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Effectiveness of Inmate Labor Programs: A Case Study of Marion County's Inmate Work Farm

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Final Capstone Project
Advisor: Dr. Lorenzo Covarrubias



**Effectiveness of Inmate Labor Programs:
A Case Study of Marion County's Inmate Work Farm**

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Abstract

This research project explores the topic of prison labor in the United States. The aim is to analyze the both the strengths and weaknesses of inmate labor programs. In addition, this project examines the effect that these programs have on both the prison itself and the inmates that participate. It analyzes Marion County's Inmate Work Farm in order to investigate how helpful or harmful this program is to the inmates and the community that surrounds it. This project uses several different theoretical concepts to further explain the topic including Michele Foucault's concept of power as well as the concept of social order and the societal institutions, such as prisons, that are used to maintain it. The project concludes that there are both risks and benefits to these labor programs which include an incentive for higher incarceration rates, exploitative conditions, vocational training for post-release, and strengthening ties with the community that surrounds it.

Keywords: labor, rehabilitation, exploitation, prison

Introduction

This research project explores the topic of prison labor in the United States. The aim is to analyze both the strengths and weaknesses of inmate labor programs. In addition, this project examines the effect that these programs have on both the prison itself and the inmates that participate. In order to achieve this, the project utilizes a case study approach to explore the topic of prison work programs and compares and contrasts several specific inmate work programs implemented by several different state-run prisons. More specifically, it analyzes Marion County's Inmate Work Farm, located in Ocala, Florida, in order to investigate how helpful or harmful this program is to the inmates and the community that surrounds it.

Many private companies outsource their labor needs to prison programs in order to save money and, in doing so, receive a tax credit. While inmate labor can be very beneficial to these companies and is considered to be part of the rehabilitation process for many prisoners, it can also be exploitative to inmates and misused to make a profit, especially for privately owned prisons. Within the literature review, this project considers whether private prisons, because of their for-profit orientation, will be more exploitative of inmates. In order to prove this hypothesis, this research project explores the types of jobs that inmates are required to do, in each case, and analyzes whether or not the program is more helpful or harmful to inmates.

Part of the challenge of this project is the concept of exploitation in prisons and more specifically: What are the rights and privileges of prisoners and when is a situation considered exploitative? This project explores this issue in detail. In addition, this project also considers the ways in which the prison industrial complex and mass incarceration contribute to this process of exploitation, as well as help others understand how the process of inmate labor works and the nature of the controversy surrounding it.

Within this project, I use the theoretical concept of social order and how many social institutions, such as prisons, are used to maintain it. This concept has been developed by many social theorists including Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Thomas Hobbes, all of whose work will help guide my research and observations. I also use some of the theoretical concepts introduced in Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish* (1995) such as the relationship between power and knowledge and the role of discipline in society and how it translates in the prison system.

Literature Review

Introduction

When discussing the topic of prison labor, many scholars hold opposing viewpoints and perspectives on what is harmful and what is helpful to the inmates in these programs. There are many different factors that come into play when analyzing these work programs. For example, in many studies, scholars will analyze a specific program from two perspectives to gain a better understanding of who is benefitting from it the most. These perspectives include the inmates' point of view and the prison's, whether state run or privately run, point of view. In addition, most scholars also take into consideration the effect of these programs on the prison industry as a whole as well as the general public's perception of the industry. After reviewing the literature available on these labor programs, the three major themes discussed most often are recidivism and rehabilitation, mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex, and the affect that these types of labor programs have on unemployment rates as well as the national economy.

Recidivism and Rehabilitation

When discussing the relationship between prison labor programs and the recidivism rate, many scholars disagree on whether or not there is a strong enough correlation. Some believe that certain work programs teach inmates the vocational skills that they need to obtain jobs after release and lower their chances of recidivism. The general belief is that if an inmate is able to obtain a job after being released, they will be far less likely to end up back in prison (Bohmert & Duwe, 2011; Goodman, 2012). These work programs include a wide range of vocations from working on assembly lines to fighting wildfires. For example, a study was conducted by Miriam Bohmert and Grant Duwe (2011) to test the effectiveness of a Minnesota prison labor program on post release employment and recidivism rates. This program trains inmates in construction jobs while building and repairing affordable housing in the community. Bohmert and Duwe

(2011) concluded that although the program only slightly reduced the rate of recidivism, it did increase the number of inmates that were hired for construction jobs after being released by a significant amount. In addition, they also stressed the importance of “a continuum of care” in order to reduce recidivism rates among inmates and that “stand-alone services may not be enough to change an offender’s trajectory” (Bohmert & Duwe, 2011, p. 349).

