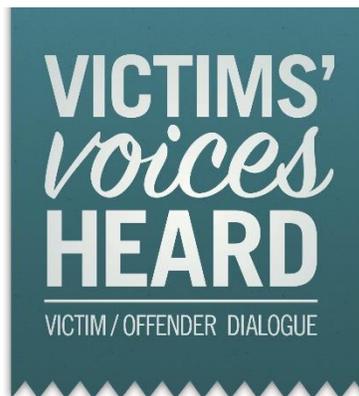


VICTIM IMPACT: LISTEN AND LEARN
AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE
VICTIM IMPACT: LISTEN AND LEARN PROGRAM
ON PRISONER RECIDIVISM AND PRISONER BEHAVIOR

OCTOBER 2015

VICTIMS' VOICES HEARD, INC.



ALPERT MEDICAL SCHOOL AT BROWN UNIVERSITY



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Executive Summary

This is a report of the evaluation study conducted to examine the effects of the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program on the behaviors of the prisoners who attended this program. The focus of the data we collected and reported on was on the participants' behaviors after attending the program but while still in prison, and upon release from prison.

Main findings

1. From the available data on 333 prisoners who had attended the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program prior to their release back into the community, 118 or 35% re-offended and were re-committed back into prison within the state of Delaware within a three-year period following release. Comparable data provided by a 2013 DELJIS report on prisoner recidivism reported that within three-years of release 67% of prisoners re-offended and were re-committed back into Delaware prisons.
2. Prisoners who attended the program and remained in prisons after attending the program showed a reduction by a third in the frequency of disciplinary charges for the period of imprisonment after attending the program.

Evaluation Overview

Rationale

This is a report of the evaluation study conducted to examine the effects of the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program on the behaviors of the prisoners who attended this program. The focus of the data we collected and reported on was on the participants' behaviors after attending the program but while still in prison, and upon release from prison.

The Victim Impact: Listen and Learn Program was developed between 2005 and 2006, by the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, Office of Victim and Survivor Services. Funding for this program development came from the Office for Victims of Crime within the US Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs. The manualized curriculum that was developed is used by facilitators engaged by Victims' Voices Heard Inc. to deliver the Victim Impact program.

Program Philosophy

Victims' Voices Heard Inc. has been delivering the Victim Impact program within the Delaware prison system since April 2011. There have been over 500 incarcerated individuals who have participated in the program since April 2011. The central tenet of this program is that a vital component to facilitating change within an individual offender is a focus on the victims of crime, and the impact of a crime on the victim.

As an organization, Victims' Voices Heard operates the prison program using the principles of restorative justice; that is, the effect of the crime on the victim is paramount and the offender has to take responsibility for the harm they have done to begin the process of repairing that harm. As is stated on the organization's website:

"...we work to restore victims' lives and end repeated violence."

Program Approach

The main conduit to facilitating this change is hearing the voices of victims; through stories, video, newspaper and role-play. There are also guest speakers who attend the group sessions and describe the direct impact that crime has had on their lives. These varied resources are utilized by the program facilitators to have the prisoners who attend the program, and who have committed crimes, listen to the voice of the crime victim. The subtle, yet pervasive message of this program is that the stories that the prisoner attendees listen to are indeed the stories of their own victims. Also, that the impact is experienced beyond the original crime victim, to the families and communities of the victim, and to the families and communities of the offenders who have been convicted of these crimes.

Program stakeholders

There are many groups of peoples who can be considered stakeholders of the Victim Impact program. These include the prisoners who attend the program; the facilitators who deliver the program; the Board of Directors of Victims' Voices Inc. who oversee this program; the prison staff who engage with prisoners; the State of Delaware Department of Correction and the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System, who are responsible for prison administration and the operation of the technology to support the correctional system; and the funders of this program. However, the most important stakeholders are members of the community where crimes are committed and who experience the fall-out of crime. These community stakeholders need to be informed of the effects of the Victim Impact program, to judge for themselves if their communities can be safer places when prisoners attend and benefit from this program.

Evaluation Questions

This evaluation report will focus on describing those individuals who attended this program, and will report on available data that allows us to answer two key questions about the program:

Evaluation question 1:

What proportion of prisoners who have attended the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program are recidivists within three-years of release?

This is considered the key question to be answered in this evaluation whether prisoners who attend this program while in prison are less likely to commit crimes and come back to prison compared to those prisoners who do not attend the program.

The expectations for re-arrest and re-incarceration are high. In 2013, the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System (DELJIS) reported on the recidivism rates of prisoners released from Delaware correctional facilities between 2008 and 2009, for the three-year period following prisoners' release¹. Recidivism comprised of re-arrest, reconviction, and imprisonment for a crime, after an individual has been released from prison.

