This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Emerald Insight in *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, doi: 10.1108/JCP-06-2013-0016

Inside experience: engagement empathy and prejudice towards prisoners

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Abstract

Purpose *– Research examining attitudes towards offenders assesses the attitudes of professionals working with offenders, rather than attitudes of those without any experience with offenders. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether prejudice towards offenders would decrease after engagement with incarcerated serious offenders, and whether any improvement would be explained by increased empathic responding.*

Design/methodology/approach *– An experimental field study was conducted. A repeated measures questionnaire assessed empathy and prejudice at two time points: before and after engagement with serious offenders.*

Findings *– As predicted experiencing actual engagement with convicted sex offenders and murderers within a prison environment did increase empathy and decrease prejudice towards ex-offenders.*

Research limitations/implications *– All participants were applied criminology students and (prison visited) is not representative of prisons within HM Prison Service. It could be argued that responding was influenced by previous knowledge of criminal justice and penal systems. Future research should consider examining the impact of engagement on empathy and prejudice with a larger, na¨ıve sample and across different prisons.*

Originality/value *– As the first (to the authors knowledge) to empirically examine attitude change of individuals with no personal experience of offenders this research has value to any person considering how social exclusion may be reduced at a societal level.*

Keywords *Prejudice, Carceral tour, Empathy, Tolerance*

Paper type *Research paper*

Traditionally, targets of prejudice and discrimination have been minority groups (Allport, 1954). As such, targeting occurs due to differences in race, culture, religious affiliation, sexual orientation and/or gender. But importantly, targeting of specific groups appears to be based on some physical, identifiable difference from the majority. Is this physical distinction necessary? Essentially, the answer must be “no”, and research has begun to identify that social or psychological distinctions are equally important in identification of who is a target of discrimination and explicit prejudice. In a series of pilot studies undertaken as means of identifying salient outgroups, Boag and Carnelley (2012) consistently identified that the most frequent outgroup towards whom prejudice and discriminatory behaviour was openly expressed by both community and student populations was serious offenders, and more specifically, sex offenders and murderers. Moreover, on replicating these pilot studies allowing participants to identify why criminals are negatively rated, the majority of participants’ verbal responses included expletive and derogatory language about the moral values (86 per cent) and psychological states (64 per cent) of these particular offenders. For example, participants used

phrases such as “[y] they have no normal morals, they just don’t care about what other people

think [y]”, and “[y] they are mentally sick” (Boag and Carnelley, 2012). Importantly, the majority of participant responses included reference to discrimination towards these specific offenders as socially acceptable, and fuelled by the likelihood that sex offenders and murderers

are likely to reoffend. These findings support previous evidence that, negative attitudes are highly prevalent towards specific types of offender (e.g. Ferguson and Ireland, 2006; Johnson *et al.*, 2007). Notwithstanding, as identified by Willis *et al.* (2010) the majority of research examining attitudes towards offenders assesses the attitudes of professionals working with offenders, rather than the attitudes of those without any experience of interaction with offenders. Therefore, one of the aims of this current research was to examine the attitudes of individuals with no personal experience of offenders.

# Why focus on offenders?

A decade ago Loic Wacquant (2002) identified the need for empirical researchers to conduct field research within prisons as a means of re-identifying prison as playing an important role in social science research. Yet, to date, psychological research that utilises the unique dynamics within carceral settings is limited to political or criminological psychology. On the other hand, within social psychology, whose theoretical and conceptual focus can be applied to such a setting, Wacquant’s (2002) plea has been largely ignored.

One of the fundamental precepts of the criminal justice system is that incarceration in prison is a means of withdrawing serious offenders from society, and also provides the opportunity for offenders to enhance, or acquire skills necessary for reintegration on completion of their sentence (Home Office, 2002). Notwithstanding, recidivism is a problem repeatedly noted in annual government reports (Ministry of Justice, 2012). Recently, a two-wave longitudinal survey has assessed the progress of 4,000 prisoners using the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction questionnaire and structured face-to-face interviews. This is the largest survey of prisoners ever undertaken in Britain (Cleary *et al.*, 2012). The first wave of data was collected within four weeks of the prisoners being incarcerated in 2005, and the second wave in 2010, shortly before their release. All data were analysed by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Offender Management and Sentencing Analytical Services at the Ministry of Justice.