Similarly to Bohmert and Duwe’s (2011) study, an analysis of several fire camps in the state of California and the effect that this type of prison labor has on rehabilitation and recidivism for its inmates was done by Philip Goodman (2012) from the University of Toronto. Prisoners placed in these camps act as firefighters, working on the front lines of some of California’s biggest wildfires. These camps are often seen as a more relaxed setting than a traditional prison. Goodman concluded that although their work is seen as important in the rehabilitation process and a great service to their community, many experts feel that inmates placed in these camps are not receiving the vocational training that they need in order to obtain a job after their release. These camps do not have any formal programs, such as formal job training, general education classes, and mental health counseling, that equip inmates with the tools needed to help them change their social or economic status after being released (Goodman, 2012). Along with the difficulty of trying to find a job with a criminal conviction on their record, many of these former inmates are finding that they do not have the necessary skills or requirements needed for the job.

In addition, Goodman argues that the idea of these camps being rehabilitative depends on one’s own perspective and understanding of what successful rehabilitation looks like. For example, he states that many of the inmates and staff in these camps place little importance on the role of formal training and programs that seek to better an inmate’s material and mental

health status post-release. Instead, they believe that it is “more important that people help themselves by building work ethic” (Goodman, 2012, p. 452).

Because inmate labor is fairly cheap and easily accessible, many states use inmate populations in assisting with emergency operations and natural disaster response. Their duties can include anything from cleaning up hazardous materials and assisting with road construction, to helping fight wildfires or cleanup after a major hurricane. In a 2016 study conducted by Jordan Carlee Smith (2016) for her master’s thesis paper, she analyzes the various ways that inmate populations are being used as labor forces within these areas of emergency planning. She does this by analyzing the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) of forty-seven states, excluding Delaware, New Jersey and Tennessee.

Within each state, an EOP is used to evaluate “overall emergency situations with hazardous potential that may arise within each state, the populations which may be affected, and the coordination of responsibility of various government...institutions to response as well as the various resources required by emergency management...to carry out an effective response” (Smith, 2016, p. 17). Within these documents, the use of inmate labor forces are outlined in regard to the various tasks they will be performing as well as the risks and benefits associated with involving incarcerated individuals.

When it comes to which regions of the United States use these labor forces the most, the Southern region was found to be the highest, with 79 percent of the states using inmate labor forces. The Midwestern region is the second highest, at 67 percent, followed by the Western region, at 50 percent of states, and the Northeastern region, at 44 percent. In addition, states that were found to have a larger number of federally-declared emergencies or disasters were more likely to have a larger number of inmate labor forces assisting with these types of jobs (Smith,

2016). The type of assistance that these inmates provide also depends on the types of disasters that are most common within each state. For example, because many Western states such as California are plagued by wildfires during the dry season, the majority of inmate labor responsibilities will be related to helping fight those wildfires.

In contrast, some scholars believe that prison labor programs have little to no effect on recidivism, and that some inmates view this labor as a form of exploitation, or even in some cases, slavery. In a study conducted at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Erin Hatton (2018) concluded that “for prisoners and welfare recipients, work is a punitive curtailment of citizenship rights, even as it is a foundation of such rights for others” (Hatton, 2018, p. 174). Many American citizens possess the belief that “any form of dependency - i.e., any perceived deficiency in one’s work ethic – is considered a moral failing” (Hatton, 2018, p. 187). Because of this, many believe that inmates should be required to work as a way to justify the fact that they are dependent on the state and taxpayers’ money. Many also argue that when an individual commits a crime and is put into the custody of the state, they forfeit many of their rights given to them by the United States Constitution. Hatton asserts that this reasoning completely disregards the rights of incarcerated individuals and their choice of whether or not they would like to participate in a work program. He believes that this interpretation is an excuse used by the prison industry in order to justify the fact that they make a profit off of cheap, and sometimes free, inmate labor (Hatton, 2018).