The data presented in this DELJIS report showed that recidivism rates increase over time after release and that by three-years following release over 70% of released prisoners from both cohorts had been re-arrested and of these, over 67% had been recommitted into the State's correctional facilities. Over 50% of the re-arrests and close to 50% of the re-commitments happened within the first year following the initial release. Factors that were associated with coming back to prison included being male, African American, and younger than 35 at the time of release.

Given that over 500 prisoners have attended the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program since its inception, it is important to evaluate the evidence for the program in reducing the burden of crime for the citizens of Delaware. It is also of interest to determine the length of effect of the program on prisoner recidivism. We also asked if the effect of the Victim Impact program decreased over time; namely, did more individuals return to prison as their time from released increased, which may indicate the need for either a more intensive program pre-release from incarceration or the need for intervention after prison release for those at risk of recidivism.

Evaluation question 2:

Are there additional benefits in attending the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program?

Many of the individuals who attend the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program are serving long prison sentences and remain in prison after they have received the training, and do so at the time of this report. The question of what are the benefits of attending the program for these prisoners, other prisoners and the general prison environment is an important one to attempt to answer. In particular, as an objective metric of behavioral change, we want to examine the prison disciplinary record of program attendees before and after program attendance. It may be that incidence of violations of prison rules decrease and compliance with instructions or involvement in other therapeutic programs increase. A comparison of pre to post program attendance, up to the point of release, would be informative: with disciplinary violations as the outcome of interest.

Data Collection and Analyses

The data that were used to compile this preliminary report were collected using a mixed-methods approach. Data collected by the State of Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) and the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System (DELJIS) were used to assess the two key questions on recidivism and prison behavior before and after program attendance. Data on imprisonment was calculated from date of admission prior to the program training, to date of release after the program training (or until May 26th 2015 if the individual was still in prison). Data on recidivism (from DELJIS) was taken from the time of release from prison, after the program training, until April 22nd 2015.

The facilitators who delivered this program conducted a survey with the attendees before they started the program activities and at the program's conclusion. This survey is part of the Victim Impact program manual. The survey has 50 items that constitute five subscales measuring the following domains: Knowledge of victims' rights; knowledge of victim related facts; sensitivity to victim's plight; victim blaming, and accountability. The 50 items are scored on a scale of 1 to 6 anchored at 'Strongly Disagree' (1) and 'Strongly Agree' (6) for the attitude items, and a binary 0 or 1 code for the knowledge items. The subscales are summed together to give an overall survey score. It is expected that the overall score will increase between the pre and end of program administrations.

We also collected interview data from two facilitators who deliver the program, a male and female prisoner who attended the program, and Kim Book who is the Director of the program. These interviews were conducted in July 2015 at the Baylor Women's correctional facility and Sussex Correctional Institution correctional facility. These interviews focused on experiences in delivering and attending this program, which adds an important personal voice to this evaluation report. We intersperse relevant quotes from those interviews in this report.

Results

Who attended the program?

We report on data from 486 of the program attendees, that we had sufficient data on, to conduct analyses. Table 1 provides us with some of these details. Most of the attendees were male (85%), which reflects the overall composition of the US² and the state of Delaware prison population¹. The data in Table 1 are divided between the male and female prisoners who attended the program.

Table 1: Characteristics of prisoners program attendees

	Males = 412	Females = 74
<i>Race</i>		
White	197	48
African American	215	26
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Hispanic	10	3
Not-Hispanic	402	71
Average Age (years)	35.8 (Range: 19-70)	34.2 (Range: 19-62)
<i>Facility</i>		
Level 4	144	16
Level 5	268	58

Of the male prisoners, 52% identified as Black/African American and among female prisoners 35% identified as Black/African American. There were very few prisoners who identified as Hispanic (n = 13); although we report on ethnicity in this report, the

conclusions we can reach about differences in behaviors and outcomes due to ethnicity are very limited. The average age of the males and females at the time of attending the program was very similar, although the age range in women (19-62) was younger than in men (19-70). Most of the male and female prisoners were housed within a Level 5 facility at the time they attended the program (65% and 78% respectively).

The average length of imprisonment of the attendees varied (this time was calculated from admission prior to the program, to release after the program, or for those still in prison until May 26th 2015). The average prison sentence was 43.6 months (or 3.6 years) with a range of 2 months to 409 months (or 34.1 years). The length of sentence was not significantly different between males (45.2 months) and females (34.9 months), but was significantly different between White (36.2 months) and Black/African American prisoners (51.2 months; $p = 0.01$). However, the difference in sentence length does not adjust for differences in types of crimes committed.

What happened during the program?

