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# Correctional Recreation: An Overview

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# Correctional Recreation

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AN OVERVIEW

Michael Ryan Alexander

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY | BACHELOR OF INTEGRATED STUDIES

## Abstract

This paper will examine different aspects related to correctional recreation with the intent of establishing that it is a valuable tool and should be continually implemented in prisons. A multitude of sources and studies were researched and used to provide the information. The history of recreation in correctional settings is presented as well as the types of recreation that have been made available in institutions across the country. The benefits and goals of correctional recreation are then examined. These benefits include physical and psychological gains, increasing institutional safety, as well as reducing recidivism. The role recreation plays in institutions is also discussed. Problems facing correctional recreation are reported, including views surrounding recreation in institutions, budget issues, and problems with participation. Also examined are suggestions to improve correctional recreation and reasons why it should be present in institutions. The evidence introduced in this paper substantiates the idea that correctional recreation is beneficial to inmates and should not be eliminated from prisons.

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## Introduction

Today, more than 2.3 million people are currently incarcerated in the American Criminal Justice System. “These people are spread between 1,719 state prisons, 102 federal prisons, 942 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,283 local jails, and 79 Indian Country Jails as well as military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, and prisons in the US Territories” (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017, p. 1). Even though these people have committed any number of crimes, they are still entitled to recreation privileges.

While there is no federal law providing for mandatory recreation privileges, it is generally accepted that not providing these privileges (or withholding those privileges for extended periods of time or for arbitrary reasons) is a violation of prisoner rights under the Eighth Amendment to the United States’ Constitution (Farber, 2008). The Eighth Amendment prohibits the use of cruel and unusual punishment. Prisoners might also have additional or more specific rights under state or local regulations or a correctional facility’s own policies and procedures (Farber, 2008). Many of these ideas and court rulings came out of the belief that the goal of incarceration should be rehabilitation instead of punishment (Robertson, 2000).

This paper will explore different topics related to recreation in correctional institutions. Research shows that recreation plays a crucial role in the offender rehabilitation process because it keeps inmates occupied, increases institutional safety, is cost effective, limits inmate trips to the infirmary, and teaches prisoners vital skills needed for reentering society.

## The History of Correctional Recreation

In the early part of the eighteenth century, prison life was intended to be punitive. Reverend Sydney Smith stated that,

In prisons which are really meant to keep the multitude in order and be a terror to all evil doers, there must be no sharing of profits — no visiting of friends — no education but

religious education — no freedom of diet — no weaver's looms or carpenters benches.

There must be a great deal of solitude; coarse food; a dress of shame; and incessant, irksome, external labor; a planned and regulated and unrelenting exclusion of happiness and comfort. (Caplan, 1996, p. 14)

Prisoners were expected to be reformed through a regimen, becoming penitent, and complying with prison regulations. This method did not help with recidivism. Instead, it appeared to increase the inmates' likelihood to continue committing crimes by further deteriorating them mentally and physically. North American penal systems began to reform by making humanitarian changes to ease the burden of prison regimes and holding a more positive view of rehabilitation. Introducing sports in prisons served both of these purposes (Caplan, 1996).

While much of the history of correctional recreation is unknown, by the 1840's, some prisons would celebrate holidays with entertainment on occasion. Initially, leisure was the only form of recreation available. Leisure consisted of guards relaxing the stringent rules within the institution (Caplan, 1996).

In 1870, the first National Prison Association Congress reviewed and approved a resolution that identified the goal of prisons as rehabilitation. Prior to this resolution, prisons were seen as having a primary function of punishing those convicted of committing crimes and protecting society (Robertson, 2000). During the 1870's, leisure time was expanded to some prisons giving inmates yard time, but only during national holidays. Special occasions provided the opportunity for other activities such as music, theater, and lectures at select prisons. Eventually, the limited yard time inmates were allowed developed into half-holidays in which prisoners organized games spontaneously (Caplan, 1996).

The first institution to develop a formal sports program for inmates was Concord Reformatory in Massachusetts. Prison authorities allowed for several clubs and societies to be formed. They thought that these organizations would offer inmates practice in self-governance. One of these societies was the Baseball Society. There were forty-five members and they held regular meetings. Prisoners could play

games such as baseball, wrestling, and football on Saturday afternoons. Eventually, neighboring cities would send teams to play against the reformatory teams. Following this model, Elmira Reformatory in New York introduced organized sports to their institution in 1896 for the purpose of fostering self-control and team spirit (Caplan, 1996).

These types of programs were extremely controversial at the time. Sports programs such as these did not spread into the adult prison system until the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1915, sports programs had spread to prisons in the Mid-West, Northeast, and Southwest United States. The reason for the change was not because prison officials suddenly realized the worth of recreation, but solely to attempt to control the prisoners in masses. When recreational sports programs became prevalent in the United States' prison system, the primary accomplishment was their entertainment value (Caplan, 1996).

Between this and 1960, there were no notable changes in prisons. However, political developments in the 1950's changed the "hands-off" approach previously taken by courts in reference to the prison system. Prior to 1960, courts refused to touch litigation connected to prison reform. This "hands-off" policy allowed prison administrators to operate without any judicial interference. The courts followed this approach due to beliefs that "separation of powers, lack of judicial expertise, and fear of undermining prison discipline justified staying out of prison matters" (McCall, 1981, p. 40). Changes in politics in the 1950's changed the belief that the "hands-off" approach was best. Due to the prison riots, inmate lawsuits against state prisons, the progressive movements of the 1960's, and the civil rights act the attitude of the judicial system changed (McCall, 1981). Some federal courts began using the Eighth Amendment to force prison officials to improve inmates' living conditions (Lee, 1996). During this rehabilitative phase in the United States prisons, there was an increased use of recreational programming. Several recreational sports programs were developed throughout the United States' prison system (Caplan, 1996).

However, the driving force behind many prison changes was the riot at Attica prison. Attica was a maximum-security prison located in New York which held 2,200 inmates. In 1971, prisoners at Attica

rebelled, taking hostages to attain their demands. They stormed through the institution beating prison guards, acquiring improvised weapons, and even burning down the chapel. The state police were called in to help regain control of the prison. They were successful at recovering most of the prison, but 1,281 prisoners still occupied one of the prison yards. They held 39 prison guards and other employees hostage. This went on for four days. Police attempted to negotiate with the inmates, but it was ineffective. Eventually, state police and prison officers raided the yard, during which 10 hostages and 29 inmates were killed and 89 others were critically injured (Thompson, 2016).

Many prison professionals found that a lack of recreation was partly to blame, as inmates had no way to blow off steam and too much idle time to plan riots. The National Recreation and Parks Association got involved through one of their branches, the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS). In 1971, shortly after the Attica riots, the NTRS, during their annual conference, formed a task force to examine correctional recreation and conduct an educational forum on the subject. They became more involved every year. In 1972, they held a conference in Virginia for people in the correctional recreation field and a separate two-day conference covering correctional recreation topics. They also published an article, partook in a special committee that they were appointed to by the Governor of Georgia, consulted the Virginia State Prison System, and participated in the conference held by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. After this, in 1973, they were asked to evaluate the jail recreation programs in Washington, D.C. and make recommendations for the new correctional facility that was being built. The NTRS also participated in a conference with the Ohio Department of Corrections, which was held for administration and recreation staff. Unfortunately, the NTRS disbanded in 1974 due to lack of professional interest. However, before they separated they made significant headway in proving that correctional recreation should be present in prison systems (Calloway, 1981).

Additionally, by 1970, prison law had become a specialty. Politicians began to pay more attention to prisoners' living conditions and the courts began to rule in favor of prison reform (McCall, 1981). Since then, the role of recreation in correctional institutions has been debated. Some felt that prisons

should be for punishment and that recreation should not be made available. Other people considered recreation to be a means to increase inmate productivity and control behavior. Still others thought that recreation was essential to keep inmates' minds occupied. No matter what the motive was, by the end of the century many prisons offered a range of recreation opportunities (Robertson, 2000).

## Types of Recreation Available

To understand the different types of recreation available to inmates, we first must define what constitutes as recreation and leisure. Both terms are assumed to be interchangeable, however there are subtle differences. Leisure is generally thought of as the spare or free time that during which one can do whatever they wish to (Roberts, 2001). Compton and Hormachea define leisure as "a block of unoccupied time, spare time, or free time when we are free to do what we choose" (1979, p. 11). Recreation can be defined as "the use of time for amusement, entertainment, participation, or creativity, and frequently takes place in one's leisure time" (Compton & Hormachea, 1979, p. 11). Recreation includes activities whose purpose is to bring joy, fun or excitement (Roberts, 2001). These activities are often pleasurable and are not taken part in out of necessity or for material rewards (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). Recreation can also be classified as either passive or active. Active recreation occurs when an individual actively participates in an activity that requires mental or physical effort to a substantial degree. Active recreation includes activities such as playing sports, playing an instrument, gardening, and crafts. Passive recreation occurs when someone is the receiver or consumer of entertainment by other people or activities. Passive recreation activities include watching television, listening to music, reading, and playing computer or console games (Roberts, 2001).

Presently, all correctional institutions provide some degree of access to recreational activities. Sometimes, these programs are referred to as Leisure Time Services (LTS). Programs are available for inmates of different ages, sexes, security levels, and mental capacities (Polson, 2002). In a survey conducted in 1981 of correctional institutions in the United States, approximately fifty percent of the

institutions provided sports activities such as basketball, softball, volleyball, and weight training (Caplan, 1996). Northpoint Training Center in Burgin, Kentucky, an adult male, medium-security institution, offers intramural softball, basketball, volleyball, corn hole, horseshoes, a weight room, a band room with instruments, a cardio room, pool tables, ping pong tables, and a library, among other activities (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2016). Another example of a facility that provides LTS is the Kentucky Correctional Institute for Women (KCIW), which is an all-level, adult female institution in Pewee Valley, KY. The KCIW offers both indoor and outdoor activities such as movies, individual video workouts, pool, tennis, video games, team sports, arts and crafts, and musical instruments (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2016). The Wyoming Department of Corrections, in their policies and procedures, outlines different opportunities for recreation that can be offered. Outdoor recreation and exercise activities include basketball, volleyball, flag football, soccer, softball, and others. Indoor recreation activities include board and card games, leisure time activities, gym time, weight room, a hobby room, and movies (State of Wyoming, 2008). As is evidenced in the examples, institutions offer a variety of recreational opportunities to inmates.

