

Program Participation Results in Differences in Perceptions of Empathy, Self-Esteem, and Locus of Control in Inmates

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Abstract

The incarcerated in America are often not considered as targets for reform or rehabilitation. However, jails and prisons in the United States do offer various programs aimed at inmates' self-improvement and preparation for life after incarceration. These include educational, religious, drug/alcohol rehabilitation and vocational programs. Previous research has found that participation in prison programs can have various benefits for inmates (Schippers, Marker & Fuentes-Merillas, 2001; Davidson & Young 2019). The purpose of this study is to build upon previous research regarding program participation in institutions and the positive impacts it can have on offenders. This study investigates differences in perceptions of inmates on the traits of empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control based on whether the inmate participates in programs and services or does not. Empathy is the sharing of perceived emotions of another individual (Ballantine, Lin, & Veer, 2015b). Self-Esteem is the perception of positive internal self-attributions (Yuki, Sato, Takemura, & Oishi, 2013b). Locus of Control is an individual's expectancy to perceive environmental impacts as either based upon one's own ability (internal) or beyond one's control (external) (Wang & Su, 2013b). It was hypothesized that participants will perceive offenders not involved in programs or services to have lower levels of self-esteem, empathy, and an external locus of control; the sex of the participant will result in different perceptions in regards to the effectiveness of the program; and differences in perceptions for those who have known someone previously incarcerated. The participants will be 104 individuals recruited through classrooms and social media who will read a description of an inmate who either participates in programs or does not. Participants will then complete an Empathy Scale (Ballantine, Lin & Veer, 2015a), a Self-Esteem Measure (Yuki, Sato, Takemura & Oishi, 2013a) and a Locus of Control Measure (Wang & Su, 2013a) for the prisoner described.

Keywords: Incarceration, Empathy, Perception

1. Introduction

Thrown aside and forgotten about: this is a popular attitude in regards to America's prisoners. Even though this approach of hiding inmates away is common, there are various resources for those within the jail that aim to help improve themselves for eventual return into society. For those inside these facilities, there are opportunities for growth and improvement, especially through programs that are aimed at helping and assisting those in custody. Such programs are an important aspect of services offered to the incarcerated that encourage growth of those within these systems to better themselves in preparation for the outside world. Some examples of programs are vocational, educational, health/wellness, and substance abuse. Incarcerated individuals could benefit from various programs to help them transition and function in normal society. This experience can allow them to survive and prosper outside of their cell.

This study will highlight not only the importance of programs within prisons and jails to showcase the positive benefits prisoners can receive by their participation, but also the perceptions that normal society has on those

incarcerated and the implications this can have. Since much research has investigated the effects of a range of programs on inmates and the perception of these programs, this study will build upon previous research to add support for inmate programs and services. Allowing for those incarcerated to create a solid foundation for themselves and learn positive skills and habits will ensure a brighter future and better society for all.

1.1 Predictors of Criminality

Differences between those incarcerated and those who are not has piqued the interest of researchers. Some have investigated how non-incarcerated adults differ from prisoners and the tendencies and personality traits that could predispose an individual to offending.

Internationally, research has shown personality differences in incarcerated and non-incarcerated adults. The Big 5 Personality Traits have been shown to differ between Japanese inmates and non-incarcerated adults. Criminals were shown to be higher in extraversion, agreeableness, and openness than normal adults (Shimotsukasa, Oshio, Tani, & Yamaki, 2018). Eriksson, Masche-No, and Daderman (2017) completed a study that investigated the differences between male and female Swedish inmates and non-inmates in offending behaviors in relation to the trait of conscientiousness. Results showed that male inmates scored higher on conscientiousness than non-inmates and inmates both male and female scored higher on order and self-discipline than a control group of students. The reason for these counter-intuitive and seemingly surprising results may be stemming from the programs or services that are being offered for those incarcerated. The emphasis of focusing on what one should be doing right and the discipline that this encompasses, could be directly linked to the inmates' sole focus on attempting to better themselves.

Research has investigated various traits as predictors of criminality. A study by Young, Taylor, and Gudjonsson in 2016 found that young boys aged six to eight years old who demonstrated emotional problems and conduct disorder tendencies best predicted one committing violent criminal offenses 19 years later. In the United States, paternal absenteeism and adolescent fertility positively predicted homicide rates and prevalence of muggings/attacks (Minkov & Beaver, 2016). Thus, there are various personality traits and early experiences that contribute to one's likelihood to engage in criminal behavior.