Some scholars also argue that the right combination of educational training and labor program will reduce the chances of recidivism and boost the chances of receiving a job after release. A study performed by researchers at the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines examined the effectiveness of job training within prison

work programs in Ohio prisons. They argue that “decreasing recidivism is critical to slowing the increasing trend in the prison population and its associated costs” (Sedgley, Scott, Williams, & Derrick, 2010, p. 497). In their research, it was found that a combination of educational training and participation in work programs can lower the chances of recidivism and therefore reduce costs associated with housing repeat offenders. They estimated that adding an additional component to a job program such as an educational class can reduce the costs associated with housing each individual inmate by approximately \$1,555 (Sedgley, Scott, Williams & Derrick, 2010).

Mass Incarceration and the Prison Industrial Complex

Many scholars attribute the development of privately-owned prisons as a result of overcrowding in state prisons and the opportunity for private corporations to make a profit. Santa Clara School of Law professor W. David Ball examines the issue of overcrowding in California state prisons and how over the years, counties have had to “reevaluate and reconfigure the way [they] use state prisons” (Ball, 2016, p. 26). Ball argues that as California’s population grew, so did the number of inmates admitted to state prisons. This eventually gave rise to the development of privately-owned prisons, hired by the state government, in order to lift some the financial burden and overcrowding off of state prisons. In order to offset the cost of new inmates, many private prisons began developing inmate work programs, under the guise of rehabilitation and education benefits, and contracting out cheap labor to private companies in order to make a profit, all while paying inmates just cents on the dollar for their work (Ball, 2016).

Expanding on Ball’s (2016) assertions, many scholars have also argued that mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex go hand in hand. Because more and more private prisons are needed to house the growing inmate population, in recent years, federal and state

governments have shifted the distribution of resources in favor of private rather than public prisons (Eisen, 2018; Fulcher, 2012). This paved the way for the development of the prison industrial complex and created an incentive for higher rates of incarceration. In her book titled *Inside Private Prisons: An American Dilemma in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, Lauren-Brooke Eisen (2018) discusses this phenomenon. She argues that the more inmates that are brought in to custody, the more cheap labor is available to the prison system. Eisen also mentions the idea of government officials using the excuse of maintaining social order as a way to incarcerate more individuals. They do this by enlisting various social institutions, such as law enforcement, to detain anyone who displays deviant behavior (Eisen, 2018). If a person deviates from behavior that adheres to our society's various social norms and values, they are subject to punishment, and in many cases, incarceration.

In agreement with Eisen (2018), John Marshall Law School professor, Patrice Fulcher (2012) offers further insight into the development of the prison industrial complex and, in particular, how the increase in privately owned prisons has contributed to its growth. Fulcher claims that both the federal and state governments have designated more and more resources to private prisons, in order to release some of the financial burden of housing inmates in overcrowded state prisons. Because of this, private prisons have been able to make a profit by outsourcing inmate labor to private companies. Fulcher claims that this has also helped to fuel the prison industrial complex because "it creates an incentive to increase the prison population, which [leads] to a monopoly and manipulation of the market by Correction Corporation of America and the GEO Group, Inc., the top two private prison companies" (Fulcher, 2012, p. 589). In addition, to incarcerating more individuals, Fulcher also makes the argument that various marginalized social groups, and African Americans in particular, are targeted when it

comes to which groups have the highest rates of incarceration. She asserts that this is not only a way to fuel the prison industrial complex, but it is also a way to prevent African Americans from having a prominent voice in political and economic matters. She refers to this practice as the “manipulation of Blacks for profit” and argues that it is “an obvious continuation of one of the practices employed to maintain slavery in the United States” (Fulcher, 2012, p. 611). Although slavery is now illegal, she argues that the so called “War on Drugs” that began in the 1980’s allowed the federal government to justify the rising number of African Americans who are being incarcerated.

