

Resolutions and Recidivism: The Case for Debate Programs in Federal and State Prisons

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Abstract:

This thesis examines reform efforts such as education and debate programs and the correlation they have with in prison violence, recidivism rates, and inmate autonomy. The concept of inmate edification and its benefits are highlighted through an examination of penal reform in the United States. From the Penitentiary System to the modern day Correctional System, many different ideas of proper prison management have been proposed. However, this thesis argues that the Professional Model of prison management is the superior style as it functions on a problem-solution basis of reform. Edification in the form of education and supplementary programs like debate help solve the problems that face inmates. Education helps find employment after release which has shown to have a direct correlation to recidivism rates. Lastly, the thesis examines five prisons through the United States that have enacted prison debate programs and the benefits the programs have provided for their participants such as lowering vocal aggression, giving greater independence and confidence, and ultimately reducing recidivism rates in a significant way.

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Introduction

As of 2017, the Prison Policy Initiative reported 1,821 state and federal prisons across the United States of America. Collectively, these prisons hold over two million incarcerated individuals, making the United States the world leader in terms of prison population per capita (Wagner and Rabuy, 2017). A lack of funding and resources due to overcrowding and budget cuts have created a myriad of problems for the incarcerated individuals. Mental illness among incarcerated individuals is at an all-time high, with 54% of inmates within state prisons and 45% of prisoners in federal prisons reporting symptoms of a mental illness (James & Glaze, 2006). Furthermore, the rate at which freed individuals returns to prison for a new crime is increasing at an alarming rate. Within the first year of release, over 50% of released inmates will return to prison for a new crime; within three years of initial release, the number increases to 67.8% of released inmates (Cooper, Durose, et. al, 2014). A return to the philosophy of Howard B. Gill, which called for a system of prison management where programs were implemented to solve the problems that inmates faced, would aid in assuaging many of the problems facing the country's prison system (Gill, 1962). Complying with the Professional Model of prisons and providing education to inmates helps combat mental health issues while lowering the rates of recidivism (Fitch and Normore, 2012). Moreover, the implementation of supplemental programs can help extend the benefits of education to a broader range of inmates. Supplementary programs, particularly debate, within prisons have shown to be incredibly successful in tackling the challenges that modern prisoners face. The programs function as a supplementary program to education by giving prisoners a practical way to practice the skills learned in the classroom, while also teaching the prisoners essential skills such as critical thinking, research, and public speaking

Thesis Statement

Shifting philosophical frameworks over the course of the United States' penological history have led to the necessity of the Professional Model of prison management, which incorporates a system of problem-solving in which programs are instituted with the goal of solving the root causes of inmates' incarceration. Instituting debate programs as educational supplements into federal and state prisons within the larger framework of the Professional Model effectively reduces the rates of recidivism and in-prison violence while preparing inmates for reentry into society. To understand the needs of the modern penal system, the history of prison systems and reform must be examined.

History of Prison Reform

The United States' penological history is a history of abuses, reform, and trial and error. Experiments with the best ways to rehabilitate criminals began in the late 1700s. Local jails throughout the states were the primary agents of crime control during the colonial period of the United States. Jails held petty criminals, religious offenders, and debtors during the wait period for their trials. After their trials, officials punished criminals by locking them in stocks, publicly whipping them, or hanging them. If prison officials did not punish the criminals publicly they sent them to workhouses where inmates endured hard labor (Barnes, 1921). After the Revolutionary War, Quakers began to push for reforms to the management and treatment of prisoners. This advocacy led to the creation of the prison in the United States. Prisons developed in two waves in the United States: the penitentiaries of the early 19th centuries and the correctional institutes of the late 19th-20th centuries (Pillsbury, 1989). The first major step toward a penal program in the United States occurred in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with the creation of the Walnut Street Jail.

To solve the problem of overcrowding through Pennsylvania's county jails, the state constructed the Walnut Street Jail in 1776. This jail acted as a first step in criminal justice reform, as it allowed for advocacy groups such as Dr. Benjamin Rush's Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons to have a say in the treatment of prisoners. Through Dr. Rush's advocacy, the Walnut Street Jail expanded and became known as the United States' first Penitentiary House (DePuy, 1951). Reform efforts in the penitentiary led to experiments. Inmates endured solitary confinement, in which they remained alone for most of their sentences (DePuy, 1951). Inmates of the Walnut Street Jail and Penitentiary who experienced solitary confinement did not endure punishment through corporal means,

but through mental conditioning. Quaker influences drove the shift in criminal management philosophy (Kahan, 2008). The guards prohibited interactions between inmates, and even attempted to restrict the interactions between inmates and fellow guards (“Walnut Street Prison”, n.d.). The only access inmates received to the outside world was a brief stint in the prison yard (“Walnut Street Prison”, n.d.). The Walnut Street Penitentiary’s philosophy came to be known the Pennsylvania system (DePuy, 1951). This philosophy led to guards denying the emotional needs of inmates. Guards denied intimacy, communication, and independence from inmates with the intent to break them down. From a broken state, inmates would repent and eventually be reconstructed morally (Gill, 1962). The Walnut Street Penitentiary lasted until the completion of the Eastern State Penitentiary in 1829.

The Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the first prison in the United States. Following the work of the Walnut Street Penitentiary, it progressed the revolutionary ideas of prison management and rehabilitation. Constructed by John Haviland, the prison’s unique wagon wheel shape aided in keeping inmates disoriented and allowed for minimal interactions between the guards and inmates (Gill, 1962). To further alienate the inmate population, prison guards would place sacks over the heads of inmates when moving them around the prison. Those who looked at Eastern State Penitentiary with a skeptical lens deemed the administration and the prison management to be a massive success (Barnes, 1921). However, upon retroactive inspection, depriving inmates of human interaction and forcing them into confined spaces led to more problems than solutions. Although the Pennsylvania System flourished in the early-mid 1800s, the problems that existed within the system would give way for a new system to emerge.

By the mid-1800s, New York became the leading state for prison reform (Pillsbury, 1989). The Auburn Correctional Facility in Auburn, New York, founded in 1818, became a

leader in the push for penal reform. The Auburn Correctional Facility did not receive its values from Quaker ideals. Rather, politicians who believed that criminals were not as intelligent as their free counterparts drove policy at the Auburn Correctional Facility (Pillsbury, 1989). Furthermore, politicians of the day believed that the Quaker ideas of “kindness and forbearance [have] failed, and will fail, wherever or whenever it is put into operation” (Pillsbury, 1989, pp. 737). The prison retained the idea that religious intervention could aid in the reformation process but adopted hard labor to help break prisoners’ morale (Gill, 1962). Elam Lynds, warden of the Auburn State Prison, said, “reformation of the criminal could not possibly be effected, until the spirit of the criminal was broken” (Gill, 1962). While prisoners under the New York Prison philosophy received more communal time, they endured strict silence during cafeteria, religious, and labor times (Gill, 1962). The New York system further differentiated itself from the Pennsylvania system by creating a classification system for prisoners. The three categories of criminals harkened back to the ideas of late 18th century reformer Dr. Benjamin Rush and included hardened criminals, rotational inmates, and promising inmates (Gill, 1962). The categorization of the inmate determined the status and benefits they would receive. The prison administration kept hardened criminals in solitary confinement because they considered them to be incapable of rehabilitation. Rotational inmates received some freedoms but spent most of their time in solitary confinement or in labor-intensive programs (Gill, 1962). Lastly, the promising inmates were those whom the administration believed had a chance at reentering society as a productive citizen (Gill, 1962). The administration allotted promising inmates the greatest amount of freedom. They could eat, work, and pray with other promising inmates during the day. However, they returned to solitary confinement during the night (Gill, 1962). The New York philosophy and the Philadelphia philosophy became the two prominent styles of prison

management across the country until the 1900s when the penitentiary gave way to the corrections institute.

The Supreme Court decision of *RE: Medley* (1890) led to the end of solitary confinement and ultimately, the end of the penitentiary system. Although reform advocates had been voicing concerns with solitary confinement for years, it was not until the *RE: Medley* case that administrations began to listen. James J. Medley allegedly murdered Ellen Medley in May of 1889 (“Medley, Petitioner”, n.d.). The Colorado courts found him guilty and sentenced him to the state correctional facility in solitary confinement until the time of his execution. Subsequently, Medley petitioned the courts on grounds of cruel and inhumane treatment. The Supreme Court granted writ of certiorari and heard the case in March of 1890. The Supreme Court ruled that solitary confinement before execution was unconstitutional, and while this decision dealt with a specific instance, the court’s majority statement dealt a detrimental blow to the practice of solitary confinement. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Freeman Miller wrote,

A considerable number of the prisoners fell, after even a short confinement, into a semi-fatuous condition, from which it was next to impossible to arouse them, and others became violently insane; others still, committed suicide; while those who stood the ordeal better were not generally reformed, and in most cases did not recover sufficient mental activity to be of any subsequent service to the community (Childress, 2014) . . .

With the old ways of prison reform dying, reform advocates began pursuing new forms of punishment and rehabilitation.