Due to the belief that there are clear differences between inmates and the rest of society, research has been conducted to attempt and pinpoint specific factors or trends that will determine an individual's likelihood of self-improvement once incarcerated. Self-compassion was found to have a significant positive relationship with self-esteem, social connectedness, and self-control in those incarcerated (Morley, Terranova, Cunningham, & Kraft, 2016). A positive association has also been shown between guilt proneness and empathy scores, along with perceived social support for prisoners (Culda, Opre, & Miu, 2016). For those participating in a type of program called victim impact training, individuals who were less empathetic were less likely to develop feelings of guilt, but more likely to experience shame. This suggests that as offenders become less empathetic, they are more likely to develop the response of shame (Jackson, 2009). Empathy is a significant predictor of one's guilt and shame. The traits of self-compassion and empathy, along with self-esteem, social connectedness, self-control, guilt, shame and social support are all factors that go hand in hand and can negatively or positively influence one's future criminal behaviors and tendencies.

1.2 Program Effectiveness

Various programs have been implemented in prisons, jails, and similar facilities in the hopes of having a positive impact on inmates mentally and physically. The availability and types of programs vary between states, counties, and facilities, but all aim to have a positive impact on those who in the system participating in these services.

There are a wide variety of programs and services that are offered in various institutions for inmates to participate in. Programs such as vocational, educational, health/wellness, substance abuse and religious are some types of services that one can partake in. These programs allow for those incarcerated to not only gain or enhance positive skills, but also creates an outlet or sense of purpose.

Various studies have researched the traits (specifically empathy, self-esteem and locus of control) that may influence the rates of recidivism as well as investigate the factor of participation in programs and services. Although much of this research pertains specifically to sexual and juvenile offenders, it is still relevant to criminals in general and the rates of recidivism and therefore should be discussed.

Wastell, Cairns & Haywood (2009) investigated the success of a program designed to develop feelings of empathy toward one's victim. All participants were adult males convicted of child molestation. One group participated in the Normalization, Education, Training and Treatment (NETT) program designed to help inmates develop skills to improve their transition into normal society. Results suggested that general empathy, emotional arousal, and cognitive

empathy were all improved after treatment as compared to a control group. Identifying and describing one's feelings, as well as an improved ability to assess and acknowledge one's own internal states improved. Recognizing the perspective of another and experiencing more feelings was a positive increase in the experimental group. However, participants did not show significant improvement in the ability to recognize affective cues in other people. This inability may contribute to the continued problem of recidivism in sex offenders. Providing programs such as NETT could give the necessary skills to those incarcerated and in turn decrease the rates of recidivism.

In a study by Thornton, Beech & Marshall (2004), researchers looked at the relationship between the trait of self-esteem and sexual recidivism in adult male sexual offenders. It was found that sexual recidivism was higher for those with the lowest levels of self-esteem and was lower in those individuals who had higher levels of self-esteem. From this, it can be inferred that self-esteem plays a significant role in the recidivism rates of sexual offenders. Creating a program that would target an individual's self-esteem and teach them how to increase their self-esteem and traits similar could have a positive impact on lowering the overall rates of recidivism.

Belief in having primary control or an internal locus of control has been shown to positively be associated with less despair, stronger expectations of success and less acceptance of present struggles with no attempt to change them. On the other hand, a secondary control mindset or an external locus of control was found to be associated with more despair, weaker expectations of success, and more acceptance of one's experiences without trying to improve their situation. These results were found by Halliday and Graham (2000) while investigating primary and secondary control among juvenile offenders. Having a program that those incarcerated can participate in to allow for them to learn how to have a primary or internal locus of control could have a positive impact on their perceived inability to change their path of crime.

1.3 Perceptions of those Incarcerated

Opinions of those incarcerated by normal society vary from individual to individual. Providing programs that increase beneficial skills for one's eventual transition into society can promote a positive well-being and lower recidivism rates. Some of society encourage the creation of programs and services to aim at working alongside those incarcerated, while others reject this viewpoint. The views of those in normal society are extremely important for those exiting the system. Employment opportunities, housing and basic societal functioning will be possible and entail an easier transition if those on the outside of prison have a more positive stigma of those exiting the system. In addition, attempting to create a separation between those labeled as "ex-cons" versus those who have not spent time incarcerated, will only harbor the growth that could be supported for a more diverse and accepting society.