An example of this occurs in Smith’s (2016) study, where it was found that within states that have larger numbers of inmate labor forces for emergency assistance, there are also higher rates of incarceration. In all states using these labor forces, there was a total incarceration rate of 411 people per 100,000 compared to a total incarceration rate of 355 people per 100,000 for all states who are not using inmate labor forces (Smith, 2016). Many people believe that the cost effectiveness of these programs is creating an incentive to incarcerate more individuals so that they will be available to participate. Similarly, it was also found that incarceration rates for both Caucasian and African American populations was higher in states that used these inmate labor forces than states who did not. However, the incarceration rate among Hispanic populations was roughly the same between both categories (Smith, 2016).

Effect of Inmate Labor Programs on the U.S. Economy

One the main subjects of debate when discussing the effects of inmate labor is the effect that it has on the national economy and how it affects the unskilled labor market. While some feel that prisoners should work to make up for the cost of housing them (Hatton, 2018; Ball, 2016; Derrick, Scott & Hutson, 2004), others feel that they are taking jobs away from free

laborers, especially with the rising rates of incarceration. In a research study conducted by Frederick Derrick, Charles Scott, and Thomas Hutson (2004), the effects of prison labor on the labor market for non-prisoners were examined to see if there was a harmful or helpful outcome. In their findings, Derrick, Scott, and Hutson concluded that prison labor has “little impact, at most, on wages or unemployment” (Derrick, Scott, & Hutson, 2004, p. 79). They compared the growing number of inmate laborers to other events in United States history, such as the increase in immigration in the 1970’s, or the period of time where children born during the baby boom became old enough to work, where an unusually large number of people entered the labor market. They again concluded that these major events made a much more significant impact on the number of jobs available than the addition of inmates into the workforce.

Similarly, Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett (1999) analyze the effect that prison labor has on the unemployment rate in the United States. They argue that while growing incarceration rates temporarily lower unemployment by removing potential job seekers from the work force, ultimately unemployment will rise because of ex-convicts’ inability to obtain a job after release. This fact ties back to Bohmert and Duwe’s (2011) study in which they questioned the ability of inmate work programs effectiveness when it comes to providing enough vocational training to obtain a job after release. Western and Beckett also claim that incarceration during youth can affect an individual’s ability to get a job for decades after they have been released. Many employers are hesitant to hire individuals who have had issues with the law, even if it occurred during adolescence. They conclude that “in the long run, incarceration thus significantly undermines the productivity and employment chances of the male workforce (Western & Beckett, 2011, p. 1052).

Another issue that discussed within this topic is the amount of money taxpayers spend on state-run prisons and the programs that they run. When it comes to the costs associated with housing each inmate in a corrections facility, many believe that using inmates as laborers is a way to lower those costs. However, when analyzing the amount of money required to run state prison facilities, it was found that states that participate in these particular inmate labor forces spend almost half of a million dollars more than those states who do not. In the year 2010, states who use these labor forces spent approximately \$1,116,136 to operate their public prison systems, while states who did not spent around \$886,651 (Smith, 2016). Smith argues that while these labor forces “may save costs initially during a short-term disaster event...the overall costs of operating the prison system may cause the state to outspend any savings provided...as operations and total expenditures of the corrections system continues to increase” (Smith, 201, p. 34). This could mean that as these states continue to incarcerate more and more individuals, the expenses that are associated may cost more than they are saving with the labor programs.

Conclusion

After reviewing the current literature on the topic of inmate labor and its effects, it is evident that many scholars have different opinions on the subject. For example, some experts believe that these labor programs are extremely beneficial for inmate rehabilitation and the reduction in recidivism rates (Bohmert & Duwe, 2011) while others feel that it has little to no effect (Goodman, 2012). In addition, many scholars feel that more work needs to be done in order for these programs to become effective (Goodman, 2012; Sedgley, Scott, Williams & Derrick, 2010). However, when discussing the issue of mass incarceration, most scholars agree that these programs have contributed in some way to the increased prison population (Ball, 2016; Eisen, 2018; Fulcher, 2012). Scholars also have opposing viewpoints on the effects that these

programs have on unemployment rates. Some feel they have little to no effect (Derrick, Scott & Hutson, 2004), while others believe they contribute to an increase in unemployment after the inmates are released (Western & Beckett, 2011).