Results demonstrated that the current reconviction rates are 40 per cent for adults and 37 per cent for juveniles. Of those, reconviction rates were higher if prisoners had childhood experience of violence in the home, sexual or physical abuse, exclusion or expulsion from school, or left school without any qualifications. In addition, reconviction rates were higher for prisoners who, since release from prison, experienced unemployment, homelessness, and/or drug and alcohol dependency (Bell, 2010). More importantly, for the purposes of this current research, is the finding that prisoners who went on to reoffend within one year of release from custody reported explicit prejudicial and discriminatory experiences. This is no small matter given that the three most likely factors preventing a return to a criminal lifestyle were: having a job, having a place to live and having enough money to support oneself (Bell, 2010). Research illustrates that approximately 50 per cent of all people with a criminal record are long-term unemployed (Metcalf *et al.*, 2001); and for those whose offence was serious enough to warrant imprisonment this increases to 75 per cent (Atkinson *et al.*, 2010). Importantly, despite governmental strategies to increase inclusion for ex-offenders (e.g. adults facing chronic exclusion pilots) this group of individuals still face long-term social exclusion, which increases the likelihood of reoffending (Cleary *et al.*, 2012).

There are a variety of negative outcomes related to chronic social exclusion, defined as “a [prolonged] perceived risk of deficit in belongingness” (Stillman *et al.*, 2009). For example, those who are socially excluded are less likely to behave prosocially (Twenge *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, the socially excluded are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour (Leary *et al.*, 2003; Twenge *et al.*, 2001). Thus, identifying if attitudes towards offenders can be improved, there could be a number of positive social implications. Given this potential, it is disappointing to note that little empirical research examines explicitly what mechanisms may be useful in bringing about increased tolerance.

# Increasing tolerance towards offenders via empathy

In a recent review examining prejudice reduction methods, Batson and Ahmad (2009) identify that empathy “has the potential to improve intergroup relations” (p. 142). Indeed, Allport (1954)

proposed that people high in empathy are more tolerant of others. However, empathy is a multi-faceted construct combining both cognitive (perspective taking) and emotional (empathic concern) responses (Davis, 1983). Moreover, research clearly identifies empathy as one mechanism that significantly mediates the relation between intergroup contact and prejudice (see Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008). However, Pettigrew and Tropp were unable to delineate the role that individual constructs within empathy exert. Thus, in order to fully examine the potential for empathy to be identified as one of the mechanisms by which tolerance can be increased, it is important to consider the role that individual components have on influencing empathic responding. Davis (1983) clearly delineates four main components of empathic responding (empathic concern, perspective taking, personal distress, and fantasy). However, the component fantasy has been argued to not reflect true empathy (e.g. Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright, 2004). On the other hand, the remaining three subscales have robust reliability and validity (Cliffordson, 2001).

Since Allport’s insightful comments, the connection between high dispositional empathy and low prejudice has emerged as robust and stable (Ba¨ ckstro¨ m and Bjo¨ rkund, 2007; Boag and Carnelley, 2012; Pederson *et al.*, 2004; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008). Furthermore, research shows that experimentally enhanced empathy (via perspective taking instructions) decreases prejudice (Batson *et al.*, 1997, 2002; Finlay and Stephan, 2000; Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000). Moreover, this specifically includes decreased prejudice towards a hypothetical murderer (Batson *et al.*, 2002, 2005). Given this latter finding, it is possible to hypothesise that empathy may be an important element in explaining how attitudes towards offenders can be improved, and in turn increased tolerance may lead to a reduction in recidivism. Given this evidence individual differences in empathy may underlie individual differences in prejudice. Therefore, the second aim of the current research is to examine the influence that engaging with incarcerated serious offenders has on empathic responding at a global and subscale level, and in turn what influence it has on prejudice towards offenders.

# Hypotheses

It is predicted that for both the experimental and control groups high global and subscale empathy will be negatively associated with prejudice (*H1*). *H2* predicts that after actively engaging with prisoners during a carceral tour participants in the experimental group will report increased empathy, and decreased prejudice towards ex-offenders (*H3*). Finally, it is predicted that the relation between actual engagement and prejudice will be mediated by empathy (*H4*).