In regards to the "get tough" laws that aim at harsh punishment for sexual offenders, many members of society encourage this type of reform. Extreme hostile attitudes are directed at those labeled as sex offenders. The public supports these types of policies, even though research has shown that many of these laws are ineffective and in some cases contribute to recidivism. In a study by Pickett, Mancini, and Mears (2013) punitiveness toward sex offenders was shown to be higher in those individuals who had a sex offender stereotype where the offender was unable to be changed or helped. Political conservatism had an impact on views of sexual offending by classifying traits of sexual offenders as deviating from core values such as family structure, gender roles, and sexual norms. One's own biases and beliefs can have an impact on their perceptions of the incarcerated and contribute to their overall feelings of this population.

A study by Edwards and Mottarella (2015) assessed undergraduate student's perceived thoughts on social distance, the development of laws that are meant to protect the public from offenders in regards to distance from certain areas (schools, neighborhoods, large shopping centers) in relation to an offender committing a non-violent or violent crime and being in therapy or not. Participants preferred greater levels of non-intimate social distance (friends/coworkers) from violent offenders versus non-violent offenders. Those offenders who had completed therapy were perceived as less of a threat with participant ratings showing overall lower levels of non-intimate social distance preferred. Wanting to maintain a friendship with someone who had previously been convicted but had completed therapy was also shown. In addition, nerves around sharing a room with someone convicted of a violent crime were decreased if that individual were involved in therapy. Perceptions of an individual committing to making a change for the better was overall shown to have a positive impact on the social distance of this offender.

Turney, Lee & Comfort (2013) investigated the relationship between stigma, discrimination and mental health of former inmates. Results concluded that one's criminal record and racial/ethnic discrimination were significant predictors of psychological distress. Society perceives those formerly incarcerated as different than the rest of us which has a direct negative influence on those who struggled with the law.

In regards to perceptions of every day society on those inmates that participate in programs and services, there is no prior research investigating this phenomenon. This is the first study that investigates the perceptions of society on

various traits due to the incarcerated individual participating in programs and services with the goal of improving their mental health in preparation for the outside world. The rest of society will have a huge impact on the well-being and overall success of those formally incarcerated obtaining a living space, car, job, and other necessary assets. With no knowledge documented in a research experiment, it is difficult to be proactive with resources that would assist those leaving prison or jail.

1.4 Empathy, Self-Esteem, and Locus of Control

The three traits of empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control will be measured in this study. Their role as predictors of criminality and importance in the presence or absence of those incarcerated can play a huge role in the decision to participate in programs and services. Empathy is the sharing of perceived emotions of another individual (Ballantine, Lin, & Ver, 2015b). Self-Esteem is the perception of positive internal self-attributions (Yuki, Sato, Takemura, & Oishi, 2013b). Locus of Control is an individual's expectancy to perceive environmental impacts as either based upon one's own ability (internal) or beyond one's control (external) (Wang & Su, 2013b). An external locus of control is when one believes that outside motivators and circumstances cause the outcomes in one's life. One does not have control over the events that happen. Those with an internal locus of control tend to recognize themselves as being the main motivating factor in determining outcomes in their life. All of these traits are measurable by various forms of tests and have a direct influence on the actions and behaviors of an individual.

1.5 Hypotheses

The programs and services that are offered within prisons and jails can have positive effects on those involved. One's background and personality traits can contribute to criminal tendencies. It was hypothesized that participants will perceive offenders not involved in programs or services to have lower levels of self-esteem, empathy, and an external locus of control; the second hypothesis tested the sex of the participant predicting in different perceptions in regards to the effectiveness of the program with male participants predicting overall lower ratings of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control in the incarcerated individual, while female participants predicted having higher ratings of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control in the incarcerated individual; and those who have known someone previously incarcerated will have overall higher ratings of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control for the described incarcerated individual than those participants who have never known anyone incarcerated.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

Participants consisted of 104 individuals who began the survey recruited through college classrooms and social media using an online link to complete the survey, with 80 completing the survey, 18 male and 62 female. Participants were not given the background of the study containing the research questions and hypotheses.

Participants' ages ranged from 17-78, with an average age of 27.51 years old ($SD = 14.86$). The sample was diverse in regards to ethnicity consisting of 42 White, 16 Asian, 4 African American, 19 Hispanic, 2 Native American/Pacific Islander, 1 American Indian/Alaska Native and 5 other. 36 participants have known or currently know someone incarcerated, whereas 44 did not. 61 participants were currently enrolled in college, while 19 were not. Of the 104 participants, 58 were given the vignette describing the inmate as being involved in programs and services, while 46 were given the vignette describing the inmate as not being involved in programs and services.