However, these offerings can vary greatly between institutions. “Different budget levels, mandates, facilities, equipment, and staffing levels and staff skills result in some institutions having a wide range of activities, while others provide more basic activities” (Polson, 2002, p. 8). For instance, Kentucky State Penitentiary (KSP) located in Eddyville, Kentucky, is an all-male, maximum security prison. It would not be able to offer the same activities as a minimum-security facility for safety reasons. Likewise, Kentucky State Reformatory (KSR) mainly handles inmates with varying degrees of mental health issues. KSR would have to be just as cautious as Kentucky State Penitentiary when choosing appropriate activities for its inmates due to the likelihood of them causing self-harm with whatever they could find, such as metal or plastic pieces from broken equipment. These issues are generally addressed in the institution’s policies and procedures. For example, the Wyoming Department of Corrections’ Policy and Procedure #5.300. This policy covers inmate recreation and activities and establishes a

comprehensive recreational policy with approved recreation activities and the process for getting additional activities authorized. This policy outlines both outdoor and indoor recreational activities. This policy also defines general rules for recreational activities that must be followed (State of Wyoming, 2008). Generally, the two limiting factors on what recreation is provided in each institution are safety issues and the resources available to the institution.

No matter the institution, three distinct categories of programs can be identified. Although, not all three can be found at every institution, due mainly to differing resources and ideologies. These three categories are activity-focused programs, reformative activities, and reintegration activities. Activity-focused programs further the goal of keeping inmates busy - such as board games, art, and sports. Reformative activities focus on providing knowledge and skills such as educational, substance abuse, or life skills programs. Reintegrative activities prepare inmates for life after prison such as assistance obtaining housing, medical services, and counseling (Braxton-Mintz, 2009). Some institutions also offer "Leisure Counseling," which is described as a "helping process which facilitates interpretive, affective, and/or behavioral changes in others toward the attainment of their leisure well-being" (Compton & Hormachea, 1979, p. 26). Leisure Counseling attempts to achieve several goals including leisure resource guidance, fostering lifestyle development and preventative counseling, and providing therapeutic-remedial and normalizing experiences (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). At the center of leisure counseling lies leisure education classes and leisure counseling sessions which help offenders make valid choices about how to use their leisure time. There are also long-range goals. These include helping prisoners prepare to re-enter society by making the value of leisure clear and allowing them to gain a better understanding of themselves. Leisure counseling programs help inmates to select which activities suit their individual interests and allow for greater self-direction when making leisure choices in the future (McCall, 1981). However, since this is a relatively new concept, it has not been widely utilized. Most institutions simply offer a list of activities to inmates from which they can choose to participate.

The types and amounts of recreation provided also depend on the inmate's legal status. Per Robert Lee of Pennsylvania State University, pretrial detainees must be considered innocent of any crime and therefore their conditions cannot be used for punishment. These detainees are also protected by the due process clauses of the Fifth Amendment. If a pretrial detainee challenges the institutions recreation policies, they have more ground to stand on because they are still deemed innocent of any crime. However, once convicted of a crime, due process clauses are not applicable and these prisoners must turn to the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments (Lee, 1996). This is important because it determines the legal basis for how much recreation is provided. It also comes into play when inmates challenge their living conditions or recreation opportunities.

As previously stated, there is no law guaranteeing prisoners' rights to recreation. Being idle does not violate a person's Eighth Amendment rights. However, courts have recognized that remaining idle for long periods of time can have an incapacitating effect. Consequently, they consider this "harmful idleness" to be cruel and unusual punishment (Lee, 1996). These rulings have resulted in a general standard; "that inmates are entitled to five hours of recreation per week" (Lee, 1996, p. 169). However, this standard is usually only applied to long-term confinements. Additionally, prison officials can revoke recreation rights provided they have just cause.

Also, while courts have determined that inmates must be given recreation time, they have not specified what constitutes recreation. In other words, the prisoners do not have a right to specific types of recreational activities. While courts have ruled that allowing inmates to walk the hallways was insufficient recreation, they have not instituted a set of standards for what does constitute adequate recreation (Lee, 1996). Courts have also ruled that prisoner's do not have a right to outdoor recreation. They did state, however, that "some form of regular outdoor exercise is extremely important to the psychological and physical well-being of the inmates" and that denying outdoor recreation for prolonged periods of time could constitute cruel and unusual punishment (Lee, 1996, p. 171). Because of this, decisions about what types of recreation are offered are largely left up to the institutions.

## The Goals and Benefits of Correctional Recreation

The “official” ideology of prison sports is that it involves more than just allowing inmates to escape the monotony of prison life. Correctional recreation allows prisoners to make changes to their attitudes and behaviors. Recreation programs can help reduce stress, conquer social weaknesses, and encourage physical wellness. These programs allow inmates to relieve the pressure of life in prison while also promoting healthy physical, mental, and social abilities. An ideal prison recreation program should also focus on the overall health of the individual. Additionally, recreation would help to teach pro-social values, educate inmates, and promote good sportsmanship practices (Caplan, 1996). Under this ideology, the perfect prison recreation program helps inmates better themselves physically and mentally and allow them to return to society as a better individual.

Correctional recreation can have roles, goals, and objectives that differ between institutions. For example, an institution manual from York Correctional provides the following objectives:

- Provide structured positive alternatives which can be used to fill leisure time.
- Provide opportunities for inmates to channel and vent negative feelings of tension and anxiety into positive productive attitudes.
- Relieve institutional stress (staff and inmates).
- Improve individual self-esteem.
- Improve health and fitness levels.
- Improve individual creativity (mental and physical).
- Improve positive socialization skills.
- Keep inmates occupied and reduce idleness. Improve athletic and artistic skill levels.
- Educate inmates of various game and sport rules and strategies. (National Correctional Recreation Association, 2004)

These general objectives can also be found in a study conducted by Marcia J. Carter and Kelly J. Russell. They determined that recreation allowed inmates to

Develop acceptable outlets for stress, identify activities that serve as alternatives to addictions, foster interpersonal skills such as trust, cooperation, and teamwork, enhance self-esteem through realizing success with a given pursuit, increase access to new social environments, foster new interests, negotiate constraints, develop awareness of personal needs and appropriate avenues to satisfy them, develop decision-making and problem-solving skills, and develop new interests, which could evolve into a career. (2005, p. 81)

These same goals are listed by Brenda J. Robertson in *Leisure Education as Rehabilitative Tool for Youth in Incarceration Settings* in the *Journal of Leisurability*. Additionally, even though prison is used as a method of punishment, prisoners still maintain certain rights as a part of society. These are the main motivation for making recreation programs accessible to prisoners. These programs have the ability to enhance inmates' self-actualization, self-esteem, self-worth, while also enabling constructive reintegration into society post-release (Caplan, 1996).

Most institutions do not bother to mention the goals of their recreation programs in their policies and procedures. These documents are more focused on what is permitted or safety measures that must be taken when inmates are participating in recreational activities. However, even though they do not explicitly state their goals, they are present. Kentucky State Penitentiary views recreation as a way to keep inmates busy, meet the requirements for recreation as set forth by the state, and keep inmates physically active (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2016).

Through identifying these goals, an over-all theme is emerging, prisoners benefit from being allowed recreation time. While recreation time is required, it is more helpful in the overall rehabilitative process than just keeping inmates from being idle. Recreation allows inmates an opportunity to interact with others. This is especially true for inmates kept in isolation, protective custody, solitary confinement,

or restricted housing units. Prisoners kept from interacting with others can suffer from “perceptual distortions, hallucinations, hyperresponsivity to external stimuli, aggressive fantasies, overt paranoia, inability to concentrate, and problems with impulse control” (Lee, 1996, p. 172). These psychological issues can be avoided if the inmate is allowed time to socialize with other people. This time is generally during recreation. This phenomenon was also noted by James Frey and Tim Delaney. They conducted a survey through a self-administered questionnaire with a secondary analysis of official data. The survey was completed by 1770 members of the adult male prison population in five Nevada correctional institutions. Study results indicated that most inmates participated in passive recreation activities, such as reading books, visiting other inmates, and watching television (Frey & Delaney, 1996). Compton and Hormachea (1979) recognized that an outcome of recreation was that it promoted a sense of belonging, encouraged social interaction, and reduced loneliness and boredom. These results suggest that making friends and constructing social relationships are the main outcome of leisure participation (Frey & Delaney, 1996).

Recreation can lead to increased self-esteem, which is another psychological benefit provided. To some inmates, playing sports can be an important factor in what it means to be masculine. Therefore, playing sports develops and maintains self-esteem. One inmate said,

Through sports you learn how to interact with other people and learn how to obey the rules and, you know, good self-image and I think there's a lot of positive aspects of it.

With anything you know there's going to be positive and negative but I think the positive outweighs the negative. (Caplan, 1996, p. 99)

This idea was not limited to one inmate. Peter Perkins', an inmate, attitude was changed after he was imprisoned. He stated,

I think sports is really good for a person's self-esteem for a number of reasons. One, if they are any good at the sport, then that inevitably raises their self-esteem. They get in

with a group of people and anytime in their life they've had a hard time getting in with groups of people or becoming part of a group, then that's something that will make them feel better. (Caplan, 1996, p. 99)

Another benefit is that recreation provides inmates with time to be productively occupied. A saying among prison officials is “we can keep the inmates busy, or they can keep us busy.” This stems from the fact that inmates will find ways to relieve themselves of boredom. “If they don’t have things to occupy their mind then obviously there's going to be other things occupying their mind, like what bank they're going to rob when they get out or things along that line” (Caplan, 1996, p. 97). This is also evidenced by Compton and Hormachea, who state that “More concern has been expressed over the prospects of a misused leisure, and unless government and citizen groups take steps to prevent it, much... leisure will be wastefully, if not harmfully, used” (1979, p. 26). In fact, being unproductive during leisure time could be a contributing factor that landed some individuals behind bars. Brenda J. Robertson (2000) notes that,

Among the inmates of correctional institutions there are many who have no knowledge or skills which will enable them to make acceptable use of their leisure... They cannot play, they do not read, they have no hobbies. In many instances, improper use of leisure is a factor in their criminality. Others lack the ability to engage in any cooperative activity with their fellows; teamwork is something foreign to their experience. Still others lack self-control or a sense of fair play; they cannot engage in competitive activity without losing their heads. If these men are to leave the institutions as stable, well-adjusted individuals, these needs must be filled; the missing interests, knowledge, and skills must be provided (p. 27).