Prisoners attend the program as part of a group, held at the facility and conducted by the same facilitator throughout the 12 program sessions. The Victim Impact program manual² contains a 50-item survey that is administered before the group sessions begin and at the final group session. This survey is designed to assess changes in the following areas: 1. Prisoners' knowledge about the effects of crime on a victim(s), 2. The prisoners' expressed empathy for the victim(s) of crime, 3. Decrease in blaming the victim of crime for the event, and 4. Increasing personal responsibility of the prisoner for their actions, which includes greater expression of wanting to make amends for the effects of their crimes on their victim(s).

Below, is a quote from a female prisoner who attended the program, describing the effects of hearing a guest speaker talk about how they were affected by a crime.

“to hear somebody speak about a situation that was devastating to them, and to understand that no matter how much time has passed it still affects them, it really stood out..... was actually what stuck out to me the most. Now it gives me a completely new perspective, when I look at crimes in the newspaper, or the news. Unlike before, now my thoughts are- what happened to the victims and their families what are the legal and physical problems.”

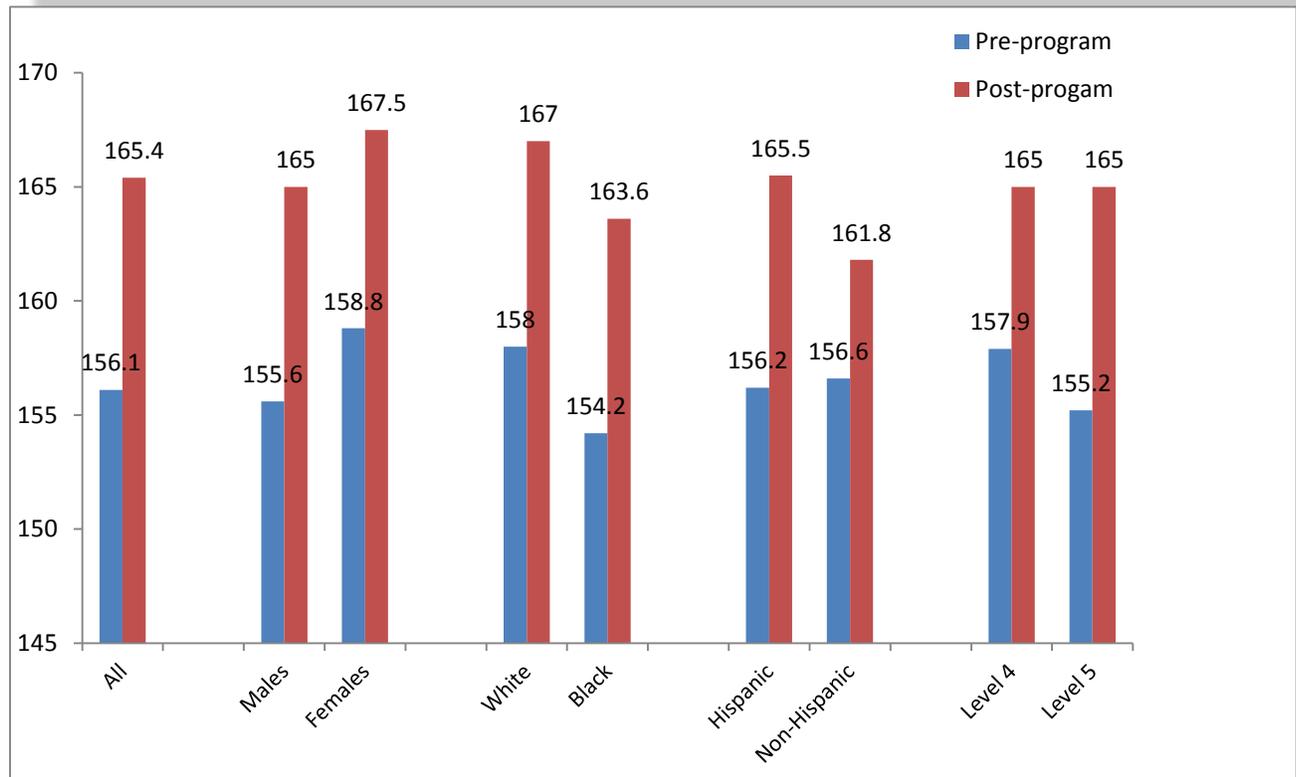
Female prisoner attendee July 2015

In general, most prisoners who attended the program, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, race, or where they were imprisoned, showed improvement in the key areas measured by the survey items, as can be seen in Figure 1 below.

We can see that overall there was an increase in survey scores from the pre to post program administration. This change indicates an increase in knowledge about the effects of crime and improvement in the attitudes of sensitivity to a crime victims' experience and a decrease in victim blaming. These are outcomes that the program is designed to achieve.