2.2 Materials

After following the online link, a randomly assigned survey consisting of one of two possible vignettes was assigned to participants. The survey described one inmate only differing on his participation in programs and services, along with the three same scales to assess perceived empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control and demographic questions. The following scales were used to measure perceptions of the traits of empathy (Ballantine, Lin & Veer, 2015a), self-esteem (Yuki, Sato, Takemura & Oishi, 2013a), and locus of control (Wang & Su, 2013a). All statements were on a

Likert scale ranging from 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree). All measures were in the public domain and were shown to have high reliability and validity (Appendix A).

Two vignettes were created to describe one inmate, varying only on his participation in programs and services inside his facility. An example of one of the vignettes is as follows: Chris is a 37 year old male who has been convicted of breaking and entering. He was sentenced for 4 years. The prison that Chris is doing time in offers a variety of different programs for inmates to choose from including vocational, substance, educational, and health. He is involved in both substance abuse and anger management programs in the facility. Positive relations with other inmates have been formed, along with not getting written up for disobeying any rules of the prison.

To measure the trait of empathy, an Empathy Scale (Ballantine, Lin, & Veer, 2015a) was used. This consisted of four statements pertaining to the individual's perceptions in regards to the inmate's feelings around others. "[He] often ha[s] concerned feelings for people less fortunate than [him]" was one of the statements used. In regards to Self-Esteem, all three statements addressed the participant's feelings and opinions that the inmate would have about himself (Yuki, Sato, Takemura & Oishi, 2013a). An example of one of the statements is "[he] feels that [he is] a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others". Locus of control was measured by four statements to assess a perceived tendency of external or internal locus of control in the inmate (Wang & Su, 2013a). Statements focused on the perceived control or luck he experiences such as "[e]very time [he tries] to go ahead, something or somebody stops [him]". The demographic questions asked of the participants pertained to their age, ethnicity, college enrollment and sex.

2.3 Procedure

Participants were either recruited through one of their classrooms or by following the link on social media. For those recruited by way of class, participants listened to me read a script describing the research, survey, and how they could proceed in assisting with my thesis after I received permission from the instructor. An email was then sent to all students once again summarizing the research, also providing a link to the survey. For those that followed the link on my social media, they saw a summary of the purpose behind my study and were provided the link.

After following the online link found on social media or via email, the Letter of Introduction which provided an introduction to the research and an explanation for the purpose of the study was shown. Those who chose to continue then saw the survey which included one of two vignettes describing one inmate, only varying on his participation in programs and services in his prison as well as three scales in which to measure the inmates on; an Empathy Scale (Ballantine, Lin, & Veer, 2015a), a Self-Esteem Measure (Yuki, Sato, Takemura, & Oishi 2013a) and a Locus of Control Measure (Wang, & Su, 2013a) and demographic questions (for the full survey see Appendix A). When the participant was finished filling out the survey, they were thanked for their participation.

3. Results

The first hypothesis tested participants perceiving offenders not involved in programs and services to have lower levels of self-esteem, empathy, and an external locus of control. An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the perceptions of the traits of empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control on the inmate based on participation or non-participation in programs and services. The mean scores for empathy were 3.23 ($SD = .67$) for the inmate not involved in programs and services and 3.26 ($SD = .56$) for the inmate involved in programs and services. In regards to self-esteem the mean scores were 2.82 ($SD = .92$) and 2.74 ($SD = .72$) accordingly. For locus of control, mean score, as shown in Figure 1 were 3.03 ($SD = .65$) and 3.23 ($SD = .73$) accordingly. All mean and (standard deviation) scores are shown in Table 1. No significant differences were found between programs and service participation, the traits of empathy $t(74) = .19, p > 0.05$, self-esteem control $t(76) = .44, p > 0.05$, and locus of control $t(75) = 1.26, p > 0.05$. Participant's perceptions of the incarcerated individual that participated in programs and services in regards to empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control were on average the same as the perceptions of the incarcerated individual that did not participate in programs and services.