This lack of knowing how to use free time can sometimes result in harmless activities such as reading, drawing, or sleeping. However, some of these “boredom-relief activities” could be lethal or illegal, such as gambling, making shanks, or doing prison tattoos. Keeping inmates productively occupied

allows prisoners to fend off boredom and have less time to focus on dangerous activities (Braxton-Mintz, 2009). Arnie Caplan found that

Offenders who experience nothing but hard time are less amenable to counselling, direction, and behavioral change than those offenders whose free time is spent in a positive manner .... Recreation will continue to serve as a bridge between hard time and free time for those offenders who wish to use it. (Caplan, 1996, p. 51)

Recreation keeps inmates productively occupied while also teaching them how to make acceptable use of their free time post-incarceration.

In conjunction with keeping inmates occupied in a productive manner, recreation also allows time for them to release negative or “pent-up” feelings; serving as a “safety valve” that allows inmates to displace aggressive tendencies in a productive and acceptable way (Frey & Delaney, 1996). This was also noted by Gallant, Sherry, and Nicholson, who stated that “participation in sport and recreation programs in prisons provides inmates with an opportunity to blow off steam and escape the monotony of the prison routine” (2015, p. 4). The rationale behind this is that if an inmate expends energy playing sports or weightlifting, they are less likely to assault a prison guard/correctional officer or another inmate. In an article entitled “Playing the Game on Sing Sing’s Field,” Laws stated that

While prisoners are taking their turn on the field; while they argue about their favorite heroes on the diamond or on the gridiron; while they discuss the salient points of a noted ring event or exchange ideas on politics or any other topic of common interest, they are not talking about their "cases"; they forget about length of sentences; they have no time to brood about emotions. They are, during those hours, normal human beings with normal interests. (Caplan, 1996, p. 25)

Because of this, tension levels within correctional institutions can be kept at a reasonable level by allowing the inmates outlets for their feelings of frustration, hostility, and aggression. Terry Tate, an inmate, said

You may be having a bad day and inside you play floor hockey... It's great, it's a lot of fun. Say you were having a bad day, you go there you may get hit, you hit a few guys. It's all clean, it's all in fun and after the game you're just totally drained, you go back to your cell, get a good night's sleep, you wake up and it's another new day... It's a good frustration reliever. I guess it's the best way to put it. If they didn't have sports, I'd be in a lot longer probably. A lot of guys take part in it and it's an escape for them. (Caplan, 1996, p. 93)

Lowered conflict and tension levels can help ensure the safety of the prison (Frey & Delaney, 1996). This was also the view of a Correctional Officer, Harry Hogan. He stated,

You need exercise programs, you need sports programs in an institution for the inmates to let off steam, to release anxieties, and to participate as groups and to cooperate, to share, and work as a team. If proper equipment is worn, for example, hockey helmets in hockey, no one will get hurt by rough play. It will just be guys letting off frustration. (Caplan, 1996, p. 96)

This was supported by the findings of a study conducted by Roy Hunter. He conducted a study of crime rates in prisons and correlated the findings to recreation budget levels. During the study, the average expenditure (per day) for recreation dropped \$20.00. After this budget cut, institutional crime rates increased. Study findings indicated that almost ninety percent of the days before the budget cut showed no crime. This changed after the budget cut, with only seventy-five percent of the days showing a similar crime rate as before. He even examined other variables that could have contributed to the increase in

crime (time of year, medical expenditure, etc.) and concluded that none of these influenced the budget/crime relationship (Hunter, 1986).

Recreation can also provide an incentive for inmates to maintain good behavior. Gallant, Sherry, and Nicholson noted that “correctional administrators routinely use sport and recreation... as a hook to promote appropriate behavior” (2015, p. 4). Inmates who were allowed access to recreation reported that they felt it was a reward, while inmates denied access considered it a punishment (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015). If inmates can only participate in recreation based on their behavior, they are highly motivated to align their behavior with the standards set forth by the administration. Recreation activities can provide staff with a way to reward inmates for positive behavior and, at the same time, impose penalties for negative behavior (Braxton-Mintz, 2009).

Perhaps one of the most recent discoveries about correctional recreation is that it can help reduce recidivism rates. This is achieved through combining several benefits of recreation. Improving self-image, physical health, and mental health can contribute to an inmates’ effective release. Also, recreation can provide constructive recreation skills, improve relationships with inmates’ families, afford outlets for frustration and aggression, and cultivate leadership skills. These positive qualities can contribute to a stable readjustment into society (Caplan, 1996). The National Correctional Recreation Association (NCRA) maintains that recreation can “engender socially acceptable attitudes and contact among the men, and arouse the interest of the inmates in recreation to an extent that they will continue this type of activity following their release from prison” (Frey & Delaney, 1996, p. 81). Williams, Walker, and Streaan (2005) also noted that leisure education could be used to isolate activities that serve as substitutes to addictions, foster interpersonal skills, increase access to different social environments, develop problem-solving skills, and learn how to address personal needs appropriately. They also perceived that it is possible to replace the “thrill” of committing crime in some young offenders with needs for sensation-seeking experiences, with specific high-risk recreation activities (Williams, Walker, & Streaan, 2005). The idea that recreation can help reduce recidivism rates can be linked to the concept of desistance, meaning “to

cease.” Data shows that prisoners that participate in recreation programs are generally well-behaved and non-violent individuals. Perhaps, if inmates continue participation in organized sports post-release, they may maintain good behavior and steer clear of future criminal activities (Caplan, 1996). Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson (2015) believed that gaining something of significance or meaning can help a person to end their involvement in criminal activity by creating a desire to change their behavior. These things that hold “significance or meaning” can be as simple as new relationships. It can be argued that “inmate participation in sport could promote the development of socially accepted identities and assist in building more positive social networks with those outside the prison setting, such as coaches and program volunteers” (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015, p. 3). Recreation can aid in the rehabilitative process and lower recidivism rates by teaching the inmates productive alternatives for leisure time and getting them involved with a different group of people.

Recreation also allows prison staff to gain knowledge of the prison climate. Guards and correctional officers are able to “get a feel” for the atmosphere by watching how prisoners separate themselves during recreation and leisure time. For example, if the staff notices that inmates are grouped by race, then the likelihood for conflict rises. Conversely, if the groups are integrated, there is a probability that the climate is less hostile. Staff can also assume that if interactions are amicable, the hostility is low. Observing these patterns allows staff and administrators to identify potential conflict within the prison (Frey & Delaney, 1996). Data suggests that prison recreation plays a major role in maintaining social control within the prison. Many inmates recognize recreation as helping to keep the prison calm and under control. Maintaining social control is important to staff, whose job it is to keep order in an environment that can be potentially violent. Therefore, if a main priority is social control, recreation should be an important part of prisoners’ lives (Caplan, 1996).

Recreation is also a way for inmates to remain healthy. It allows inmates to “create a healthy body in an unhealthy environment” (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015, p. 3). Health benefits include providing alternatives to addiction, reducing health risks for older inmates, and increasing or maintaining

the general physical fitness of inmates (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015). For example, older inmates often encounter “high levels of stress and increased incidence of depression, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, arthritis, diabetes, and cancer” (Williams, Walker, & Streat, 2005, p. 59). Recreation and physical activity can improve physical health and offer protection against these diseases. This can increase the prisoners’ quality of life and reduce additional healthcare costs (Williams, Walker, & Streat, 2005). However these benefits are not limited to the older inmate populations. Physical inactivity has been linked to coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and osteoporosis. Physical activity is also linked to weight control, which is an important factor in managing a person’s health. The probability that an inmate will develop these problems lessens for every 20-30 minutes they are involved in vigorous physical activity (Hitchcock, 1990). Depending on the activity, a prisoner may benefit in differing degrees. This is due to varying intensity levels and physical exertion (Caplan, 1996). Even those inmates who participate in moderately intense activities have lower mortality rates than those who are not active. Cardiovascular diseases are the number one cause of death in the United States, and a positive relationship has been found between exercise and cardiovascular health. Exercise also helps decrease the risk of developing “colon cancer, noninsulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, and obesity” (Amtmann, 2001, p. 6), many of which affect incarcerated individuals. Physical activity can also help to relieve or eliminate symptoms of depression and anxiety. Living a non-active lifestyle can be considered a risk factor for developing these diseases (Amtmann, 2001).

One final benefit to correctional recreation is that it provides inmates with new skill sets. Garrett Heyns, a warden in Michigan, said,

Among the inmates of correctional institutions there are many who have no knowledge or skills which will enable them to make acceptable use of their leisure. Most of them lack the avocational interests of the well-adjusted. They cannot play, they do not read, they have no hobbies. In many instances, improper use of leisure is a factor in their criminality. Others lack the ability to engage in any cooperative activity with their

fellows; teamwork is something foreign to their experience. Still others lack self-control or a sense of fair play; they cannot engage in cooperative activity without losing their heads. (Compton & Hormachea, 1979, p. 5)

He continued by pointing out that these skills must be provided for the inmates to become stable, well-adjusted individuals who are “rehabilitated.” These new skills can be things such as teamwork, trust and cooperation or more complex skills such as negotiating social, financial, or physical constraints to recreation. Recreation programs can also offer opportunities for inmates to learn new skills that could develop into careers post-incarceration. These could be opportunities such as music, art, or drama (Carter & Russell, 2005). More examples include woodworking, metal-working, or working in the kitchen/cooking. Additionally, programs such as vocational counseling allow inmates to realize that their recreation interests can become stable bases on which to build career goals. Sometimes, these interests are a more stable base than an inmates’ occupational history. Pre-incarceration, many inmates do not realize that their talents in certain recreation or craft areas that interest them could be possible future employment opportunities (Caplan, 1996).

## The Role of Correctional Recreation

When sentencing an offender, the objectives usually include elements of deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, retribution and restitution. Incarceration supposedly accomplishes the first four elements, deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and retribution. Recreation is one tool that institutions use to achieve these goals.