# Method

*Pilot study*

A pilot study was conducted to identify which, of ten vignettes would elicit the greatest degree of empathic responding. Each vignette described a convicted murderer by name and length of sentence. Details (high or moderate) regarding the prisoner’s background, educational achievements, relationship experiences, as well as describing feedback from prison officers and clinicians with regular contact with the named prisoner were embedded in each vignette. Names chosen for the prisoner in the vignette represented ethnic groups common in the local geographical area (white English, Asian-Indian, Afro-Caribbean, eastern Asian, and eastern European). In all, 30 volunteers, six from each of the five named ethnic groups, completed the same 12-item version of Davis’s (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) used in the main study in response to each of the ten vignettes. Results identified that the most empathic responding emerged when the prisoner had a traditional English name (Steve or James) (*M* ¼ 4.73, SD ¼ 1.03), and the least empathic responding when the name was Eastern Asian (Akio or Huojin) (*M* ¼ 1.55, SD ¼ 0.84). In addition, the highest degree of empathic responding occurred in the highly detailed description of the prisoner (*M* ¼ 3.68, SD ¼ 0.46). Given these results, the vignette used in the main study was a detailed description of “Steve” at Time 1, and “James” at Time 2 to avoid repetition effects.

*Design*

Using a field experimental design, the experimental group (*n* ¼ 87) were randomly selected from a wider participation pool of undergraduate criminology students (*n* ¼ 143) to take part in a day long carceral tour at a Category B prison. The prisoners (*n* ¼ 235) were all convicted of serious offences against the person. Almost half had a main current offence of violence (20 per cent for murder, and 28 per cent for other types of violence), 28 per cent were convicted of robbery and 15 per cent for sexual offences. All prisoners are diagnosed as having a “personality disorder”, 47 per cent of whom score 25 or above on the PCL-R (Psychopathy Checklist). The carceral tour involved meeting the prison staff, visiting one of five prison wings[1], taking part in a debate[2] with prisoners and engaging with (conversing, dining and questioning) individual and groups of prisoners who were present throughout the day[3]. The entire experimental manipulation lasted approximately five hours. The remaining 56 students served as the control group. All participants completed the same measures at two time points: prior to the carceral tour, and after the carceral tour. As a repeated measures design is implemented, the order of the empathy and prejudice measures and items in each measure were changed to avoid order effects.

*The experimental setting*

All participants allocated to the experimental group spent the day at (prison visited) the only prison in Europe that operates wholly as a therapeutic community (Genders and Player, 1995; Wilson *et al.*, 2011). Shine and Newton (2000) described the profile of prisoner receptions into the jail between 1995 and 2000 as “damaged, disturbed and dangerous” (p. 34). All participants were observed by the researchers in conversation with prisoners, at no time were any of the participants alone or unsupervised by either prison staff or the researchers. On questioning during and after the carceral tour, all participants reported that they believed the prisoners, with whom they engaged had been explicit about, and felt accountable for, their crimes.

*Procedure*

This was a two-part study to accommodate the experimental element of the research. Time 1 was at the beginning of the semester two and Time 2 (four weeks later) after the carceral tour (on the return journey from the prison for the experimental group, during the next lecture for the control group where they were the only attendees). At both time points participants were instructed to make immediate responses to each of the statements included in the questionnaires (counterbalanced), in an attempt to increase the validity of the attitude data. On completion of the final questionnaire at Time 2 all participants were debriefed.

*Participants*

Participants were 143 undergraduate criminology students from Birmingham City University (*M*age ¼ 22.01, SD ¼ 3.18). Participation was a requirement of their module. The majority of participants were white (60 per cent), female (81 per cent) and religious (71 per cent). Participants were randomly allocated to either the carceral tour (experimental) group (*n* ¼ 87) or control group (*n* ¼ 56) using a lottery draw of all class members, and completed the same measures at the two time points defined above.

*Measures*

*Prejudice*. The Attitudes Towards Prisoners (ATP) scale (Melvin *et al.*, 1985) was used to assess prejudice. The ATP is a 36-item measure of explicit prejudice (17 items tap positive attitudes and are reversed). Items include “In general, prisoners are just bad people” and “Only a few prisoners are really dangerous” (reverse scored). Participants were instructed as follows: “The statements listed below describe different attitudes toward people with custodial prison sentences. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express how much *you* agree or disagree with each statement:” on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); high scores reflect high prejudice. Reliability was good prior to the carceral tour (a ¼ 0.90), and after the carceral tour (a ¼ 0.91).