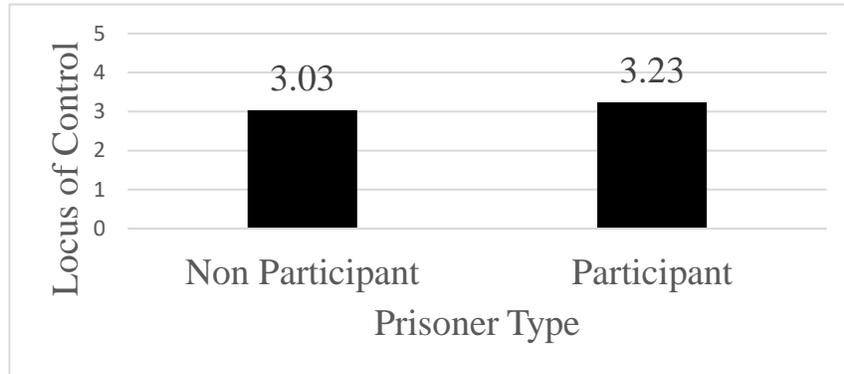


Figure 1. Means for Locus of Control scores in regards to the independent samples t-test

Table 1. Means and (standard deviations) for the traits of self-esteem, empathy and locus of control in regards to the independent samples t-test

	Traits		
	Empathy	Self-Esteem	Locus of Control
Non-Participant	3.23 (.67)	2.82 (.92)	3.03 (.65)
Participant	3.26 (.56)	2.74 (.72)	3.23 (.73)

The second hypothesis tested the sex of the participant resulting in different perceptions in regards to the effectiveness of the program hypothesizing that male participants would have overall lower ratings of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control, and female participants would have higher ratings of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control. An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between sex and the three traits. There was no significant difference for empathy $t(73) = .47, p > 0.05$; self-esteem $t(75) = 1.23, p > 0.05$; and locus of control $t(74) = 1.51, p > 0.05$. Males and females perceptions of the incarcerated individual did not differ in regards to the traits and program participation.

The last hypothesis tested those who have known someone previously incarcerated stating that they will have overall higher ratings of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control for the described incarcerated individual than those participants who have never known anyone incarcerated. An independent samples t-test was conducted and found that there was no significant difference between the participant knowing someone who has been incarcerated or currently is incarcerated and the three traits for empathy $t(73) = 1.40, p > 0.05$; self-esteem $t(75) = 1.83, p > 0.05$; and locus of control $t(74) = .14, p > 0.05$. It did not matter whether or not someone had previous experiences with an incarcerated individual, overall participants did not view differences in the traits of empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control.

No significant difference was found between race and the traits of empathy $t(73) = .51, p > 0.05$; self-esteem $t(75) = .17, p > 0.05$; and locus of control $t(74) = .66, p > 0.05$. No matter what race the participant was, this did not have an effect on their ratings of empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control. Even though race was not included as part of the description of the incarcerated individual in the vignettes, the perceptions of one's own personal biases stemming from their own internalization of race was a factor that was important to include as part of the demographic questions and analyze for significance. In addition, the majority of those in this study were college students and therefore analyzed for significance resulting in no significant difference in regards to the traits of empathy $t(73) = .93, p > 0.05$; self-esteem $t(75) = .87, p > 0.05$; and locus of control $t(74) = .15, p > 0.05$ and college enrollment.

In conclusion, there were no significant differences found between the inmate being described as participating in programs and services or not involved and the traits of empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control, gender, knowing someone in the system, race, college enrollment and age.

4. Discussion

The present research suggests that perceptions of an incarcerated individual whether or not they participated in programs or services in their facility does not have any impact on the traits of empathy, self-esteem, and locus of control. The age, race, sex, and familiarity of knowing someone incarcerated does not have any impact on their perceptions of an inmate on the traits of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control, no matter the progress that has been made by participating in programs and services. The implications that this finding has are significant due to impacting the entire success of an offender once they leave incarceration.

Those in the system are granted various opportunities to gain the necessary skills when transitioning back into normal society. Research has shown that many incarcerated individuals who have the chance to participate in programs while incarcerated have prospered and increased positive skills. For example, prisoners working within the prison had lower ratings of self-esteem than those who were granted work outside of the prison. Convicted prisoners rated themselves lower on the self-esteem scale than those awaiting trial (Blatier, 2000). This contrast between prisoners contained within the prison and those allowed to leave periodically or with the eventual hope of exiting the prison, demonstrates differences in one's traits that could persist when released.

Social knowledge and social interaction were greatly improved after being involved in Goldstein therapy shown in a study by Schippers, Marker & Fuentes-Merillas (2001). An increase in positive feelings related to everyday social situations and a decrease in social anxiety were also shown in male offenders. Goldstein structured learning therapy could have a significant impact on those offenders that are transitioning from prison or jail life into everyday society. Another program such as Seeking Safety was found to improve general mental health symptoms and psychological functioning in male inmates (Wolff et. al, 2015).