Recreation in correctional settings offers many benefits to inmates. However, not all inmate attitudes towards recreation reflect these benefits. The way in which inmates view recreation determines the role that it plays in the rehabilitative process. Mathew McIntosh (1986) conducted a survey to examine the attitudes that minority inmates hold towards recreation programs and how they relate to rehabilitation. He surveyed three minority groups; blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans. The

participants were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-seven and were housed in the Oregon State Main facility. The participants were randomly selected and a total of seventy-five volunteers were enlisted in the study. There were twenty-five participants from each selected minority group. Overall, the Hispanic and Native American groups felt that the recreation programs were not effective in aiding to achieve personal goals. The quality of program management was viewed poorly, and the inmates therefore believed that management was failing to attain any level of rehabilitation. Respondents from the black minority group differed in that they believed management could achieve some level of rehabilitation, however, not with the current programs and setup. All three minority groups recognized that a lack of facilities, storage space, and care for equipment and facility safety were responsible for the fact that current recreation programs were not fulfilling the needs and interests of the groups (McIntosh, 1986). Teresita Aguilar and Kelly Asmussen (1989) found these same outlooks. They surveyed 496 male inmates in a maximum/medium security state penitentiary. Only 172 inmates responded, and seven questionnaires were unusable. Their results were based on the remaining 165 respondents, or 33 percent of the population. In their study, inmates identified the reason for recreation programs failing to contribute to rehabilitation as “poor management of recreational programs” (p. 68).

Most inmates look forward to participating in recreational activities. This is because it provides an escape from their monotonous lives as prisoners. However, most inmates do not perceive recreation as a link to the community which they will eventually return to, nor do they see recreation as a way of finding “personal satisfaction, contentment, or development” (Compton & Hormachea, 1979, p. 9). Ultimately, these viewpoints do not allow inmates to realize all the benefits that recreation can offer them.

These attitudes could stem from how recreation in correctional settings is currently utilized. In institutions that implemented a “leisure counseling” program, inmate satisfaction was high and their views of recreational programs were positive. They were able to see the links to the rehabilitative process and felt as though the programs were effectively managed. They were also matched with program offerings they liked or were interested in, increasing their involvement (Compton & Hormachea, 1979).

Increased involvement in the activities also lead to the inmates reaping more benefits from the recreational activities than those inmates described in the above paragraphs. It has also been noted that, currently, recreation is not commonly used with other resources, such as counseling programs. For example, recreation and drug abuse classes are offered separately and there is no correlation made between the two. However, recreation can be used to teach drug abusers alternative ways of using their free time. If the prison could identify the connections and pass this insight to the inmates, both programs could possibly see an increase in effectiveness (Frey & Delaney, 1996).

Another aspect that determines the role of correctional recreation are the guidelines that institutions use for recreation. What activities are inmates allowed to participate in? Who determines these activities? Do these activities change based on an inmate's security status? The answers to these questions help determine what role correctional recreation plays in the rehabilitative process. Because these answers vary between institutions, the role recreation plays differs as well. For example, the Wyoming Department of Corrections policy and procedure number 5.300 states that "inmates being housed on a special status such as segregation, protective custody, temporary restrictions order, or other specialized population housing may have limited recreational opportunities based on their housing or status" (State of Wyoming, 2008, p. 7). This statement shows that recreation is not equally afforded to all inmates. While general population inmates might have access to numerous recreational activities, inmates housed in any special housing could only be offered a narrow selection of recreation. Depending on what programs they are offered, they could miss out on benefits that recreation provides. The Commonwealth of Kentucky policy and procedure 22.2 covers recreation and inmate activities. It states that recreation supervisors will choose activities and post them in a daily schedule (2016). Under this model, inmates have no say in the program offerings and, therefore, the programs picked might not align with the interests and needs of the inmate population.

Through these findings, it is evident that correctional recreation does not currently play a vital role in the correctional setting. Correctional administration might not understand what a crucial role

recreation can play in the rehabilitation process. Because of this, they are not using recreation to its greatest potential and they are not motivated to do so. The biggest problem in determining recreation's role in correctional institutions is that there has not been a great deal of research on this topic. James Frey and Tim Delaney also observed this lack of research. They stated that

There is considerable need for additional research into the role of recreation and sport programs in prison and other correctional settings. Recreation's role in contributing to or defusing potential conflict among prison groups warrants further investigation. In addition, it would be important to know the basis on which recreation or leisure groups form. Does ethnicity, race, type of offense, age, sentencing status, or common leisure interests become the reason that inmates' associations form in prison contexts? What role does an inmate's pre-prison leisure experience play in the selection of leisure pursuits in prison? Are there barriers to leisure participation in prison? Is there a hierarchy of leisure pursuits that impacts the structure (e.g., who has power) of the general prison population? There are many questions in addition to these that need to be asked. (1996, p. 87)

Assisting prison administrators in realizing all the benefits recreation has to offer could be beneficial in allowing them to effectively utilize it. This could allow recreation to play an important and larger role in the rehabilitative process.

## Problems Correctional Recreation Faces

Unfortunately, a multitude of problems plague correctional recreation. These issues begin with the inmate attitudes. One prisoner was quoted saying, "In its simplest meaning to me, recreation is anything that provides escape from the monotonous ... regimentation and boredom of prison routine ... the undeviating monotone of prison life" (Compton & Hormachea, 1979, p. 8). While the inmate looks forward to recreation activities, they do not understand the link between recreation and the community they will return to. He also does not view recreation as a means to find personal satisfaction, serenity, or

improvement (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). As previously referenced, the study conducted by Mathew McIntosh showed that minority inmates do not view recreation as valuable in the rehabilitation process. They rejected the idea that current recreation programs fulfilled group interests and needs. Native Americans who participated in this study felt their creativity was stifled. Blacks felt that family leisure planning was limited. Ultimately, all three groups viewed recreation as failing to achieve any means of rehabilitation. It was felt that recreation was not meeting personal goals and it was poorly managed (McIntosh, 1986).

Overall, inmates feel that leisure and recreation is just a way to pass the time. They mostly identify poor management as the main reason that recreation programs fail to meet their goal of rehabilitating inmates (Aguilar & Asmussen, 1989). Additionally, some inmates view recreation as a job. One inmate who participated in weight lifting was quoted saying that, "To me it's a job. There isn't much pleasure involved. On the outside, I'm a mechanic, but in here I lift" (Caplan, 1996, p. 121). He saw his chosen form of recreation as a part of his survival within prison or a form of self-discipline. Other inmates agreed and went on to say that sports are more useful for passing the time, not for rehabilitation. While it wasn't that they were uninterested in positive changes, they recognized the limitations of recreation. Another inmate argued that recreation should not be placed ahead of educational programs, and that more time should be spent learning trades and preparing to find employment post-release (Caplan, 1996). He believed that

There should be more training in jail. My attitude is that the system is so screwed up. They program people. As far as I'm concerned, these programs are useless. You have to say no first then go into the program. As far as I'm concerned, this place offers no trades, no nothing. There should be a trade where a guy can save a little money, learn something whether it's electrical, plumbing, anything. Just apprenticeship, learn a little something, then go out on the street, he's got a little money and he's got something to go for, he's got

a goal.... That's my attitude towards how they should rehabilitate people. (Caplan, 1996, p. 137)

Other groups that view recreation negatively are prison staff and administration. Many administrators and legislators think that the only way of reducing crime is making punishments severe and increasing criminals' chances of being caught. One warden was even quoted saying

The only hope for reducing the burgeoning crime rate lies in decreasing the expected net advantage of committing crimes (compared to lawful activities) by increasing the cost through increasing the expected severity of punishments and the problem of suffering them. (Caplan, 1996, p. 34)

When this punitive penal philosophy is followed, leisure is not thought of as a priority. Administrators are often reluctant or unable to allot adequate funds for recreation programs. Correctional Officers also resist recreation activities because they could interfere with security, which is their primary job responsibility (Caplan, 1996). Also, there are often scheduling conflicts that cause inmates not to be released from their housing units in time to participate in recreation programs. Inmates are also frequently denied the opportunity to attend programs as a punishment mechanism. There is also a predominant attitude that necessities must first be met before one deserves or earns leisure time (McCall, 1981). The problem that emerges is that administration does not value leisure time and therefore does not make concessions that allow inmates to participate in recreation. Formal times for recreation are set and these times are thought of as "good enough," even if only 10% of the inmates are able to participate during those times. If they do allow more time for recreation, they still make a schedule. Most institutions do not have the manpower or luxury of multiple recreation and leisure leaders to cover the allotted time (McCall, 1981). These views on recreation hinder programs that could help the rehabilitative aspects of recreation.

Possibly the biggest hurdle correctional recreation faces is the public's viewpoint. Taxpaying citizens resent the use of their tax money to provide inmates with anything except necessary services.

This is especially true for services that are considered to turn institutions into “country clubs” (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). The attitude toward crime and criminals has shifted. They believe that people should be sent to prison for punishment, not as punishment. They think that incarceration should be painful and a “tough on criminals” philosophy has emerged (Carlson, 2001). This corresponds with the “No Frills” movement. Beginning in the mid 1990’s, people began to desire to “get tough on crime” by limiting or eliminating prison comforts. Several states, due to public pressure, began banning or limiting certain activities in prisons, such as weightlifting. Other programs that the public wanted cut or restricted were musical instruments, contact visits with family, telephone access, television, and many recreation programs (Polson, 2002). Many of the public view recreation as a privilege inmates don’t deserve. Other members of the public think that other forms of recreation, such as basketball, jogging, or calisthenics cost less and make more sense (Caplan, 1996). This could be because of the expense associated with correctional recreation combined with the apparent luxury it provides. “Most hard-working, law-abiding Americans tend to look at correctional recreation facilities and think, ‘I work hard and obey the laws, but I’m barely making it financially. If I don’t have tennis courts and softball fields in my backyard, why should inmates have them?’” (Dallao, 1996, p. 80). This is also a concern of prison administrators. The public has an uncertain view of correctional recreation, and administration is concerned with spending limited budget money on experiences that the public might not even have access to (Carter & Russell, 2005). Many members of the public see that taxpayers’ money is providing prisoners with cutting-edge health clubs that are larger and superior to those found in many universities (Caplan, 1996). Generally, the public’s attitude towards inmates is that of a retributive justice and punishment system and that

Prisons should be places of work and organized education, not resort hotels, counselling centers, or social laboratories. It ensures that time spent in prison is not good time but rather devoted to hard work and education. This is a far more constructive approach to rehabilitation. (Caplan, 1996, p. 46)

They think that living conditions within prisons should be sufficiently harsh enough to prevent offenders from wanting to return. This is coupled with the idea that tax dollars should not be spend on amenities that make life any easier for those people who have broken the law (Williams, Walker, & Streaan, 2005), including recreation.

