

Introduction:

Recreational resources available to prison inmates has become a contentious issue. Some Americans and criminal justice officials want to protect inmates access to recreational resources because they feel the positives of it far outweigh the negatives. On the other side, some Americans and criminal justice officials want to remove these recreational resources because they don't want to "beef up" already dangerous people, and they don't want their tax money used on convicted criminals.

The use of weights in prisons opens up many other issues that are centered on the inmates and the running of correction facilities around the world. This paper will take an in-depth look at five individual articles and how the experts in corrections are dealing with inmate weightlifting as a prominent issue in criminal justice. It will also offer up my own personal experiment that I would conduct using inmates in order to help citizens have an easier time deciding whether or not inmates should be allowed to use weights while incarcerated.

Topics/ Research in Previous Literature

The article by the Florida Doc reviews the public's perception and the media's representation of what inmates should be allowed and not allowed inside the walls of prison (Florida Doc, 1996). Similarly, Deitch (1996) looks at work environment in a drug treatment unit and how it results in custody personnel experiencing less stress. Robinson (1998) reviewed all empirical literature which documents the link between emotional and criminal recidivistic behavior. Finn's (1996) study overlaps with both the Florida Doc's (1996) study and Robinson's (1998) study by focusing on recent efforts to eliminate or

reduce inmate privileges including legislation and case law and the impact these efforts are reported to be having on corrections management. In contrast to all of the above studies, Morris and Wilkinson (1995) examined organizational responses to women prisoners' needs.

Methods of Research

The most common method used in the research was the use of telephone surveys. Finn (1996) surveyed 15 people in corrections management. In another experiment, Morris and Wilkinson (1995) used a telephone follow up to initial interviews that were done with female inmates from three different prisons in England. The first half of the interview took place face-to-face with inmates while they were incarcerated. Only one of the articles I read actually conducted an experiment. The experiment put inmates into different living conditions, some with more freedom, and tested to see how they behaved and what their behavior with other inmates was (Deitch, 1996). For the Florida Doc (1996), the researchers did random surveys to interviewers asking their opinions on the matter of public funding of weights in prison. The final article used cross-referencing techniques of literature relatively contained in the personal/ emotional domain of CSC's risk/ need measure (Robinson, 1998).

Measurement of Journals

Only a few of the articles that I read included the questions that the researcher(s) asked in the telephone interviews. Morris and Wilkinson (1995) asked the females the females about drug problems they had before they went into prison, and then asked the

same after the women's release. They also asked them what types of things they have learned in prisons, and about what job skills they might have learned.

Deitch (1996) watched inmates to see which sections of the prison were more problematic. The Florida Doc (1996) asked citizens about their personal knowledge about inmate privileges, and then finishes up by asking them whether or not they believe inmates should have these privileges.

Finn asked the correctional managers by phone the same types of questions as the Florida Doc, but he also asked the respondents he interviewed for more in-depth detail about the inmates they gave and why they believed that way. Robinson (1998) was concerned about the inmates well-being, and his questions pertained to how prisons could raise prisoner self-esteem.

Findings

The Florida Doc (1996) found that most citizens were against inmates having weights and televisions, many were for them having air condition. Deitch (1998) found that inmates that lived in the more open treatment yard were much less likely to be problematic than people who lived within the general custody yards. Robinson (1998) found that exercise and activity, just like for people not in prisons, was healthy and had positive affects on inmates. Robinson (1998) concluded that the inmates who earned the privilege of working out and living in the treatment yard didn't want to be sent back to the general custody yard, so they tried harder to avoid problems.

Finn's (1996) found that there is no evidence that jails or prisons being more controlled have any effect on recidivism. Eliminating privileges may or may not decrease

corrections costs and workload depending on the amenities that were restricted. The corrections management felt that many of the privileges targeted do not lead to increased idleness either because the inmates affected already participate full-time in school or work (Finn,1996).

Morris and Wilkinson (1995) found that most of the women they spoke to were not given proper information in prison on how to make plans to better themselves. Most of them didn't have any contact with their prison-based probation officer. They found that few of these women left prison with job skills, and that many of them received no drug counseling. The result of this lack of care and direction from the prison staff was that almost a quarter of the women re-offended (Morris and Wilkinson,1995)

In conclusion, reading all these journals made me realize that although public favor is towards reducing inmate privileges, activities such as weightlifting and rehabilitative programs are actually beneficial to the inmates in terms of them causing less trouble while still behind bars, and more importantly after they are released.

My Methods

My research question is "what does the general public think about weightlifting by incarcerated people in prisons?" In order for people to give a logical response, I think it's important that people realize that 95% of the people who are incarcerated are one day released into society (Clear and Cole,2000). Realizing that 95% of incarcerated inmates are released, it's essential that we consider the impact of taking away privileges from inmates that will be returning to society. The purpose of my experiment is to help people understand the impact of weightlifting on inmates.

The experiment that I would conduct would consist of criminals who are locked in the same prison, have similar backgrounds and sentences, as well as having committed the same crime, and being scheduled to be released within the next year. It's important that the criminals used in this study have the same types of backgrounds and have committed the same crimes because if they didn't, the study might have too much margin of error. I will randomly assign the chosen inmates into two groups. The experimental group will be permitted to lift weights. The control group will not be permitted to lift weights. I would like to have over 30 inmates from each category. The larger number of people in this experiment the more accurate the results would be.

My experiment would be to compare all these people who are being released within the next year. That goes for the inmates who are lifting weights (experimental group), as well as the inmates who are not allowed to lift weights (control group). It's my belief that we will see a higher recidivism rate in the inmates who are not allowed to use weights. Inmates that are allowed to use weights, and actually use them, I would believe to have more direction in their lives. After a year of being released I would check the files on all the inmates who were in the study and try to call them to see how they are doing and to see whether or not they have been charged with a crime since their release. After another five years I would do the same.

Limitations Section

The possible problems that might occur with this experiment is some of the inmates might be released and have no money or might have to live life in an economically unstable situation, therefore predisposing them to possible having to

commit another crime. It's my hope with this experiment to match people of similar backgrounds and economic standings in order to prevent that from happening. The reason for matching people who have committed the same crime is because certain criminals have higher rates of recidivism than do others, such as child molesters. If I had one child molester in the study, then I would need to match him up with another child molester that isn't allowed to use weights. Because the criminal justice system has had problems in the past dealing with repeat child offenders, I would like to see if weightlifting helps them in anyway. With this experiment I hope to be able to show people specific data that can help make the decision for them when it comes to the question of inmate weightlifting.