Recidivism rates have been shown to decrease with increasing one's self-esteem (Thornton, Beech & Marshall, 2004). By implementing programs to increase one's positive traits such as self-esteem, this can contribute to a decrease in reoffending. In addition, having an internal locus of control has been shown to be positively associated with less despair, stronger expectations of success and less acceptance of present struggles potentially influencing one to change their situation for the better (Halliday & Graham (2000). These results demonstrate that those incarcerated actively working on themselves can change and become productive members of society.

However, if all of this research pointing toward supporting programs and services to improve the mental health of an incarcerated individual does not change the perceptions of those in the outside world, while still viewing all incarcerated individuals as the same as when they were arrested, what does the ex-offender have to do in order to redeem themselves? The difficulty of those leaving the system as a changed individual to distance themselves from the stereotype of a criminal is life-threatening. The implications that the perception or stigma around an individual can make it extremely challenging to obtain a job, go to school, rent a property, or even face society after the fact. Even through one may make immense progress working on themselves through the programs in the facility, this proves to not be enough for those on the outside.

The stereotypes and stigma that we all hold can be vital to the well-being of ex-offenders. Those offenders who had completed therapy were perceived as less of a threat than those who had not completed therapy. In addition, wanting to maintain a friendship with someone who had previously been convicted but had completed therapy was shown. Nerves around sharing a room with someone convicted of a violent crime were decreased if that individual were involved in therapy (Edwards & Mottarella, 2015). Perceptions of some individuals have been adapted due to learning about the convicted individual working to improve themselves.

Federal and state institutions have contributed financially to various programs and services practiced in prisons and jails due to the belief that they will have a real impact on one's life. With the support of research and real-life success stories, this contributes to the impact of continued and new programs on future inmates.

Transitioning back into society with a new perspective and outlook on life can be all a former inmate needs to prosper in society. However, if one is never given the chance to do so, what was the point of working tirelessly to gain back the trust of society? When we are all closed minded and do not give the opportunity for one to redeem themselves, this creates major problems for society as a whole. Therefore, this research points in the direction of everyday society to take a step back and analyze one's own stereotypes and perceptions of those around them.

4.1 Limitations

There were various limitations in this study that could have contributed to the resulted outcomes. For instance, there could have been alternative reasons for why participants felt as though they could not make a clear assessment of the

inmate. Only knowing a few brief sentences about the individual may not have been enough to make a decision about his self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control. In addition, the differences between the two vignettes in regards to Chris' participation or lack of participation in the programs and services may not have been clear enough. Not seeing this distinction could have contributed to the lack of a significant difference between the three traits and participation in programs and services. The population sample that was used was homogeneous in regards to directing this study mostly to college students. Since this was completed at an undergraduate campus, the majority of those who answered this survey were college students. In addition, no ex-cons were included which could have had an implication on the results.

4.2 Future Directions

The goal of the current study was to showcase the effectiveness of inmates participating in programs and services on the perceptions of those in society. However, this study showed that the stereotypes and perceptions that those in society have, overshadow the successfulness of an inmate changing for the better.

Past research has demonstrated the effectiveness of inmates participating in programs and services on various traits, such as those explored in this study. Future research could target practices that would convince or open the minds of society to trust in those coming out of the judicial system. Educating the outside world to take the participation in programs and services that an inmate completed could have a positive impact on the ex-offender's well-being. By reading articles and exploring the effectiveness of various programs in certain facilities could change or have an impact on the perceptions of society.

In addition, future research could investigate those who have made it through the incarceration system and find what resources helped them to live a successful life on the outside. This could directly demonstrate that simply because one was incarcerated, it does not have to continue to be their path for life. People are constantly changing and some programs can have an extremely positive impact on the minds of those incarcerated. This could be valuable to members of society to see for themselves the change in action.

This was also the first study completed that investigated perceptions of everyday society on those incarcerated based on their participation in programs and services. Future research could delve more into this topic and discover the reasoning behind one's perceptions of an offender on various traits in regards to participation in some sort of program to improve their well-being.

This present study showed that there are no differences in perceptions of those incarcerated participating in programs and services from those not participating on the traits of self-esteem, empathy, and locus of control. The implications that this has on the mindset of our every-day society forces us to look within ourselves for the real methods of change. Currently in the United States, there are numerous programs aimed at reforming prison inmates. If these programs do not have an effect on how the people of America view them, we as a whole will still perceive these maladjusted humans as the evil of society. It is time for this viewpoint to change.

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