In Figure 1 we present the average scores for each group at the start and at the completion of the program. We conducted analyses on mean differences in change in the scores for all prisoners who attended and across the sub-groups of prisoners, we employed two main statistical tests, Studentised t-tests and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test, to determine if the discrepancies between the pre and post test scores were significantly different based on the gender, race or correctional facility level of the attendee. The results indicate that although there may be variability within the different groups of prisoners there were no significant differences between these groups in changes in the attitudes pre and post program as measured by the survey.

Figure 1: Average pre and post program survey scores by prisoner groups

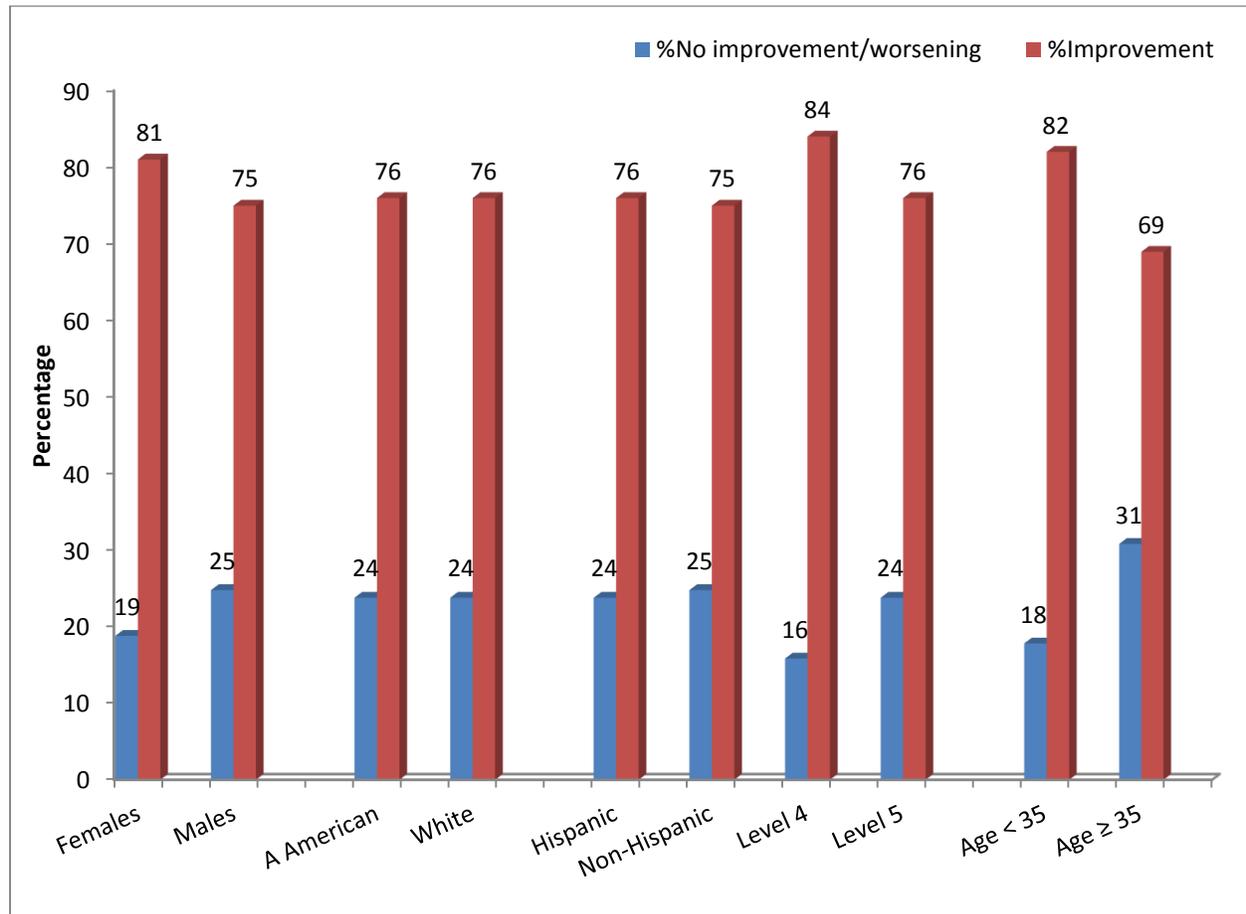


However, not all individuals who took part in the program showed an improvement. For some program attendees their scores worsened after completing the program or stayed the same. We examined who changed and did not change in the program. We used a Fishers Exact Chi-Square analysis to examine differences in the proportion of groups of prisoners who did or did not positively change in the key areas measured by the program survey. Figure 2 below displays the percentages of prisoners who attended the program and whose post program survey scores either improved, did not improve/worsened.

We found that 19% of female prisoners and 25% of male prisoners either did not change, or had worse post program survey scores. There were 24% of Hispanic prisoners, 25% of non-Hispanic prisoners, 24% of African American and 24% of white prisoners who did not change, or had worse post program scores. Of prisoners who attended the program while in a level 4 facility, 16% did not change or had worse

scores, this was also found in 24% of Level 5 prisoners who attended the program. These differences did not reach statistical significance.