*Empathy*. Empathy was assessed using a 12-item version of the IRI (Davis, 1983) which followed a short vignette about a hypothetical prisoner sentenced to 25 years for murder. Each item was revised to assess empathy towards the prisoner (Steve or James) in the vignette. Participants then rated each item on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Empathy was assessed both at a global (overall) level (Time 1 a ¼ 0.77, Time 2 a ¼ 0.66) and a subscale level. Four items assessed perspective taking (e.g. I am able to understand Steve better by imagining how things look from Steve’s perspective) (Time 1 a ¼ 0.66, Time 2 a ¼ 0.84), four items assessed empathic concern (e.g. When I read of how Sam is feeling, I feel kind of protective towards Sam) (Time 1 a ¼ 0.72, Time 2 a ¼ 0.70), and four items assessed personal distress (e.g. I feel helpless when I think of Sam’s situation) (Time 1 a ¼ 0.61, Time 2 a ¼ 0.64). High scores reflected high empathy at both global and subscale levels.

# Results

*Baseline data analyses*

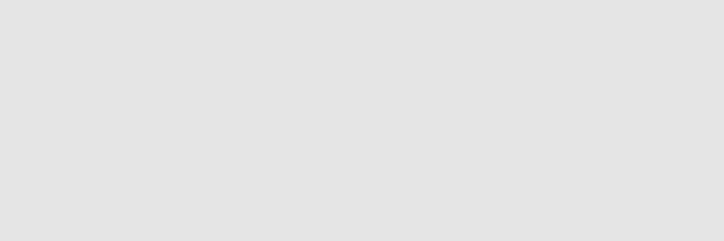
Prior to the carceral tour high global empathy related to low prejudice towards prisoners (*r* ¼ -0.61, *p*o0.001), as did the empathy subscales of perspective taking (*r* ¼ -0.26, *p*o0.01) and empathic concern (*r* ¼ -0.68, *p*o0.001). In contrast, people scoring high in the empathy subscale of personal distress also scored highly on prejudice towards prisoners (*r* ¼ 0.29, *p*o0.001). There was no significant difference in either empathy (*t*141 ¼ 0.94, *p* ¼ 0.35) or prejudice (*t*141 ¼ -0.47, *p* ¼ 0.64) between groups prior to the carceral tour.

*The effect of engagement with criminals on prejudice and empathy*

Correlation analyses determined that for the experimental group after the carceral tour, global empathy and the subscales of perspective taking, and empathic concern remained significantly negatively related to prejudice (*r*’s between -0.22 and -0.32, *p*-values o0.01 and 0.05). Consistent with baseline, personal distress continued to relate positively to prejudice (*r* ¼ 0.27, *p*o0.05). In contrast, for controls only empathic concern remained significantly related to low prejudice (*r* ¼ -0.28, *p*o0.05). No other empathy measure significantly related to prejudice.

In order to examine whether there was a significant difference in empathic and prejudiced responses between the experimental and control groups an independent samples *t*-test was conducted with group as the grouping variable. Results (see Table I) showed that as predicted global empathy was significantly higher, and prejudice significantly lower in the experimental group than the controls. Thus *H2* and *H3* are supported.

*Mediation analysis*

Given the associations described above, mediation analysis was only conducted on the experimental group. In order to test the indirect effects of global empathy on the relationship

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table I | Effects of manipulation on empathy and prejudice scores | | | | |
|  | | | | | |
| *Measure* | | *Condition* | *Mean* | *SD* | *t* |
| Global empathy | | Experimental | 3.29 | 0.32 | 12.86\*\* |
|  | | Control | 2.41 | 0.50 |  |
| PT | | Experimental | 3.25 | 0.91 | 0.92 |
|  | | Control | 3.39 | 0.87 |  |
| EC | | Experimental | 3.06 | 0.47 | 1.93\* |
|  | | Control | 2.86 | 0.76 |  |
| PD | | Experimental | 3.82 | 0.46 | 18.09\*\* |
|  | | Control | 1.80 | 0.87 |  |
| Prejudice | | Experimental | 2.58 | 0.40 | 2.06\* |
| Control | 2.70 | 0.26 |
| Notes: PT, perspective taking subscale; EC, empathic concern subscale; PD, personal distress subscale.  \**p*o0.05; \*\**p*o0.01 | | | | | |

