they have a conduct violation.

Neal, A. (2005). Trained dogs transforming lives. *The Saturday Evening Post*, 64.

No abstract available

Ormerod, E. (2008). Companion animals and offender rehabilitation—experiences from a prison therapeutic community in Scotland. *therapeutic communities*, 29(3), 285-296. [PDF](#)

Interaction with companion animals is now known to confer health and social benefits to people of all ages, whether living in the community or living within an institution. Carefully planned Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) programmes can be introduced to enhance the therapeutic milieu and as an adjunct to client care to help address diverse health and social needs. This paper provides an introductory overview of the role of animals in institutions. The author draws on her experience with particular reference to a programme in a prison-based therapeutic community. The introduction of carefully planned AAT programmes would bring many benefits to prisoners, staff and ultimately to society. A multidisciplinary approach is emphasised. A consistent approach to animals in institutions is required and programmes should work to recognised standards. The effects of AAT on offenders requires more research including monitoring of recidivism.

Osborne, S. J., & Bair, R. (2003). Healing inmates' hearts and spirits with man's best friend. *Corrections Today*, 65(2), 122-123.

The dog-training program at the Kit Carson Correctional Center in Colorado uses inmate handlers to provide trained canines to community agencies who, in turn, provide the dogs to people with disabilities. The Service Dog Training Program began in March 2002, in cooperation with the Canine Assistance, Rehabilitation, Education and Services (CARES) organization, a local nonprofit

agency that supplies trained dogs to the elderly, disabled people, children, and adults to assist them in independent living. The program helps inmates by providing job training and the therapeutic functions of healing hearts and spirits. The program works by providing inmates with a canine that accompanies the inmate everywhere in the correctional facility, including living in the inmates' cell. The inmate handlers follow a strict schedule that begins at 5:30 a.m. and concludes at 9 p.m. Inmate handlers must take their dogs for scheduled bathroom breaks and exercise breaks; they must train their dogs in certain skills; and must ensure that the dogs learn how to love, trust, and bond with people. The dog-training program not only benefits the community by providing trained canines to those in need, it also has benefits for the inmates who participate in the popular program. The program has been shown to have a positive effect on inmates' morale and physical health. Inmates with health or discipline problems have shown considerable improvement in health and attitude within a very short time of being paired with a canine. As such, the Service Dog Training Program is considered a successful inmate program.

Richardson-Taylor, K., & Blanchette, K. (2001). Results of an evaluation of the Pawsitive Directions Canine Program at Nova Institution for Women. Correctional Service Canada, Research Branch. [PDF](#)

This report presents results of an evaluation of the Pawsitive Directions Canine Program at Nova institution for Women. It is a canine-handler training program that introduces women inmates to the basics of dog husbandry and training, and relies on the principles of pet-facilitated therapy. It also specializes in the placement of dogs with adoptive families in need of a well-trained pet or assistance dog. The Pawsitive Directions Canine Program is exclusive to Nova Institution and has been accredited with local, provincial, national and international media exposure.

Schniper, M. (2010). Dog-training programs in prisons give inmates second chances. In S. Engdahl (Ed.) Prisons, 200-209. Detroit, MI: Greenhaven Press. ISBN: 9780737744606.

No summary available.

Strimple, E. O. (2003). A history of prison inmate-animal interaction programs. American Behavioral Scientist, 47(1), 70-78. [PDF](#)

Interest is growing in establishing animal-facilitated programs in prisons. Although food animals have been maintained by prisons for years, few have looked at the benefits inmates derive from working with animals. Recently, prisons have started dog and horse training programs. Preliminary evidence indicates that inmates benefit, learning life-enhancing skills and lowering the recidivism rates. Shelter dogs and wild horses trained by the prisoners help people with physical and emotional needs. State and federal funds are needed to further study the benefits derived for prisoners, animals, and society.

Turner, W. G. (2007). Experiences of offenders in a prison canine program, Federal Probation Journal, 71, 38.

No abstract available.