This leads into yet another problem correctional recreation faces; budget cuts. When budgets for correctional facilities start getting dropped, recreation programs are not far behind. Construction of prisons and proper security demand large amounts of money. With these expenses draining budgets and the public opinion of recreation in correctional facilities, legislators and prison administration are encouraged to eliminate recreation. This is because construction and security are necessary evils, and taxpayers and legislators understand these expenses. However, recreation programs and other programs like them, are often looked at as expendable (Polson, 2002). Prison administrators and legislators are becoming “obsessive in their determination to bring down the costs of incarceration. Correctional programs administrators increasingly are asked to cut costs and to justify a program’s existence in terms of social and economic analyses” (Adams, 1999, p. 316). This obsession leads to targeting recreation programs for cutbacks. When program administrators are asked to quantify recreation’s worth they have very little empirical research to support their claims. While they might report that recreation is a necessity, administration and legislators are reluctant and unlikely to believe them without research and data to substantiate their assertions.

Most facilities are overcrowded and have little, if any, recreational facilities. On top of this, inmate sentences are flexible, they can be extended or shortened (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). This complicates the problem of tight budgets. When prisons are housing more inmates than they can manage or their maximum capacity has been surpassed, budgets are shot. Prisons calculate their budgets based on inmate numbers. If a prison can hold a maximum of 1,000 inmates, then this is what the proposed budget will be based on (Upton & Harp, 2009). If their population rises to 1,500 inmates, they will not have enough funds to provide their usual services. Monetary resources will be pulled from unnecessary

programs and reallocated so the prison is able to meet each inmate's basic necessities, such as food and clothing.

However, cuts to recreation programs are already being proposed. For example, a few years ago Illinois introduced a budget that eliminates 124 correctional recreation positions throughout the state (Polson, 2002). Ultimately, when governments are facing financial hardship and are forced to show restraint, the public can find little reason for paying taxes so that prisoners can pursue recreation. If recreation programs are not cut completely, they are understaffed due to budget constraints. In a study done in 1981, seventy-five and a half percent of the administrators expressed a need for more recreation personnel. The inmate to recreational staff ratio at some prisons is approximately 1:947. Expecting one recreation professional to be responsible for an average of over 900 inmates can only lead to more problems (Caplan, 1996). Recreation programs are easy targets for cost-cutting measures by the government, through amendment proposals like the Pryce-Stupak Amendment. This legislation aims to eliminate weight lifting from prisons. When the media allows the public to see the facilities that prisoners have access to daily, and the public sees them as unnecessary "frills", they support cut-back policies (Caplan, 1996).

Currently, the government has proposed twelve ways to reduce staffing levels of correctional recreation to reduce the budgets. Polson (2002) identifies these twelve suggestions as

1. Reduce the number of hours, days or seasons recreation is offered
2. Allow inmates to recreate in larger groups
3. Eliminate activities and programs requiring higher levels of supervision
4. Limit recreation to an unsupervised open outdoor exercise recreation yard
5. Reduce the number of activities, sports and programs provided
6. Limit recreation access to a fraction of the inmate population
7. Reduce the number of inmates in the facilities
8. Transfer more recreation management responsibilities to other corrections officers

9. Transfer more recreation management responsibilities to inmate workers
10. Increased use of community volunteers
11. Eliminate recreation at some facilities
12. Eliminate recreation at all facilities (Polson, 2002, p. 19).

Additionally, correctional recreation professionals who are kept “on staff” can be minimized by providing remaining staff with training and tools, outsourcing the responsibilities of the recreation department, or making the remaining staff work overtime. Other tactics listed for reducing the budgets are reducing hours for recreation staff and reducing pay and benefits (Polson, 2002). These suggestions show how far the government is willing to go when reducing correctional recreation program budgets.

Adding to this list of problems facing correctional recreation are safety issues and concerns. Many inmates lack social skills and believe that fighting is an acceptable outlet for their anger, even over something as simple as another inmate breaking a rule in a game. This can result in a large number of altercations and extensive violence during sporting events and recreational activities. Rough play can also land inmates in the infirmary (Caplan, 1996). Also, Recreation Directors can have trouble bringing in volunteer recreation workers due to security measures. Volunteers must be extensively screened to ensure they are not friends or relatives of inmates (Caplan, 1996). Staff members at prisons are greatly concerned with security. The greater amount of security required, the greater amount of money involved. Since institutions are generally short staffed, staff can have problems implementing general security procedures. If the staff has problems with general security, recreation programs could become an even greater security burden on staff (Caplan, 1996). Compromised security can also lead to inadequate supervision of inmates during recreation. If numerous events or programs are ongoing, it could be impossible for staff to appropriately supervise them. If the inmates are not supervised properly, violent events can escalate quickly and get out of hand (Caplan, 1996).

However, recently the biggest perceived threat to security has been weightlifting programs in prisons. One argument for removing weightlifting programs is that they work to create bigger, stronger,

more aggressive inmates who will be harder to deal with while incarcerated and also on the outside if they choose to continue to commit crimes post-release. There has even been legislation proposed in the United States, the Pryce-Stupak Amendment, to eliminate weightlifting programs in prisons. This amendment came to fruition due to events that occurred at the 1993 Lucasville Prison riot and the 1994 Riker's Island Prison riot. During these riots, weightlifting equipment was used as weapons by inmates to seriously injure prison staff and cause massive property damage. At Lucasville, inmates used free weights to knock down a concrete wall that was being used to protect prison staff. This resulted in eleven guards being taken hostage and one of the eleven being killed. Inmates at Riker's Island used weightlifting equipment as weapons against correctional officers, with one inmate beating a guard almost to death using a fifty-pound weight. Supporters of this amendment claim the equipment should be removed because it should be "common sense to keep potentially dangerous equipment away from prisoners" (Caplan, 1996, p. 44).

Prisons also run into many legal issues when providing recreation programs. While prisoners do not have an explicit right to recreation, they have a right to be protected from psychological pain and psychological torture. The line linking these two is very thin, but courts have ruled that withholding recreation for extended periods of time causes psychological problems. There are grey areas, however. For instance, if an inmate is placed in protective custody or segregation, recreation opportunities can be limited. Sometimes, inmates in these types of housing can be told that any exercise must be done with the general population. This could put the inmate's life at risk or negate the reason for them being in separate housing units. While prison officials have grounds to deny recreation for certain reasons and for certain time frames, several court cases have been presented pertaining to recreation. One involved inmates being allowed access to sunscreen before or during outdoor recreation. The inmates in this case claimed that, because their family histories showed a tendency toward skin cancer, not allowing sunscreen bottles in recreation areas constituted cruel and unusual punishment. Another involved a morbidly obese inmate who claimed that his weight prevented him from sitting at the tables for indoor recreation and he was not able to participate in recreation activities provided by the institution. Because he could not participate, he

maintained that the prison was not allowing him access to adequate recreation (Lee, 1996). Prisons are also subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act. They cannot discriminate when allowing access to programs solely based on a disability. Reasonable adjustments must be made or programs must be offered for people with disabilities. Prison officials could be required, by law, to modify prison programs to suit disabled inmates, resulting in expensive changes and increased security risks (Adams, 1999). There was also another case of an inmate suing the prison they were incarcerated in because they disbanded the boxing program for supposedly racial motives. The court asserted that certain forms of exercise could not be denied if the underlying cause was discriminatory (Farber, 2008). The extensive legal issues that can arise have the possibility to deter prisons from wanting to offer recreation programs, as lawsuits are costs that prison cannot afford with their limited budgets.

The argument against recreation that holds the most weight is that prisoner participation in recreation is so low that they do not reap the benefits and it is therefore an unnecessary expense. It has been argued that inmates cannot release adequate amounts of tension because so few inmates are engaged in regular physical exercise (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015). Aguilar and Asmussen conducted a survey to assess inmate participation in recreational activities. They surveyed 496 male inmates. The responses indicated that the activity most frequently participated in was watching sports on television (72 percent of the inmates reported participating in this activity). One-fourth of the inmates reported that they did not use the recreation facilities at all. Fifty-two percent of the respondents indicated that they stopped participating in recreation as a result of incarceration (Aguilar & Asmussen, 1989). Frey and Delaney (1996) found that “visiting other inmates, reading books, and watching television were the most popular activities in prison. Other than watching television or visiting with fellow inmates, prisoners did not participate in a significant amount of leisure activity” (p. 83). If inmates are participating in passive activities, it is not possible for many of the recreational benefits to be recognized. Frey and Delaney (1996) also noted that only a small number of inmates participated in basketball, handball, or other active

recreation. If the highest participation numbers are in passive recreation categories, then it could be said that

the functions of tension management and time management cannot be correctly associated with the role of recreation in prison. Since a large portion of inmates profess to spend a great deal of their leisure time talking to other inmates it is possible that these conversations include considerable discussion of prison conditions. Thus, leisure could contribute to unrest rather than prevent its occurrence. (Frey & Delaney, 1996, p. 84)

In conjunction with general non-participation, older inmates rarely participate in recreation activities.

Michael R. Brintz (1974) noted that many recreation programs are dominated by the younger population (45 years old or younger). He spoke with several inmates spread across all age groups and found that older inmates refuse to participate in programs that are available or open to the entire population.

However, their participation increased greatly when programs were provided specifically for them, where younger inmates were not allowed to participate (Brintz, 1974). Even though they want to participate, it is still an issue. Many institutions do not offer programs specifically for the older population. Therefore, this is a group that does not participate in recreation on a regular basis. Other reasons for non-participation are “lack of interest, lack of facilities, lack of time, and lack of funds” (Caplan, 1996, p. 52). Romsa and Hoffman administered a survey to determine participation patterns of male inmates across nineteen prison recreation activities. When inmates participating in this study were asked about their interest in participating in new activities, only 38.6 percent reported a desire to participate (Caplan, 1996). Some inmates report that their reason for not participating is that they do not enjoy the activities presented in prisons, although they might have enjoyed them on the outside. Tommy Thomas, an inmate, said

I don't enjoy doing sports in this environment. It blows off a lot of steam. There's not too many ways you can blow steam off except for sports. I've played on highly structured teams (outside the prison) and when you screw up or something on the nice guys will give you compliments or say that's all right we'll get them the next time. But here it's a

total screw up, it's all negative reactions. You can't enjoy it. You can't have fun. (Caplan, 1996, p. 93)

Additionally, many inmates have limited abilities that could keep them from participating. When prisons experience budget cuts and remove programs as a result, some inmates suffer because they have limited physical or athletic abilities. This would decrease participation because some inmates will only participate in particular activities due to either their enjoyment levels or competencies (Caplan, 1996).