Figure 2: The percentage that positively changed or worsened in pre and post program survey scores by prisoner groups



However, when we looked at prisoners age, which we re-classified as those who were age 35 years or younger versus those older than 35 years at the time of engaging in the program, 18% of younger prisoners, but 31% of the older prisoners, did not change or had worse scores in the post program survey. This difference did reach statistical significance ($p = 0.03$). It must be remembered when reviewing these statistics that the categories used are not mutually exclusive; for example a prisoner can be male, non-Hispanic and have been in a Level 4 facility when they engaged in the program.

Evaluation question 1: Recidivism

Data was gathered on 333 prisoners who had been released since completing the Victim Impact program, and that data on recidivism was available. In total 118 (35%) released prisoners re-offended and were re-incarcerated over the three-year period that data was available. The average time to re-offense and re-incarceration was 325 days with a range of 1 to 1096 days. Of these released prisoners 77 (23%) were recommitted to prison within one-year of release; an additional 31 (total = 31%) were recommitted between one and two-years after release, and 10 (total = 35%) were recommitted between two to three years after release.

We can compare these data to the data collected by the Delaware Statistical Analysis Center. This study tracked two cohorts of prisoners who were released between 2008 and 2009 from prisons within the Delaware Correctional System, and tracked for up to a three-year period. This study found that across the three-years following release the numbers of prisoners who were recommitted to prison increased from 47% at the end of year 1; 61% at the end of year 2, and 67% at the end of year 3. These numbers were consistent across the two cohorts that were studied.

We estimated the 95% confidence interval around the recommitment rate of prisoners who were released after attending the Victim Impact program. This confidence interval allows us to predict where our estimate of recommitment for the prisoners who attended the program would be 95% of the time. We found that there would be a range of 30% to 40% of prisoners who would be recommitted after release who attended this program. As this estimate does not include any of the values collected by the Delaware Statistical Analysis Center in their three-year study of released prisoners, we can conclude that significantly fewer prisoners who completed the Victim Impact program re-offended and were recommitted compared to what would be expected of prisoners who do not attend the program.

Predicting recidivism

The recidivism data is consistent across all groups of prisoner except for gender. Male prisoners were more likely to commit an offense after prison release and be recommitted to prison.

However, re-commitment did not vary by race or level of facility that the prisoner was released from, and we also examined age differences which was not significantly different between those who committed an offense and were recommitted after release and those who were not.

Table 2: Recidivism and recommitment of released prisoners

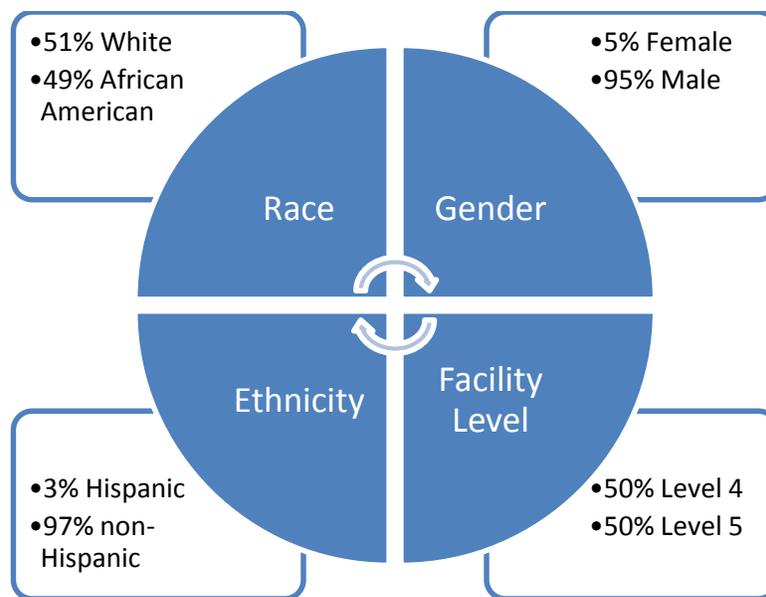
	Re-Offense Committed	No offense committed
All	n =118 (35%)	n = 215 (65%)
Male	112 (38%)	181 (62%)
Female	6 (15%)	34 (85%)
White	58 (34%)	114 (66%)
Black	55 (34%)	106 (66%)
Hispanic	3 (30%)	7 (70%)
Level 4	56 (38%)	91 (62%)
Level 5	57 (31%)	129 (69%)
Average age	34.2 years	35.2 years

Figure 3 below graphically represents the 118 of the 333 prisoners that we have recidivism data on, who were released from prison after completing the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program between April 2011 when the program began and April 22nd 2015 when we have available data from DELJIS.