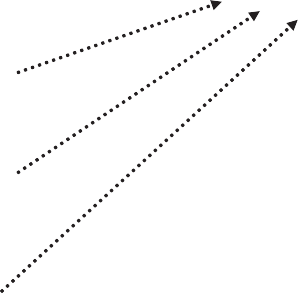
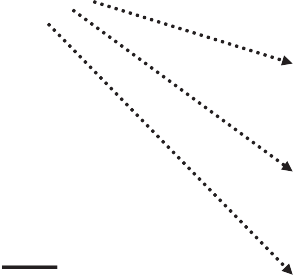
between engagement and prejudice we used bootstrapping (Efron, 1979). Bootstrapping circumvents the power problem introduced by asymmetries and other forms of non-normality in sampling distributions (Shrout and Bolger, 2002). We used 1,000 bootstrap resamples and found that the indirect effect was moderately significant, Sobel’s *z* ¼ 1.93, *p* ¼ 0.05, total *R*2 ¼ 0.15, *F*(5, 137) ¼ 4.53, *p*o0.001 (95 per cent CI ¼ -0.00, 0.58), indicating that the effect of engagement on prejudice was not fully accounted for by global empathy. However, it was considered that the marginal significance indicated a mediating effect at a more specific subscale level. To identify whether this was true, further bootstrapping was conducted.

Bootstrapping for multiple mediators (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) was used to test for the mediating role of perspective taking, empathic concern and personal distress on the relationship between engagement and prejudice. In the analyses all three subscales were added simultaneously to examine both independent and contrasting indirect effects. Empathy subscales were contrast coded so that comparisons could be made between two subscales whilst holding the third constant. Figure 1 shows that across all comparisons only personal distress was not a significant predictor of prejudice towards prisoners. However, only empathic concern emerged as significant in explaining the effects of engagement on subsequent prejudice towards prisoners, Sobel’s *z* ¼ -1.47, *p*o0.05. This indicates that any mediating effect of empathy on the link between engagement with prisoners and subsequent prejudice towards prisoners is reliant on the influence of empathic concern. Hence, *H4* is accepted with caution as mediation only occurred via the empathic concern subscale of empathy.

# Discussion

The main aim of the current research was to examine whether the attitudes towards offenders would improve after actual engagement with incarcerated sex offenders and murderers during a carceral tour, and whether any improvement would be explained by increased empathic responding. As hypothesised there was no significant difference in either empathy towards ex-offenders or prejudice towards a named convicted murderer at baseline. Moreover, in line with previous research (Ba¨ ckstro¨ m and Bjo¨ rkund, 2007; Pederson *et al.*, 2004) and as predicted high dispositional empathy was associated with low prejudice towards ex-offenders. In addition, as predicted experiencing actual engagement with convicted sex offenders and murderers

Figure 1 Effect of empathy subscales on relationship between engagement with prisoners and prejudice



–0.22\*

(0.12 ns)

Engagement with

prisoners

Prejudice towards

ex-offenders

0.14 ns –0.09\*

Perspective

Taking

–0.20\*

0.20\*

0.07 ns

2.02\*\*

Empathic

Concern

Indirect Effect

Direct Effect

Personal

Distress

**Notes:** Total effect: *R*2 = 0.14, F(5, l137) = 4.53, *p* < 0.01; 95% CI: total effect

(–0.17, 0.32); 95% CI: empathic concern (–0.14, –0.01); 95% CI: perspective taking

(–0.11, 0.05); 95% CI: personal distress (–0.39, 0.12). \**p* < 0.05; \*\**p* < 0.01

within a prison environment did increase empathy and decrease prejudice towards ex-offenders. This not only supports the premise that experience with outgroups decreases prejudice towards them (e.g. Crisp and Turner, 2010, 2011), but also provides support for the identification that empathy is one of the mechanism through which prejudice may be reduced (e.g. Batson and Ahmad, 2009; Batson *et al.*, 2002; Boag and Carnelley, 2014).

However, the finding that prejudice is reduced only via increased empathic concern was not predicted. The literature on empathy to date tends to consider the individual components of empathy as distinct but interdependent constructs that combine to drive empathic responding (e.g. Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright, 2004; Batson *et al.*, 1997; Finlay and Stephan, 2000; Davis, 1983; Pederson *et al.*, 2004). However, recent focus on empathy has begun to identify that this relation is more complex (e.g. Batson and Ahmad, 2009; Boag and Carnelley, 2014), and individual elements of empathy can be exclusive predictors of reduced prejudice.

One of the arguments used to drive the current study was that there was no evidence to suggest that experimentally manipulating empathy towards a convicted murderer who explicitly expresses suffering (Batson *et al.*, 2002), would be a true reflection of empathy elicited after engagement with convicted criminals who take responsibility for their own situation. The finding that it is possible to increase empathy via experiencing actual engagement with prisoners within a prison setting serves to broadly support and extend Batson *et al.*, (2002, 2005) results. However, we found that the relation between engagement and decreased prejudice over time in the experimental group was entirely explained by an increase in the empathic concern element of empathy. Given that empathic concern is reflective of emotional empathy (Davis, 1983), it is credible that engaging with the prisoners at (prison visited) led to participants reporting an increased ability to feel an emotional connection to the situation of the person in the vignette. This is an avenue that warrants further research.