Scheduling can also cause a decrease in regular attendance or commitment of inmates, which threatens the effectiveness of the programs. Activities are often scheduled for times after the inmates receive their medications, which decreases the inmates' abilities to participate as they are often lethargic due to side effects of their medications (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015). Also, inmates are often motivated to participate by extrinsic rewards, such as trophies or refreshments. Because of this, the intensity of their participation is shallow. When inmates participate mainly for rewards or through persuasion, they do not reap the benefits that inmates who become involved due to personal interest do (Caplan, 1996). Non-participation or inmates only participating in certain activities makes it "difficult to support the arguments that leisure reduces tension, prepares inmates for life on the outside, or performs rehabilitative services. Leisure and sport appear to have a non-essential role in prison life. Opportunities are available but few participate" (Frey & Delaney, 1996, p. 86).

When dealing with non-participation issues, one must also look past the gates and into inmates' post-incarceration lives. Many prisoners will not continue participating in recreation after their release. While many inmates want to continue involvement in recreation, their financial situation might prevent them from doing so. They could also have problems joining teams or leagues due to their status as a convict (Caplan, 1996).

Many programs are not effective in helping the inmates attain the benefits of recreation.

Williams, Walker, and Streaun (2005) reported that many programs do not utilize treatment models that are consistent with offender rehabilitation research. Other programs that are used, such as “boot camps,” are implemented without any evidence that they work. When programs are implemented based on the punishment principle, that punishment deters future crime, they tend to fail (Williams, Walker, & Streaun, 2005). The phenomenon of punishment based recreation was also noted by Compton and Hormachea (1979), who stated that this idea leads to programs that are not creative nor do they provide inmates with long-lasting, positive changes. Most programs are stereotypical sports programs, such as basketball and baseball, or games of horseshoes, checkers, or cards. These programs only begin to tap into the potential that recreation has to influence permanent changes in offender lives. “These programs do not provide an opportunity for all inmates to satisfy their leisure needs. They are not designed to encourage the inmate to develop leisure pursuits which he may easily continue when he returns to the community” (Compton & Hormachea, 1979, p. 7).

There are many reasons recreation programs fail. The main reasons are a lack of professional staff and adequate facilities, too strong of an emphasis on security, and administration’s general opposition to change (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). Lack of proper personnel can damage recreation programs, as underqualified individuals might not know what to change or implement other than these stereotypical programs. Inadequate facilities also pose a barrier, as approximately 50 percent of institutions in the United States were built between 1830 and 1900. These institutions had limited recreational provisions. Many jails are even older, and 83 percent lack recreation or educational accommodations (Caplan, 1996). Lack of facilities could be due to the climbing prison populations. When there is a constant increase in inmates, there are not enough recreation facilities. However, neither the inmates nor the staff seem to want to improve the situation (Caplan, 1996). Inadequate facilities can prove to be a hindrance to recreation staff when developing programs. Many inmates are interested in programs that cannot be or are not offered. This could be due to facilities or the fact that inmate needs are not considered when

recreation programs are developed (Caplan, 1996). These problems are also evident to inmates, who report that the

facilities were inadequate and poorly administered, the programs lacked specific goals, the programs helped pass the time but served no rehabilitative purpose, recreational interests were not being learned during incarceration, there was very little carry-over value of prison activities because too many of the sports were team oriented, and attitudes towards recreational activities were mostly formed before one's incarceration and would rarely be changed by any available rehabilitation programs. (Caplan, 1996, p. 58)

Recreation programs often lack adequate supervision. When dealing with weight training, inadequate management can lead to injuries or distortions to the body. When there is no guidance or instruction, inmates do not learn about the activity, and therefore cannot appreciate what it can do for them (Caplan, 1996). One inmate stated that “we don't have the proper training system. It's not so much the training facilities that we have, it's the teaching. A lot of the guys, they can go in there and they don't know what they're doing” (Caplan, 1996, p. 103). He felt that many inmates did not know enough about weightlifting considering the amount of time spent on it.

It has also been postulated that recreation in correctional settings can have negative effects on inmates. One negative effect is the possibility for increased aggression. Athletes who compete in competitive sports are likely to show “anti-social and hostile behavior both during and after events” (Caplan, 1996, p. 35). Contact sports are more likely to instill these behaviors. Participating in sporting events may increase inmate aggressiveness as a side effect of the competition. Participants that become angered during events do not seem to discharge this anger through the activity, instead becoming generally more violent. Losing can also result in higher aggression levels. This view suggests that recreational sports can contribute to increasing prison disorder rather than decreasing it (Caplan, 1996). Recreation programs can also increase inmate stress. This is due to poor attitudes of recreation professionals, limited staff, rehabilitation programs being cut, overcrowding, and old-fashioned recreation

ideals (Caplan, 1996). Many recreation leaders do not understand the inmates' perceived freedom of leisure. Inmates are not free to choose which activities are offered, which leads to their needs not being satisfied and adding to inmate stress (Card, 1983).

What can be identified as the root cause of all these aforementioned problems is the fact that results from studies on recreation in incarceration settings are mixed. Some study results identify recreation as a crucial tool in the rehabilitative process while other studies classify recreation as useless other than passing the time in prison. It is difficult to capture the effects of recreation because various institutions offer different programs. There are also multiple variables that must be taken into consideration when researching recreation (Caplan, 1996). For example, Frey and Delaney (1996) found that "traditional justifications for recreation programs in prison, such as release of tension and rehabilitation, are not supported" (pg. 87). Another study found that

the improvement of one's self-image, physical health, fitness level, and mental health all may derive from effective prison recreation. Inmates may increase constructive recreational skills, improve communication and ties with their families, have an outlet for frustration and aggression, and develop leadership skills. These are all positive attributes which potentially contribute to a more stable readjustment to society following release from prison. (Caplan, 1996, p. 62)

Differing opinions and results in studies leads to a discontinuous view on recreation in corrections. When results are mixed, no one can decide what role recreation plays. This gives way for reasonable doubt as to the effectiveness of the programs. When the programs are shown as ineffective, the administration, public, and legislators support budget cuts which reduce recreation programs. When budgets are cut, safety measures are compromised due to decreased staff and equipment. Budget cuts are also responsible for providing ineffective programs and decreased inmate participation. When inmates do not participate or programs are not effective, benefits are not realized and studies conclude that recreation is unsuccessful.

## Suggestions to Improve Correctional Recreation

While correctional recreation faces many problems, there are also many ways for these problems to be fixed or improved. Williams, Walker, and Streaan (2005) suggested six ways that the delivery of correctional recreation could be successful.

These include:

- leisure and recreation services should be based on principles of rehabilitation
- services should be viewed as a right
- services should be individualized and take into account cultural background
- services should promote choice, freedom, and control, while decreasing dependence
- services should integrate offenders to the community
- and leisure and recreational services should focus on providing programs to reunite families. (pg. 57)

They also suggested that correctional recreation that is used to support psychotherapy should be provided based on either a “strength-based” or “solution-focused” approach. These approaches pinpoint and use personal offender strengths and resources to enable stress management and positively change behavior.

They also emphasized the importance of personalized assessments before assigning correctional recreation to inmates. This was because prisoners differ on many factors including motivation and potential barriers. Williams, Walker, and Streaan also encouraged prisons to use Life Development Intervention (LDI). LDI suggests that personal skills one develops to succeed in recreation are transferable to everyday life situations. These include performing under pressure, communicating with others, and having self-control. LDI would allow correctional recreation to be strongly connected to individualized treatments (Williams, Walker, & Streaan, 2005).

Compton and Hormachea (1979) also offered suggestions to improve correctional recreation. They said that administration attitudes must be addressed and changed. Leisure and recreation’s

significant and essential role must be stressed, especially to those individuals who have management and monetary duties. By doing this, recreation could possibly be recognized as more than just a means to satisfy inmate boredom. They should also accept recreation as a vital tool in reintegration of the offender to the community. They also recommended that institutions offer extensive education programs and provide occupational counseling. Prisons should also offer individual and group psychotherapy in conjunction with recreational services (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). Administration must also see the inmate as a total person. Merely perceiving the inmate as a total person helps him to become a better citizen, as you are not focused on rehabilitating one aspect of that person, but instead the person as an entirety (Caplan, 1996).

The view of prison staff must also be changed. Recreation should be seen as an essential part of everyday prison living instead of a privilege or extra frill. Rehabilitative recreation in prisons should be structured as tension-relief and tension-reduction outlets. Corrections officials should not see these activities as detrimental or hazardous to security. Instead, they should be viewed as productive contributions that provide opportunities for healthy and appropriate release of inmate energy (Caplan, 1996).

Compton and Hormachea (1979) also suggested that well-rounded programs should be offered. Clearly, it is not possible to offer every possible recreation activity to all inmates, even with the most extensive and intricate prison. Some activities are simply not plausible (golf or water sports) and others pose serious threats to security (skeet shooting). However, if recreation professionals think creatively and carefully assess inmates' interests, they should still be able to manage a wide range of activities to make up a well-rounded program.

Both Compton and Hormachea (1979) and Williams, Walker, and Streat (2005) advocated for the use of leisure assessments when planning recreation activities. Compton and Hormachea cover several different assessments that could be used. The first is the Constructive Leisure Activity Survey. This is a questionnaire which is five pages long. It deals with a list of 50 general leisure activities. The respondent

is asked to check whether they have tried the activity, would like to try it, or no have no interest in it. The client is also asked about religious affiliations, financial aspects, and skills. The counselor uses this information in conjunction with other data to create a referral worksheet which lists specific activities and where they can be carried out. Another is the Leisure Activities Bank (LAB). The LAB is a psychological assessment tool that identifies seven activity factors. The client identifies their past participation and expected future involvement in 120 different recreation activities. The Leisure Interest Inventory (LII) uses five general qualities of activities to determine preferred leisure activities. Items are grouped by popularity and the client is asked to choose activities from eighty groups of three activities. The client must choose the activity they like the most and the least out of the three. The Mirenda Leisure Interest Finder presents the client with a list of interests in different categories. The client then rates the activities on a scale of one to five, which are plotted on a graph. The Pie of Life attempts to aid the client in visualizing their use of free time. A circle, divided into 24 pieces that each represent an hour, is presented and the client is asked to fill in each hour with how it is used. They then complete some statements about leisure preferences (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). Any of these assessments would be appropriate to establish personalized leisure needs for the inmates.