Figure 3 below has to be interpreted as the shared characteristics of the group of released prisoners who were re-arrested, reconvicted and re-committed for a crime, after their prison release and initial program completion.

For example, we can see below that re-commitment was almost equal among African American and white prisoners. Females made up only 5% of those re-committed, which reflects the smaller number of women within the prison population and who attended the program. Within females as a group, 6 out of 40 women were reconvicted which is a rate of 15% who were recommitted, compared to 112 out of 293, or 35% of men who were re-committed. In addition, there were very few prisoners who identified as Hispanic who attended the program (n = 10), this accounts for the relatively small percentage of this group of prisoners within the released group who were re-committed to prison.

Figure 3: Characteristics of individuals who return to prison



We conducted a logistic regression model to compare all of the possible predictors of recommitment in one model. This type of analysis allows us to compare the relative change in odds of being recommitted to prison for each of the characteristics we tested in the model. We examined age (age 35 years or younger versus older than 35 when released), gender, race, ethnicity, the difference in pre and post survey scores and facility level prior to release (level 4 or 5) as predictors of recidivism and recommitment.

Only gender was a significant predictor, with males being four times more likely than females (odds ratio = 4.1; 95% confidence interval = 1.53 to 10.8).to be recommitted to prison within three years of release. The 95% confidence interval for the odds of being re-committed to prison for the other predictors mentioned above, all crossed above and below 1 indicating that these factors did not increase the odds of recommitment.

The difference between pre and post program survey scores was significantly higher among those who were recommitted (mean = 13.5) compared to those who were not (mean = 8.5; p = 0.02). This lack of effect for the difference between the pre and post survey scores in predicting recommitment perhaps indicates that the survey is not sensitive enough to identify the mechanisms of change that account for whether or not any individual prisoner will re-offend or not.

Types of crimes among recidivists

Below table 3 details the types of offenses leading to re-commitment of the 118 out of 333 prisoners within a three-year time period of being released from prison after completing the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program

By a very large percentage, probation or breach of release violation was the most common crime event. The reasons for these violations have not been specified in the DELJIS data. Crimes of violence accounted for 5% of these re-commitments, and were solely committed by males. Although not represented in Figure 4, there were no females or Hispanic prisoners re-committed to prison for possession of drug crimes.

“I have built a foundation to where I have accepted my crime and I have accepted that what I have done is wrong and that it should have never happened. I came out of a very, very bad hole. “

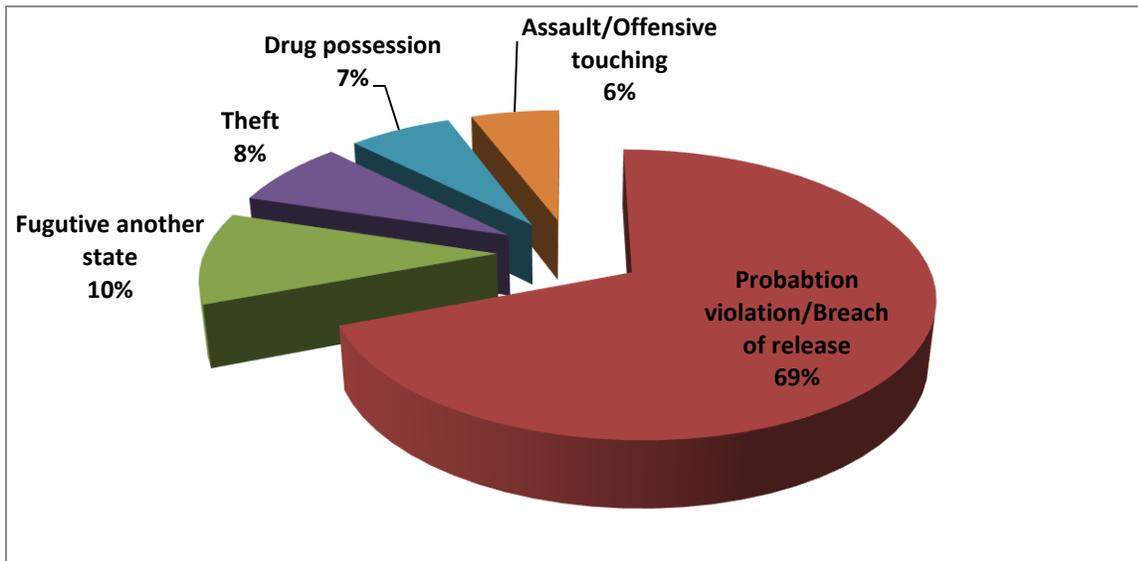
Female prisoner attendee July 2015 discussing the positive effects of the program on her mental state after being imprisoned

Table 3: Types of offenses and number of released prisoners committing offenses

Offense Type	Number committing Offense
Probation violation/breach of release	72
Fugitive another state	11
Theft/Shoplifting/Possession of stolen property/Robbery	8
Possession of Drugs/Controlled substance	7
Assault/Offensive touching	6
Conspiracy	4
Civil contempt of court	4
Criminal trespass/Loitering	3
Resisting arrest	2
Drunk on highway	1

Figure 4 below graphically represents the relative proportion for the five most common offenses leading to imprisonment for the cohort of 333 prisoners we have release and recommitment data on.