Theory

The primary social theory that I use in my research project is Michele Foucault's concept of power. This theory is outlined in Foucault's book titled *Discipline and Punish* (1995). He claims that power and discipline go hand in hand, and that modern society is a "disciplinary society." Discipline is a tool, used by those in power, in order for them to continue to keep that power. This discipline is enforced by the social institutions that are put in place to maintain the norms and values held by those in power. Foucault argues that these institutions are able to regulate and control the thoughts and behavior of individuals in a society through subtle means. For example, certain institutions are able to control various spaces that we occupy. In a prison setting, those who run the institution have complete control over the space that inmates inhabit including where they sleep, where they eat, etc.

Foucault's book has been extremely helpful to me as I continue to develop this particular section of my capstone project. It has given me a greater understanding of the role that power and discipline play in modern society. It has also given me better insight into the history of the prison system and the way that punishment was carried out in earlier centuries. In the case of my project, these concepts have helped me better explain the how these prison work programs function as a form of discipline or punishment. Many experts on this topic have also used Foucault's theories to interpret the issue of mass incarceration. Because those in power use social

institutions to keep their interests and values intact, those who do not fit into what is considered “normal”, are punished.

Another theoretical concept that is relevant to my capstone project is the concept of social order and how many social institutions, such as prisons, are used to maintain it. Social order can be defined as the values, norms, and laws that are important to a society and that its members are expected to follow (Cole, 2018). Each member in a particular society enters into a social contract in which they are expected to uphold these values. If any member goes against these rules, institutions may place sanctions on the individual as a form of punishment. Many social theorists including Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Thomas Hobbes have talked about and contributed to this theory. In the case of my project, I am looking at the theory of social order as a way to explain the function of these prison work programs and how they can potentially contribute to the growing prison population. Many scholars on this topic talk about mass incarceration being used as a tool for prisons to turn a profit. Private companies often outsource their labor to prisons in order to keep production costs lower and receive a tax break. Prisons make a profit off of this by paying inmates just cents on the dollar for their labor. The more individuals that prisons incarcerate, the more cheap labor they gain and the better chance they have of making money. Maintaining social order is often used as an excuse to imprison people who do not fit into the what society deems “normal” or “acceptable.”

Methodology

University of Illinois professor, Robert E. Stake argues that a case study approach is “the preferred method of research because [it] may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience and thus to that person a basis for generalization” (Stake, 1978, p. 5). In other words,

case study research gives the reader real life examples of the topic being studied and allows him or her to make connections between their own personal experience and the particular case that is being presented. In addition, Robert E. Kin talks about the ability of a case study to highlight the “richness of the phenomenon and the extensiveness of the real-life context” (Kin, 2009, p. 2).

Case studies provide greater detail to the event or topic being studied and allows the audience to become more informed on the overall subject. In light of this, I use a case study approach for this research project.

For this particular project, I have used qualitative methods to collect and interpret my data. I have done this by gathering data from text-based sources such as peer reviewed, scholarly articles and books. These sources were found through online databases such as Social Sciences Abstracts, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, and others that are provided by the library here at California State University, Monterey Bay. I also visited the Tanimura and Antle Library itself to find scholarly books that discuss the topic of prison labor in both public and private prisons.

Once all of my data was collected, I used it to compare and contrast the policies and practices in several different inmate labor programs and how they relate to prison labor specifically. I also used these articles to perform a critical analysis of the effects of prison labor on both the inmates themselves and the different institutions that are involved. In addition to this analysis, I also examined the cause and effect relationship between prison labor programs and rehabilitation for inmates.

To organize my data effectively, I used Google Drive to categorize and code all of the major themes and ideas that I deemed important within my data and that were most relevant to my topic. I also used Google Drive to organize all of the articles, books, and book chapters that I

downloaded and separated them by major idea or theme. This allowed me to find each source that I needed quickly and efficiently.