Prison sentences adapted to be multi-faceted to apply to a wider range of prisoners than in previous systems (Gill, 1962). Furthermore, the introduction of programs such as probation and parole worked as some of the first attempts to lower recidivism rates. Reform advocates began focusing their efforts on the edification of prisoners. While reformers of the time conceded that there could not be a catch-all for crime, interest in scientific approaches became a routine style of reform (Pillsbury, 1989). Many scholars of the early 19th century viewed crime as a disease (Pillsbury, 1989). In 1923, the scholar L. L. Stanley wrote about the links between disease and crime. His studies led him to the conclusion that there were three distinct types of diseases that affected crime: moral disease, mental disease, and physical disease. Moral disease dealt with an individual's character and formed early in the individual's life (Stanley, 1923). Mental disease combined the environment the individual grew up in with biological factors. Lastly, physical disease exacerbated mental and moral disease, but also dealt with the individual's habits and past experiences (Stanley, 1923). The work's concluding argument maintains that these diseases hinder individuals, cause them pain and stress, and lead individuals committing crimes at a higher frequency (Stanley, 1923). Using Stanley's framework, crime could theoretically be eliminated if prison administrations eliminated the causes of the diseases in the individual. This thought process led reformers of the day advocating for more science-based punishments and reforms in the hopes of making a peaceful and productive society (Pillsbury, 1989). This philosophical belief system led to tangible legal change in the justice system. After years of reformation stagnation, the courts began to make sanctions "for the benefit of those to be 'treated'" (Pillsbury, 1989, pp. 744). One of the most significant reform efforts in the history of penal reforms was the introduction of education to the penal system.

Penal philosophy shifted into the modern forms in the mid-1910s when the philosophy of a professional style prison began to gain traction (Gill, 1962). Professional style prisons prioritized four key concepts according to prison reformer Howard Belding Gill. First, security was an essential asset that must be ensured before anything else be achieved. Second, prisoners should be classified. While like the New York style, the Professional Model for prisoners created four categories of “New, Intractable, Tractable, and Defective” (Gill, 1962, pp. 315). Third, if a prisoner can be released back into society, the administration should prioritize “problem-solving” and “acculturation” of the prisoners so that they may be successful upon reentry into society (Gill, 1962, pp. 315). Fourth, was the way in which a correctional staff should operate. The pivotal of the four aspects presented in the Professional Model is that of problem-solving before programs and acculturation. Before an administration wastes time and resources on programs that offer the inmate little or no benefits, the Professional prison model recommends that the problems of the inmate are addressed. Then, prison administrators can place inmates into programs that will work to solve the problems plaguing the inmate (Gill, 1962). Not only does this approach save money, but it allows the administration to get “to the heart of each problem instead of skirting all around it in a vague, indefinite manner” (Gill, 1962, pp. 318). Instituting education in the penal system allowed for inmates to solve the problems that kept them incarcerated and gave them the ability to be successful outside of prison.

History of Prison Education

Educational training in prisons did not begin in the 20th century alongside the Professional Model. Rather, educational training began in two distinct forms: religious teaching and vocational teaching during the 19th century (Barnes, 1921 and Kahan, 2008). Stemming from the original Quaker values, many inmate populations were versed in the

Bible to aid in the repentance of their sins and the reconstruction of their morality.

Religion's influence in the penal system has remained since the days of the Walnut Street Penitentiary (Depuy, 1951). However, through the mid-1800s many prisons also turned to vocational training to help recondition inmates. Hard labor was the fate of many prisoners, especially during the prominence of the New York style of management. (Gill, 1962). Some prisons used the inmate population as its labor force and would use them to construct ditches, roads, pipe work, and any other maintenance task that would need to be done around the prison's perimeter ("Secrets of the Norfolk Prison", 2013 and Gill, 1931). Toward the late 19th century and early 20th century, prisons began including academic teaching into their curriculum.

The inclusion of academic education in the prison curriculum can largely be attributed to the work of Thomas Osborne and The Mutual Welfare League. Established in 1900, the MWL focused on the cognitive development of inmates (Davidson, 1995). Osborne's primary method of fostering development was through self-government. Self-government allowed the prisoners to take responsibility for their actions and their situations while gaining social skills needed for successful reintegration into society (Davidson, 1995). Osborne instituted an inmate legislature, judiciary, and executive committee that would hear problems and potential ideas to better the system. Reports of the day boasted about the success of Osborne's program, saying self-government had the "ability to minimize the use of drugs; to improve production in the workshops; and to reduce escapes, insanity, and violence" (Davidson, 1995, pp.170). This success led to other groups following suit with the idea of educating and engaging prisoners.