Figure 4: Percentage of five most common recommitment offenses



Evaluation question 2: Behavior in the prison

Predicting disciplinary change

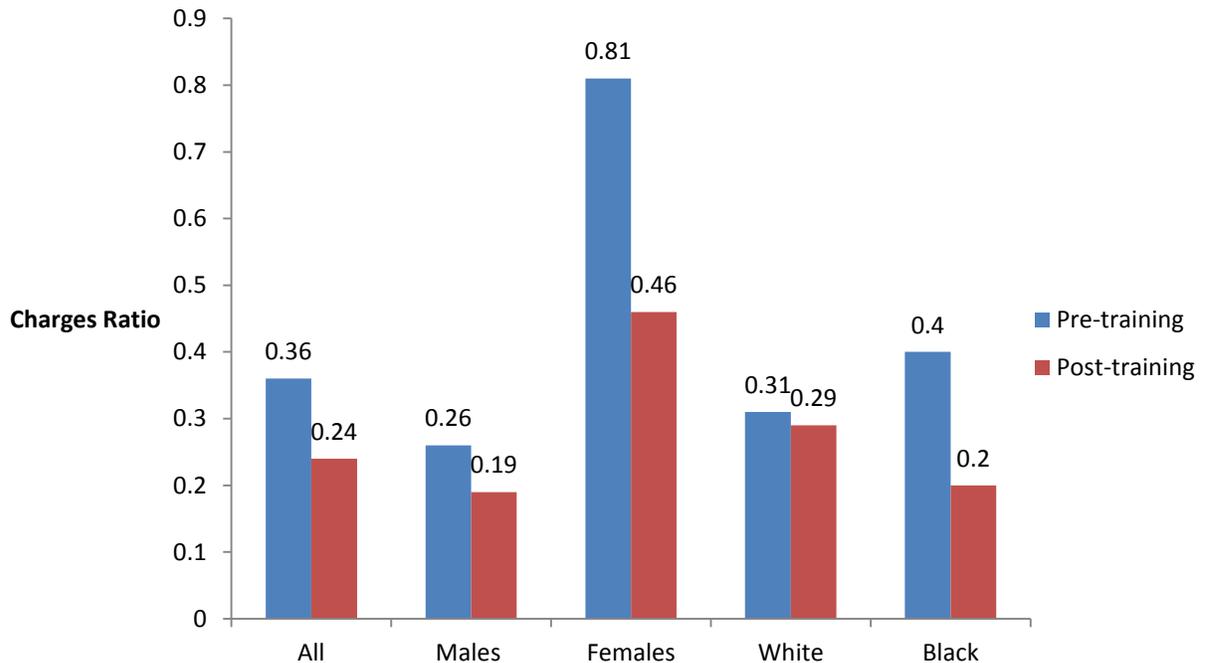
We were given data for 252 prisoners (males and females) who had attended the Victim Impact program and who had disciplinary charges while committed at a level 5 facility. We assessed the frequency of any disciplinary charge (whether or not the prisoner was found guilty of the charge) as a proxy for behavior that was compliant with prison rules. The disciplinary charged were counted from the time of prison admission to prison release or until May 26th 2015, if the prisoner had not been released.

As there was a longer period of time from prison admission to the Victim Impact program training (mean = 54.5 months) to length of time post training to discharge or May 26th 2015 (16.1 months), a ratio was created from the number of disciplinary charges pre training divided by the number of months of imprisonment pre training and the same type of ratio was created for disciplinary charges per month post training.

Figure 5 below shows the mean pre and post Victim Impact program training for all prisoners and by prisoner groups. There was a significant decrease in the ratio of

disciplinary charges before training with an average of 0.36 charges per month (or on average 1 disciplinary charge every 2.7 months across the prisoners) to 0.24 per month post training (or 1 charge every 4.2 months), reducing by a third the frequency of disciplinary charges for the period of imprisonment after attending the program. The only significant difference across the prisoner groups was between male and female prisoners, with female prisoners having more disciplinary charges pre training and showing the steepest decline post training.