Compton and Hormachea (1979) also outlined the process for developing a program. They identified six steps. Step one is determining program framework. In order to do this a survey must be conducted. The survey should cover leisure interests, an inventory of the current facilities and equipment, and inventory of staff and their skills, community resources, and rules and regulations of the facility. In step two, the philosophy and approach of the program should be developed. This should be in line with the rules and regulations of the facility and also be based on the fact that recreation is important. It should also account for the results the program intends to achieve. Step three involves planning the program offerings. Both active and passive activities should be considered and the time periods offered should vary. Implementing the program occurs in step four. Recreation staff should make sure the inmates are informed about the different types of programs and record inmates' participation patterns. Step five

involves evaluating the program and the inmates. Staff should use information gathered in step four to assist in determining the effectiveness of the offerings and the inmates' attitudes toward them. Finally, step six involves making corrections and adjustments. Recreation professionals should determine what went wrong and fix it. These might include changes to specific activities or the direction of the program as a whole. Through these six steps, recreation departments in correctional facilities should be able to develop effective recreation programs that maximize inmate involvement.

Sandra Little (1995) noted five practices that should be implemented by recreation professionals working in correctional settings. First, she noted the need to increase the diversity of recreation program offerings. Active and passive group, individual, physical, and intellectual activities should be incorporated. A major reason given for needing to expand the programs is the fact that many prisoners stop participating in recreation once they are incarcerated. Second, she noticed the need to increase opportunities for recreation presented to females and older inmates. Many times, these groups are overlooked when creating recreation programs. She also suggests shifting recreation's focus from diversionary activities to rehabilitative and educational activities. Recreation can be incorporated with other intervention programs. An example given was blending parenting programs with recreation opportunities that allow for bonding between children and parents. Another proposal was including recreation in comprehensive programs. Programs such as camping programs allow for a multifaceted approach, in which inmates are included in the planning and implementation stages. Finally, recreation should allow for adventure-based activities for both youth and adult offenders. These programs allow for building new peer groups and family cooperation (Little, 1995).

In addition to these suggestions, Arnie Caplan (1996) noted that "the recreation programs in a prison should be deliberately planned, and not represent merely a way to spend unoccupied time" (1996, p. 32). Recreation in prison should be planned in such a way that it purposefully benefits the inmates more than providing a relief for boredom. He also suggested that recreation professionals should look for incentives to prevent hostile and aggressive feelings instead of implementing physically competitive

opportunities that attempt to release aggression and tension. Instead, inmates should be taught to control their aggression to help manage aggressive tendencies long-term (Caplan, 1996). Another proposition for improving correctional recreation is to use different methods to ease inmate stress. Recreational assessments need to be performed to determine the connection between perceived recreational freedom and lowered stress. Additionally, recreation should be founded on more extensive and reliable analyses so that high-quality programs are ensured (Caplan, 1996). Recreation professionals should also assist prisoners in becoming knowledgeable in a range of activities. Increasing an inmates' control over their activities helps to develop more profound involvement in their activities. This corresponds with easing inmate stress by changing the inmates' outlook on recreation and transforming recreation from a negative influence into a positive influence (Caplan, 1996).

Larry Williams (1981) also developed his own list of recommendations for improving correctional recreation in prisons. He examined thirty-three state correctional institutions and documented present recreational services offered. Four elements were studied. These were recreation personnel, facilities, programming, and funding. Through this study, he identified several ways that correctional recreation could be improved. He believed that

- in-service training and staff development should be conducted by individual states or professional associations within the prisons lacking organized recreation services or for those desirous of improving their programs. Employing educational specialists would enhance existing programs.
- Organized prison recreation services should be designed to serve all ages but special attention should be directed toward the 16- to 35-year-old age group since this group make up over fifty percent of the population of the prisons surveyed
- Operating budgets for recreation services should be expanded to provide sufficient funds to conduct adequate programs, especially in smaller prisons

- Use of community indoor and outdoor facilities should be encouraged to offer additional outlets for prison recreation activities
- Institutional recreation programming efforts need to be expanded to incorporate all programming categories into the organized recreation program. Special attention should be devoted to hobby groups, literary activities, and outdoor recreation to balance leisure service delivery modes.
- More institutions should consider the resources/talents within the inmate population in their overall leisure time program planning efforts
- Statewide coordination of recreation services within states would provide more resources for prison recreation services
- Institutions of higher learning should develop quality programs of study in correctional recreation (Williams L. R., 1981, p. 58)

Williams admitted that these recommended changes would not drastically alter the criminal justice system instantly. However, he saw them as a starting point. He was focused on making life in institutions more humane, going on to state that “as dedicated... professionals, we should be capable of leaping over the prison walls and unlocking the cell doors... to improve the quality of recreation services for incarcerated offenders” (Williams L. R., 1981, p. 58).

Recently, in an endeavor to enhance correctional services, community corrections have had more importance placed on them. Some correctional institutions, such as jails, have been closed to make room for more community correctional centers to open. These centers allow for social ties between the offender, the community, and the family to be rebuilt. Using community resources offers offenders the chance to experience recreation similar to what they will encounter post-incarceration (Caplan, 1996). The process of using community-based corrections involves utilizing appropriate community resources to their fullest degree. The goal is to “re-educate, rehabilitate, and redirect the attitudes and behavior of offenders, enabling them to become self-sufficient and productive members of society” (Compton &

Hormachea, 1979, p. 54). These types of institutions offer offenders a wide range of programs along with recreation and leisure counseling, which play important roles in helping individuals reform their lives (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). Community-based correctional facilities allow for children and families of the offender to benefit from the inmates' recreational interests. Also, giving the offender the chance to participate in activities with their partner and children gives them a greater chance of keeping their family together (Caplan, 1996). Community-based corrections also helps avoid "social shock," which is the, often difficult, adjustment period resulting from long-term incarceration. Community-based correction centers consist of community correctional centers, pre-release centers, half-way houses, and regional facilities. While it can be costly to provide this type of network, it would cost about the same as the current containment method which has resulted in a revolving door for offenders (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). In fact, Brayshaw (1981) stated that

The move toward community corrections is not really a choice. The cost of the alternative – building bigger prisons – is even more unpalatable than the struggle to learn, after the fact, how to operate successful programs in the community. (p. 53)

When speaking directly about weight training programs, education could greatly improve this experience. Institutions could designate classrooms in which videos could be shown or mechanics could be taught (Caplan, 1996). However, this does not have to be limited to weight lifting. It was postulated that many of the inmates would be highly receptive to professional or educated athletes entering the prison and holding clinics that teach the basic or elementary skills of several sports (Caplan, 1996). A correctional officer, Wayne Woods, thinks this would be beneficial. He said that he would like to "see qualified people come into the institution on a contract basis to do seminars in Physical Education" (Caplan, 1996, p. 104). He thought that more clinics and seminars would enhance interest among inmates. This would also help to fix the problem of most recreation, weight lifting included, being unstructured and unsupervised (Caplan, 1996).

Many researchers have encouraged prisons to invest in multi-purpose facilities, complete with a gymnasium and locker room. Ideally, the gym could also be used as an auditorium for theater productions or movies. It has been suggested that only equipment in safe condition be used and thorough, periodic inspections take place for safety and security (Caplan, 1996). While this seems expensive, building a multi-purpose facility would eliminate the need for prisons to constantly convert existing facilities to fit the needs of recreation staff and inmates. It would also allow recreation professionals to offer a wider variety of activities for offenders.

## Why Should Recreation Be Present in Correctional Facilities?

Recreation allows inmates to be productively occupied. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a historian, wrote that “the most dangerous threat hanging over American society is the threat of leisure... and those that have the least preparation for it will have most of it” (Compton & Hormachea, 1979, p. 27). Prisoners are often presented with numerous leisure opportunities and are ill-prepared to handle them. Inmates in correctional institutions frequently suffer from a lack of leisure education and think that leisure time is time to be squandered or invested in criminal activities (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). This leads to a cycle where leisure and recreation time is dedicated to generally unacceptable behavior. This cycle lands individuals in the criminal justice system, which removes any meaningful leisure activities while simultaneously presenting them with more leisure opportunities (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). While in prison, unoccupied minds lead to prisoners thinking about inappropriate ways to fill their leisure time (Caplan, 1996). Recreation keeps inmates productively occupied while incarcerated and can help teach inmates how to use their free time post-incarcerated. “Recreation will continue to serve as a bridge between hard time and free time for those offenders who wish to use it” (Caplan, 1996, p. 51).

Recreation also increases institutional safety. Inmates can release negative or pent-up feelings of anger and aggression. During sporting events or recreational activities inmates become “normal humans with normal interests” (Caplan, 1996, p. 25). They are allowed to relieve their stress and clear their minds

just like a normal human would on the outside, which keeps them from getting angrier and causing problems (Caplan, 1996). One inmate, Peter Percy was quoted saying,

take for example you're having a bad day. Basically, myself, I can't speak for others, but myself, if I'm having a rough day, instead of taking it out on you or this guy or this guy, I take it out on the weights (Caplan, 1996, p. 94).

Other inmates back this view. Another inmate said that amenities such as weight rooms and gymnasiums keep institutions from becoming more violent because those are places “where people go and express themselves physically, emotionally, and verbally” (Caplan, 1996, p. 94). The study conducted by Frey and Delaney confirmed this view stating that “leisure participation ... provides participants with constructive outlets for pent-up feelings of frustration, hostility and aggression” (Frey & Delaney, 1996, p. 82). A previously discussed study conducted by Roy Hunter suggested that budget cuts targeted at recreation led to increased crime in correctional institutions (Hunter, 1986). Therefore, it appears accepted that participation in recreation programs provide inmates with opportunities to “blow off steam and escape the monotony of the prison routine” (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015, p. 4). This benefit is also noted by prison administration, as they reported that inmate participation directly correlated to a decline in violent occurrences in prisons. Not only are sports used for diversion by prison staff, but also by the inmates themselves. Gallant, Sherry, and Nicholson remarked that

On one hand, sport and exercise provide prisoners with vehicles for self-expression and physical freedom. On the other hand, prison officials know that involvement in sports and exercise activities help make inmates more tractable and compliant. Therefore, the cultivation of the body through sports and fitness activities is simultaneously a source of personal liberation and social control. (2015, p. 4)

Allowing inmates to release tension and aggression also allows the guards to maintain social control. Through recreation, tension levels can be kept at reasonable and controllable levels. Prison

officials can develop an understanding of the prison climate through monitoring how groups form during recreation and leisure time (Frey & Delaney, 1996). Many inmates even observed that recreation is a necessity in keeping the prison calm and under control. Prisoners claimed to participate in recreation to “relieve stress/frustration, alleviate boredom, develop and maintain self-esteem, and create friendships through common interests” (Caplan, 1996, p. 117). These factors play key roles in controlling the atmosphere within a prison (Caplan, 1996). Privileges such as weightlifting and recreation keep inmates engaged and reduces the time they have to cause trouble. Reducing or eliminating recreation would give them more opportunities in which to involve themselves in activities such as escape attempts, drug schemes, and assaults on correctional officers or other inmates (Polson, 2002). If prisoners are allowed to release their frustrations, and the guards use recreation to keep social control, then recreation can be used to increase institutional safety.