Throughout the early 1900s, most prisons focused their resources on classifying and segregating inmates (Davidson, 1995 & Gill, 1962). While this segregation did occur along

the lines of gender and race, segregation dealing with the classification of crime became incredibly common. Education was typically less of a priority than classification. Although prison programs taught classes such as arithmetic, literacy, and composition, there was very little growth in terms of education reform. However, prison colonies such as Howard B. Gill's Norfolk Prison Colony did represent glittering beacons of reform during this period of stagnation. Colonies such as Norfolk's allowed prisoners to learn a trade, engage in academics, and even enjoy social events such as baseball or debate teams ("Secrets of the Norfolk Prison", 2013). It was not until the latter half of the 20th century that education reform took a positive turn.

The 1960s brought a wave of civil rights reforms, and with the activism, a wave of prison reform. The federal government instituted the Higher Education Act of 1965 which allowed incarcerated individuals access to federal funds to aid in paying tuition bills. This act opened the door for many lower-income prisons to include education in their curriculums. The act positively affected prisons, and at its peak, 92% of prisons had some form of educational program established. Education allowed inmates to stimulate their minds during their incarceration and work toward a degree that would give them an advantage in the job market once they were released from prison (Newell, 2013). While it showed to be effective in lowering rates of violence and recidivism, the public's opinion shifted in the 1980s (Newell, 2013). Anti-prison education sentiments grew during the 1980s. The American people wanted the government to get tough on crime. Inmates did not deserve to be working jobs that could go to hard-working Americans, nor did they deserve to receive government funding for education. Under new regulations such as mandatory minimum sentencing and the Reagan administration's War on Drugs, prison populations rose rapidly (Newell, 2013). From 1981 to 1989 new prisoners who were incarcerated on

drug counts rose from 7.7% to 29.5% (Newell, 2013). The increase in drug-using prisoners led the public to push for stricter legislation, and thus Congress passed the 1994 Violent Crime Control Act.

The Violent Crime Control Act of 1994 was legislative action created under the Clinton administration that buckled down on crime and prisons. This act made prisoners in federal and state prisons ineligible for the Pell Grant. Not only did this act limit inmates' ability to receive a post-secondary education, it reduced state prisons' technical and vocational programs by one half (Tewksbury, Erickson, et. Al, 2000). In the year after this legislation took effect, prison enrollment dropped by 44% from approximately 38,000 students to roughly 21,000 (Tewksbury, Erickson, et. Al, 2000). It would take nearly two decades for prisoners to receive eligibility again.

In 2015 the Obama Administration created the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program which provided inmates the opportunity to receive a post-secondary degree. Sixty-seven colleges and universities partnered with the Department of Education to bring post-secondary education to 100 federal and state prisons across the country ("12,000 Incarcerated...", 2016). The efforts are estimated to impact over 12,000 incarcerated individuals ("12,000 Incarcerated . . .", 2016). Former U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King Jr. stated that

The evidence is clear. Promoting the education and job training for incarcerated individuals makes communities safer by reducing recidivism. . . I applaud the institutions that have partnered to develop high-quality programs that will equip these students with invaluable learning. The knowledge and skills they acquire will promote successful reintegration and enable them to become active and engaged citizens." . . . ("12,000 Incarcerated . . .", 2016)

The program is in its third year as of 2018, but its future is uncertain. The Trump Administration has not released any statements on its intent to keep the program. While the Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has not yet pulled the program, estimated budget cuts of over \$3.3 billion leads the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators to fear for the stability of the program (Ali, 2017). Regardless of the public's opinion on crime or the Trump Administration's policies, the benefits of education and supplementary programs have been consistent throughout history and their success merits further examination by prison administrations.

Benefits of Education

According to a RAND corporation analysis, which analyzed the results of 267 studies concerning the effectiveness of education in prisons, education has significant and positive results for inmates (Davis, Sanders, et. Al, 2014). This analysis separated three distinct areas that education significantly impacts: recidivism, post-release employment, and a prisoner's ability to successfully integrate back into society (Davis, Sanders, et. Al, 2014). In prisons where education is easily attainable, recidivism is significantly reduced (Tweksbury, Erickson, et. Al, 2000 and Davis, Sanders, et. Al, 2014). Educated inmates have a 43% lower rate of recidivism than inmates who did not have access to education during their incarceration (Tweksbury, Erickson, et. Al, 2000). A study conducted by the United States Sentencing Commission suggested that the education level of an inmate had a direct correlation to their likelihood of recidivism (United States Sentencing Commission, 2004). The department's research highlighted findings over the course of fifteen years and found that the lower the level of education an inmate has, the higher their likelihood of returning to prison. Inmates with less than a high school diploma have a recidivism rate of 31.4% on average. Inmates with a college degree have only an 8.8% chance of returning to

prison upon release (United States Sentencing Commission, 2004). The percentage gap between the educated and uneducated is large and shows why education is critical for the success of an inmate's rehabilitation. Education helps inmates stay out of prison because it increases their likelihood of finding work upon release.