Findings/Analysis

Findings

When it comes to housing an inmate in a corrections facility, the costs can add up. This is especially concerning for state-run facilities that rely on taxpayer dollars and government funding to house the rising prison population. Some public facilities such as the Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) in Ocala, Florida have come up with ways to reduce some of those costs while also creating a way for incarcerated individuals to provide their own food for themselves and their fellow prisoners. Inmates at Marion County Jail are able to participate in agricultural work that provides food for around 2,000 inmates each day (Moore, Freer & Samuel, 2015). This work is done at MCSO's 125-acre Inmate Work Farm located near the county jail.

In a 2015 study, Austen Moore, Tiffany Freer and Norma Samuel interviewed sixteen inmates who participated in this work program, in order to gauge the program's strengths and weaknesses. After interviewing each inmate, the researchers found that most viewed their part in the program as a positive and beneficial experience. One of the most frequently mentioned positives to the program was the sense of freedom and autonomy that inmates experienced compared to their time spent inside the prison. One participant said "it keeps my mind off of being incarcerated, so I don't feel so much of an inmate. It gives me a little bit of freedom that I wouldn't experience sitting in the jail" (Moore, Freer & Samuel, 2015, p. 21). Many participants also mentioned that they enjoyed being outside in nature instead of confined in a jail cell. Another positive aspect of the Inmate Work Farm is the incentives that it offers. The Marion

County Sheriff's Office grants each inmate six days off of their sentence for every thirty days worked on the farm. Although this does not seem to be a significant motivating factor for inmates, to join the program, it is seen as an added benefit to participating (Moore, Freer & Samuel, 2015). A few of the other positives of the program, mentioned by inmates, include being able to keep busy so that time goes by faster and being treated "fairly" by correctional officers in charge of monitoring them.

Most of the participants also touched on the rehabilitation aspect of this particular work program. There are many opportunities for inmates to learn specialized agricultural skills from experts who volunteer their time to the program. Correctional officers also provide certain occasions for inmates with prior skills to teach other inmates and help them practice skills such as tractor operation, mechanics, etc. In addition to the various technical skills inmates learn, they are also taught important life skills that will help them in their rehabilitation journey as well as life after release. Some of the skills most commonly mentioned were "responsibility, accountability, and developing a positive work ethic that could be applied upon release" (Moore, Freer & Samuel, 2015).

Although the Inmate Work Farm received an overwhelming amount of praise by inmates overall, there were also several negative aspects mentioned. For example, some participants complained about the type of work they were required to do, calling it "monotonous" and "difficult" (Moore, Freer & Samuel, 2015). In addition, some inmates were unhappy with their compensation they received for their labor and stated that the number of days taken off of their sentences did not make up for the abnormally long hours they worked on the farm. They felt that they were being exploited for their cheap and easily accessible labor. A few also stated that they did not feel they learned any special skills from participating, and that the work they were doing

did not provide any challenge or excitement to their day. The largest and most agreed upon complaint about the program, however, was the quality of the food they were producing. All of the participants agreed that there was little variety in the food they made and that it was poor quality, the majority of the time (Moore, Freer & Samuel, 2015).

Analysis

Based on these findings, there appear to be both several risks and benefits to inmate labor programs. Some of the risks include contributing to a higher incarceration rate and exploiting the rights of inmates. In contrast, some of the benefits of these programs can include providing vocational training and rehabilitation for inmates as well as fostering a better relationship between inmates and the communities that they live and work in. It is also important to note that this project only studied a small number of different programs in detail, and that the countless other prison labor programs that exist in the United States may be more harmful or helpful to inmates.

Risks of Inmate Labor Programs

Based on these findings, one of the most significant risks associated with inmate labor programs is the incentive that it gives law enforcement to incarcerate a higher number of individuals. Inmates often get paid little to no money while working in these types of environments, which makes labor cheap and easily accessible. In addition, if these types of programs are benefitting a prison or the surrounding community in some way, they may have more of a motivation to keep that program running and continue recruiting more individuals into it. In the case of Marion County's Inmate Work Farm, the inmate work program allows the prison to save money on providing inmates meals because the inmates are able to grow their own food. Although there has been no research on whether or not this has affected the incarceration

rate in the area, it can be inferred that it gives local law enforcement more of an incentive to keep a steady flow of inmates available for the program.