Another reason recreation departments should be present in correctional institutions is that they are cost effective and cheap to operate. Recreation programs represent very small percentages of total correctional operating budgets. For example, the Colorado Department of Corrections’ operating budget in 2001 requested a total of \$548,448,611. Only \$5,865,341 was allotted for recreation. This amounts to only 1.1 percent of the total amount requested (Polson, 2002). That \$5,865,341 might seem like a lot of money for recreation programs. However, that amount must be spread over the entire Department of Corrections, which covers 20 adult prisons along with juvenile facilities (State of Colorado, 2017). If we only account for the 20 adult prisons, that allots \$293,267.05 per prison. This must cover recreation staff salaries, facility upkeep, and equipment costs. The average salary for a correctional recreation officer in Colorado is \$43,190 (the beginning salary is \$32,740 and the cap is \$61,960) (State of Colorado, 2017). If the institution employs 4 correctional recreation leaders (Kentucky averages 4 recreation officers per institution. The State of Colorado’s webpage did not give a number on how many officers are employed, so it was estimated that the average was equivalent to that of Kentucky.), that means that approximately \$172,760 of the allotted \$293,267.05 is spent on salaries, leaving \$120,507.05 for anything the recreation

department needs throughout the year. However, the actual amount is much lower. These calculations did not account for money sent to juvenile facilities. There are currently eleven juvenile detention centers operating in Colorado (State of Colorado, 2017). This means that the per institution recreation allotment drops to approximately \$189,204.55 on average. Once the salaries of the assumed four recreation leaders are accounted for, this amount drops again to \$16,444.55. This means that, on average, each institution has just over \$16,000 per year to spend on recreation. When this amount is compared to the requested budget of \$5,865,341 it seems trivial. This is also shown through Kentucky's expenditures. Since all 13 state prisons in the Commonwealth of Kentucky have a gym, they all have recreation departments. These departments employ a total of 55 full-time recreation personnel. The cost associated with the recreation departments is \$2.4 million annually. If we assume that this is spread evenly over the 13 institutions, that means that each facility's recreation department is allocated \$184,615.38. With the total budget for the Department of Corrections reaching upwards of \$451 million, or approximately \$35 million per institution, the recreation department's expenses account for one half of a percent (0.05%) (Upton & Harp, 2009). As evidenced, these programs do not require a lot of capital to operate in relation to overall corrections budgets.

When discussing the cost of these programs, one must also consider the healthcare costs that are not necessary due to recreation. The benefits of physical activity on one's health are clearly established. Exercise increases an individual's cardiovascular health and decreases the risk of colon cancer, noninsulin-dependent diabetes, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, and obesity. The risks worsen for elderly inmates who are not physically active. Since the prison system must shoulder the weight of paying for inmate health care during imprisonment, these factors must be considered when making decisions concerning recreation (Amtmann, 2001). The State of California Resources Agency substantiates these claims. They maintain that the physical health benefits of recreation include reducing obesity, diminishing the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease, boosting the immune system, and increasing life expectancy (California State Parks, 2005). Research suggests that "exercise programs for elderly

inmates may have a positive effect on the number of infirmary visits, which may have a long-term effect on inmate health” (Amtmann, 2001, p. 6). Additionally, chronic lifestyle-related diseases can be developed through a sedentary lifestyle. Physical activity can help protect from developing these diseases which lowers healthcare costs (Amtmann, 2001). If inmates become healthier through physical activity, they are less likely to make frequent visits to the infirmary. With medical expenses accounting for over \$51 million, less trips to the infirmary would save money. The top five medical treatments for inmates are diseases of the circulatory system, tumors and other growths, injury or poisoning, diseases of the digestive system, and diseases of the respiratory system (Upton & Harp, 2009). Physical activity can play a major role of preventing these diseases and reducing institutional medical costs.

Recreation can also allow inmates to learn valuable skills they will need post-incarceration. According to Garrett Heyns, a Michigan warden, recreation brings inmates into contact with opportunities that will lead to them seeking out new recreation pursuits once they return to their communities. He believes that recreation awards inmates the chance to learn to fill their leisure time with non-criminal activities, which is beneficial to both the inmate and society (Compton & Hormachea, 1979). Other new skills that can be learned through recreation can lead to possible job opportunities. Inmates at the Lincoln Correctional Center in Illinois are afforded the opportunity to train to become coaches, officials, timers, and event organizers (Caplan, 1996). Training in these areas can lead to careers the inmate can pursue after their release. More basic skills that are taught through recreation are teamwork, fair play, creating friendships, conflict resolution, and accepting authority (Caplan, 1996). These skills can transfer to everyday life and can help the offender in almost any work environment. Many offenders struggle with these concepts and deficiencies in these areas could have contributed to their incarceration in the first place. While teaching these elementary ideas might seem like a waste of time or unnecessary, it is important to develop these concepts for the inmate to be a functioning member of society. Once an inmate masters these ideas and is proficient in their recreational interests, they might find an opportunity to build their interest into something more. It has been observed that an inmate’s recreational interests can be a

stable base to build career goals on. They can even be more stable than basing career opportunities on occupational histories. Recreation provides offenders with opportunities to realize where their talents lie and turn these talents into occupations (Caplan, 1996). Teaching these skills and creating career opportunities can lower the chance of an offender returning to the system by giving them tools they need to live a normal, crime-free life.

## Conclusion

Ever since prisons started offering inmates structured recreation, problems have arisen. These problems range from views on recreation, to budget and safety issues, and to ineffective programs. Ultimately, these problems hold a lot of weight, especially with the general public and legislators. It is hard for one to ignore many of the issues. The public's main concern is the tax money that is poured into correctional recreation departments. They do not want to see their money squandered on frivolous programs that might not work. Prison administrators are concerned with safety, since it is a large part of their job. They cannot look past the fact that many recreation tools could be used as weapons if an inmate wished to do so. Even the inmates themselves have trouble seeing recreation as anything more than a way to relieve boredom and monotony. However, although correctional recreation is presented with numerous problems, it still has immense value. While the problems cannot be ignored, neither can the benefits. Recreation provides various health benefits, keeps inmates occupied, and teaches necessary skills.

Administration should work with the government and the public to attempt to fix or eliminate the problems correctional recreation faces. While some problems will always arise, such as safety concerns or low participation, many others could be eradicated. Prison staff and administration along with public views on recreation in prisons can be changed through education and additional research. Correcting these views and allowing the public to understand the role recreation plays in correctional institutions would also likely fix the budget issues. If recreation was seen in a positive light and as a necessity, the public and legislators would be less willing to drastically cut funding to these programs. Safety risks can be

minimized through supervision of activities and educating offenders about recreation's worth. If they understand how beneficial recreation can be and that increasing safety concerns could eliminate recreation all-together, they would be more likely to comply and appreciate the equipment. While these risks cannot be outright abolished, they can be diminished. Fixing ineffective programs goes along with increasing participation. If institutions created adequate programs that interested a wide variety of inmates, they would be more likely to participate. Staff could also motivate inmates to participate through education endeavors. If inmates know how to exercise and the physical benefits of recreation they might be more willing to participate. Institutions could also use Life Development Intervention (LDI) techniques that connect recreation to individualized treatment. This would allow inmates the chance to realize how much positive recreation can impact their lives.

It is promising that attitudes towards correctional recreation are already beginning to change. Arnie Caplan (1996) noted that recreation staff and Correctional Officers agree with the "official" ideology of prison sports. This philosophy, as put forth by the NCRA, states that

recreational sports programs involve far more than merely serving as a way for inmates to escape from the reality of prison life. It is also an opportunity for them to make changes in their criminal attitudes and behaviors. Recreational sports programs in prisons help reduce stress, overcome social weaknesses, and promote physical well-being. Besides giving inmates an opportunity to relieve the pressures of prison life, they promote healthy physical, mental, and social abilities. A good recreational sports program should include an area which focuses on the overall fitness of the individual. Inmates would then presumably take more pride in themselves and in their well-being if physical fitness is presented as an important issue. Recreational sports would also help to instill pro-social values, leaving inmates with a sense of purpose and well-being. Other assumed benefits of such programs are education and the promotion of good sportsmanship in a safe, secure, and humane environment. (Caplan, 1996, pp. 111-112)

Some prison administrators also believe that recreation experiences have “considerable value in helping inmates to adjust to the responsibilities and obligations that they will face upon their return to society” (Caplan, 1996, p. 56). In a study organized by Marcia Carter and Kelly Russell (2005), they surveyed administrators and staff at correctional institutions to determine their attitudes towards correctional recreation. Respondents were asked to complete a survey consisting of open- and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions required them to select from a list of alternatives while open-ended questions required respondents to identify types of recreation that should be offered, the safety issues they connected with recreation, the relationship to their role with recreation, the needed amount of financial support for recreation programs, and their opinion on the effects of participation in recreation on recidivism. From their findings, it was concluded that the staff believed that

Inmate participation in recreation allows the inmates to burn energy, relieve stress, help pass the time, increase their self-esteem, exercise and get fresh air. They also believed that when inmates have something to look forward to, such as recreation, they are temporarily able to “escape” from other issues they might be facing in their lives. (Carter & Russell, 2005, p. 83)

Additionally, they found that administration and staff felt that recreation provides important programs for offenders. They observed that “recreation is viewed as a useful tool for stress relief, increasing self-esteem, breaking up the monotony of jail life, and promoting physical health and wellness” (Carter & Russell, 2005, p. 83). Changing attitudes on correctional recreation is a step in the right direction. If enough minds are changed, maybe correctional recreation can be utilized to its fullest extent.

Through all the research and evidence, one can conclude that although correctional recreation faces many problems, the benefits outweigh the costs. Facilities should strive to improve their existing programs while simultaneously developing new recreation programs. Prisons and incarceration facilities should continue the use of recreation because it keeps inmates occupied, increases institutional safety, is

cost effective, limits inmate trips to the infirmary, and teaches prisoners vital skills needed for reentering society.

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