Figure 5: Pre and Post program impact on prisoner disciplinary charges



Interviews with Prisoner Attendees, Facilitators and Program Director

As part of the evaluation of the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program, interviews were conducted in which some questions were asked of the facilitators, participants and the program director alike. The program executive director set up interviews at two correctional facilities within the Delaware prison system. Those interviewed were a male and female facilitator (currently instructors of the program,) a male and female prisoner that were participants of the program and the executive director herself. Upon visiting the correctional facilities, the interviews took about 45 minutes to 1 hour each. The main topics asked of most participants were as follows:

The purpose of the program:

Everyone interviewed had the same general sense that the purpose of the program was to reduce recidivism. This was to be achieved by educating the participants on what the victims of their crimes went through and in turn they would think twice before putting other people (their own families as well as that of the victim's) and themselves through that again.

“To have them understand the impact of their crimes in particular on their victims, and identifying who their victims are. Also, I like to have them understand that they make themselves a victim of crimes.” – Female Facilitator

“To get insight on what the victims go through when crime happens” – Male Participant

“To get insight on how people feel about people who commit crime toward them or their families.” – Female participant

Skills required for being a facilitator:

The need for facilitators to be open-minded and know how to listen was emphasized by the program director. Sharing similar experiences and showing respect for the prisoners was a sentiment expressed by the program director and the facilitators we interviewed.

“A facilitator should follow the rules, be on time, and be humble. I look for people that have a good work ethic. It helps to have some type of background with victims or your own victimization.” – Program Director

The change you see in the participants that show they get it:

One of the changes that the participants of this program show is that they start to see crime differently, they start to look more at the victims involved, and they start to identify themselves as victims also.

“It takes a few weeks and then you see the ‘light’ come on. You realize they start thinking about what they did and the people that they did it to.” – Male Facilitator

“I became more social as a result and the other group members were more open and willing to have more conversations about their feelings.” – Male Participant

Topic that they would you liked to have covered or gone into in more depth:

Overall the answer to this throughout the interviews was that the program should be more in depth and it should cover the topic of drugs.

“I wish it were longer, to have the lessons be longer, dive a little deeper in.” – Male Participant

“The one [topic] that wasn’t in the manual was about the drug issue.” – Male Facilitator

Most challenging session for you for each individual:

This question yielded different answers from everyone, and it depended on their personal experiences surrounding their background and or crimes committed.

“The most difficult is child sexual abuse and domestic violence; because those are the two areas where I would say 99% of my students have a history of.” – Female Facilitator

“To hear the stories of the outside people coming in; a lot of times I felt bad because a lot of them lost family members, or friends or close ones to someone doing what I did.” – Female Participant

The most helpful/powerful thing(s) about the program for you

The overall take on this was that the guest speakers were a powerful piece of the program. The prisoners listened to guest speakers that were victims or family of a victim. These guest speakers would share how the crimes committed onto them affected not only the direct victim(s) but the families and community of the individual both directly and indirectly.

“The guest speaker, to hear somebody speak about a situation that was devastating to them, and to understand that no matter how much time has passed it still affects them, it really stood out. [The current events activity] was actually what stuck out to me the most. Now it gives me a completely new perspective, when I look at crimes in the newspaper, or the news. Unlike before, now my thoughts are- what happened to the victims and their families what are the legal and physical problems.” – Male Participant

“The sharing stories, because in the workbook, it is a workbook. With them sitting there and them giving me the real, that was the realness of it. That right there was the meat in the potatoes for me.” – Female Participant

Conclusions and Limitations

This evaluation has been conducted using the data that was available from multiple sources; including the survey data provided by Kim Book, recidivism data provided by DELJIS, and prison disciplinary data provided by Delaware Department of Correction.

All data has limitations; in these data, we cannot be certain that we have all available re-commitment data for the released prisoners and we do not have to report the re-arrest data for those prisoners who were released back into the community after they had completed the program. We also do not have available data on others programs or services that the prisoners attended or received while in prison. For example, it is likely that the prisoners who attended the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program, attended other programs or services that addressed issues such as drug and alcohol use. The effect of these programs in concert with the Listen and Learn program is an important issue to explore. In addition, the effects of family and community support as a factor in reducing recidivism has not been included in these analyses presented.

Compared to recidivism data provided by the Delaware Criminal Justice Council, a significantly lower percentage of prisoners released and who completed the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program, will be re-committed to prison for a three-year period following their release. Currently the State of Delaware estimates it costs up to \$35,000 annually to house an individual within a correctional institution. If attendance at the Victim Impact: Listen and Learn program reduces expected recidivism, with a recidivism rate of up to 40% of prisoners released after completing the program compared to the expected recidivism of 67%, as estimated by the DELJIS study. This has the potential to provide enormous savings to this and other states.

The data also indicated that even for prisoners who remained incarcerated after attending the program, there were benefits. Disciplinary charges over time decreased in the period before and after attending the program.

These data do need further analyses to determine if the types as well as frequencies of disciplinary charges decreased.

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