Another risk associated with inmate labor programs is the issue of exploitation. Although many people believe that inmates should have little to no rights while in prison, they are still protected by certain laws and have certain rights. However, because prison inmates are not held in the highest regard among the general public, exploitation of these rights is often overlooked or ignored. For example, inmates have the right to work under safe and fair conditions while participating in a work program. However, this is not always the case. In Marion County, inmates are sometimes required to operate dangerous equipment and are not always given the proper training before they begin using it. In addition, inmates are not required to be paid the minimum wage for their labor. This means that although they may be doing rigorous or difficult work, they are either not compensated or compensated very little for their labor.

Benefits of Inmate Labor Programs

Although there are many different risks associated with inmate labor programs, there are also several benefits to these programs. For example, inmates are given vocational training and specialized skills that they will be able to use after they have been released. On the Work Farm, some inmates are trained on how to operate farming equipment such as tractors, plows, and balers, which may help them find a job working with this type of machinery after they are released. They also learn how to tend to crops such as lettuce, onions, and broccoli as well as work with various types of livestock and other farm animals. With these new skills, they will have a much better chance of obtaining and keeping a job after release.

One of the original goals of these inmate labor programs was to help rehabilitate and prevent recidivism after release. There are many programs that are effective in executing this

goal. At the Work Farm, many inmates have stated that they have learned several different life skills that will benefit them after release and help prevent them from reentering the prison system. These skills can include hard work, responsibility, working well with others, and maintaining a positive attitude. These life skills may contribute to the process of rehabilitation and can greatly improve the mindset of inmates. Along with counseling and vocational training, the right work program can be very beneficial to the overall well-being and post release life of inmates.

Along with helping rehabilitate and reduce recidivism rates among inmates, prison work programs can also help strengthen the relationship that a prison has with the community that surrounds it. Living in a community near a state-run prison can sometimes produce negative feelings or opinions from residents in the area because some of their tax dollars will go towards the cost of housing and feeding inmates in that prison. Any prison work program that helps reduce those costs will more than likely garner a positive reaction from community members. With their Inmate Work Farm, Marion County Jail has been able to reduce the amount of taxpayer money that is used to provide meals for inmates by creating their own self-sustaining method of feeding inmates. In addition, by having community groups come in to work with and train inmates on the farm, the program also helps inmates develop a good relationship with members of the community. This will give them ties to the community that may help them after they are released.

Conclusion

This research project explored the topic of prison labor programs in the United States in order to measure how helpful or harmful they are to both the inmates and the prisons themselves.

To do this, I used a case study approach to analyze the Marion County Sheriff's Office's Inmate Work Farm in Ocala, Florida. I also conducted a literature review of scholarly, peer-reviewed articles on this topic to draw out the main themes that surround this topic which include mass incarceration, recidivism and rehabilitation, and the affect that it has on the national economy. I also used several different theoretical concepts to further explain my topic including Michele Foucault's concept of power as well as the concept of social order and the societal institutions, such as prisons, that are used to maintain it.

Based on my findings, there appear to be both several risks and benefits to inmate labor programs. Some of the risks include contributing to a higher incarceration rate and exploiting the rights of inmates. This, in turn, contributes to the capitalist structure of the Prison Industrial Complex in which private companies and special interest groups make a profit off of the prison system and the cheap labor they have access to. In contrast, some of the benefits of these programs can include providing vocational training and rehabilitation for inmates, reducing the costs associated with housing and feeding each inmate, and fostering a better relationship between inmates and the communities that they live and work in.

It is important to study these types programs in order to make sure they are actually beneficial to inmates and not exploitative in nature. If the ultimate goal of the prison system is to rehabilitate inmates and keep them from reentering the system, we need to make sure that the programs within it are working towards that goal and not just working to benefit those in power. It is also important to note that this project only studied one program in detail, and that the countless other prison labor programs that exist in the United States may be more harmful or helpful to inmates. In addition, I believe that further research should be done in regard to the long-term effects these work programs can have on former inmates' ability to obtain and keep a

job after release as well as the overall effect, whether positive or negative, that they have on the prisons themselves.

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