Moreover, our findings demonstrate the usefulness of carceral tours in this dynamic. Carceral tours are propounded by some to be unrepresentative of real prison communities due to factors such as impression management on the part of both prison officers and inmates (e.g. Piche´ and Walby, 2010). However, given (prison visited)’s compulsory requirements for honesty and personal accountability, the current study goes some way to addressing this weakness. In addition, our findings identify that empathy (certainly the empathic concern element), is not dependent on having a target person express a need for help. This has profound implications for empathy research, as it indicates that experimentally manipulated empathy may not actually translate to real-life applications as transparently as early researchers would suggest. Although by no means dismissing the literature to date, it is important to note that as with any avenue of research, the time has come to extend our understanding and begin to examine whether what we do know has realistic applications that will serve to benefit everyone.

*Limitations and future research directions*

One limitation of the current study is that the participants were all students enrolled on an applied criminology course, and predominantly white, religious females. Thus, all participants had learned about the theoretical implications of therapeutic communities within prisons. In turn, it could be argued that responding may have been influenced by previous knowledge about the criminal justice and penal systems. However, only those who engaged with prisoners showed any significant increase in empathy and decrease in prejudice at Time 2, indicating that the face-to-face contact does influence responding to prisoners beyond that driven by increased academic understanding. Moreover, the demographic bias of the sample limits the generalisability of the findings to the wider population. In order to address these limitations, future research should consider examining the impact of engagement on empathy and prejudice with a larger, naı¨ve sample from the community.

A further limitation is that (prison visited) is not representative of prisons within HM Prison Service. However, prisoners at (prison visited) are mostly serving sentences for murder or sex offences. Thus, it was possible to target the engagement to those clearly identified as the most negatively perceived criminal group. In addition, given the precepts of the therapeutic commitment to honesty and responsibility that the prisoners must adhere to, participants were

exposed to factual first-hand rationales for actual murder and sex offences. This was considered a benefit as prisoners did not present themselves as victims or in need. Notwithstanding, the current research could be extended by assessing whether there is any difference on the impact of engagement with prisoners from traditional prisons compared to (prison visited). Moreover, research indicates that familiarity with a target of prejudice (both real and imagined) is sufficient to reduce prejudice (e.g. Turner and Crisp, 2010). Although we did not assess this as it presents an alternative mediating mechanism, future research could consider familiarity as both an independent mediator and/or a covariate.

In addition, the current research did not consider individual differences in the dynamic between engagement and prejudice towards prisoners. Recent research identifies that empathy also mediates the relation between individual attachment pattern and prejudice towards traditional target groups (Boag and Carnelley, 2014), it is possible that the same dynamic would apply to the socially acceptable target of criminals. Given that research also demonstrates that primed attachment security predicts not only discriminatory intention, but actual discrimination (Boag and Carnelley, 2012) future research could also extend the current study by adding measures of discrimination.

# Conclusions

The current research is the first to experimentally examine the role of engagement with convicted prisoners on prejudice towards ex-offenders, and identify the importance of the empathic concern element of empathy in this dynamic. This opens up a domain of research that has the potential to have profound implications on increasing tolerance in an increasingly diverse society. Although the effects of educational interventions may sometimes be limited (e.g. Hogan and Mallott, 2005) there is evidence indicating that prejudice can be reduced using psycho- educational and public policy interventions (e.g. Buhin and Vera, 2009). Thus, this domain of research has application potential in the wider field of training people who work with offender populations and in guiding information provided to the general public, employers, etc. regarding offenders who are subsequently released from prison. Although by no means proposing that empathy is a panacea that can lead to a reduction in prejudice towards serving prisoners or ex-convicts, we do open up a novel area of research that has the potential to identify ways to increase tolerance in the long term.

# Notes

1. Participants were randomly allocated to one of ten groups. Each group visited one of the five prison wings that accommodate the prisoners who live there whilst under the supervision of a prison officer.
2. The debate involved two prisoners and two students (also participants) who proposed opposing views about reasons for criminal behaviour. Both pairs were advised of the debate topic some weeks prior to the carceral tour. All prisoners and all participants were present for the debate and were involved in a Q and A session after the arguments from each side had been presented.
3. All prisoners were present.

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