A lack of education compounded with their "criminal" label makes it difficult to find employment. The Urban Institute Justice Policy Center conducted a research project that found that 40% of state and federal prisoners do not have a high school diploma or the GED equivalent. Education increases an inmate's chance of finding employment significantly (Ellison, Szifris, et. Al, 2017 & Tahmincioglu, 2010 & Harding, Wyse, et. Al, 2014). Upon release, inmates who had access to education were more likely to participate in programs that enhanced their job marketability (Ellison, Szifris, et. Al, 2017). Furthermore, according to a rapid evidence assessment concerning education, employment, and recidivism, individuals who participated in education while incarcerated have a 13% higher chance of finding employment (Ellison, Szifris, et. Al, 2017). Due to the security and convenience that prison provides, many inmates who are unable to find employment will commit a crime to return to prison for the convenience it provides for them (Tahmincioglu, 2010). Furthermore, inmates are often forced into taking low-paying jobs that do not sufficiently provide for their needs. Having an education assists in making inmates more competitive, and thus, gives them an advantage to stay in the job market and out of prisons (Tahmincioglu, 2010).

Education also benefits the inmate because it helps reintegrate them into society. Staying out of prison and gaining steady jobs are important steps to rejoining society, but it is not all inmates need. Getting involved in educational programs while incarcerated can help inmates learn vital social skills (Brosens, Donden, et. Al, 2014). During their

incarceration, those who participate in educational or vocational training programs are more likely to create social circles that are positive to their well-being (Brosens, Donden, et. al, 2014). These circles allow the inmate to foster trust and confidence. While this study did show that increase in social groupings can lead to a decrease in participation in programs, it also notes the long-term benefits positive social groupings can have. A study conducted by the Department of Justice concluded that more than 50% of all prison and jail inmates suffered from mental health problems (James & Glaze, 2006). These social groups help to reduce this number. These benefits are present while the inmate is incarcerated, but also helps their mental state after release.

Although education helps reduce a considerable number of negative impacts, it is not the final solution for prison reform. Harkening back to Howard Gill's philosophy of a Professional Model of prisons, an administration must use supplementary programs to solve the problems plaguing inmates (Gill, 1962). While education is the first step in this process, other programs must be used as supplements to extend the positive impacts received by education. One such program, debate, works to not only extend the benefits provided by education, but gives unique benefits to the inmates. Debate could act as a supplementary program to fulfill the needs of prison inmates.

History of Rhetoric and Debate

The use of debate to facilitate reform among individuals is not a modern concept. Debate existed in informal negotiations of disputes over property, proper management styles of societies, and other debates that dealt with the survival of an individual or group. Informal negotiations then evolved alongside society into formal pursuits of political and social gain. Informal debates over dinner plans and chores are the subject of many interpersonal conversations. The chamber halls of senates and parliaments echo with political debates.

Students engaging in academic debate fill classrooms and universities. Each branch of rhetoric, no matter how complex or simplistic, can find common roots in ancient Greece. Known to the Greeks as *rhetorike*, this term dealt specifically with formal speeches in the government and in the courts of democratic city states. This *rhetorike* would become the foundation of modern rhetoric and academic debate (Roberts & Goods, 1993).

During the 5th century B.C.E., rhetoric emerged in the common sphere as a discipline (Roberts and Goods, 1993). Rhetoric denoted only deliberative and judicial oratories within democratic Greek city states, particularly Athens (Roberts & Goods, 1993). During this time, classical writers began dictating what constituted an effective speech, how the power of word influenced other individuals, and the most effective ways to teach the skills of rhetoric to other citizens (Roberts & Goods, 1993). As members of a democratic city state, free citizens had a voice in their government. Honing their rhetorical prowess allowed them an advantage, as they were able to personalize the style and delivery of their arguments. Many educators within the ancient world saw the need for the public to utilize their skills in rhetoric.

Prevalent throughout the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries B.C.E., sophists were teachers who worked to spread the disciplines of philosophy, math, music, and rhetoric (Conley, 1994). Different Sophists groups taught the art of rhetoric in a variety of ways. Famous Sophists Corax and Tisias taught the discipline in an incredibly technical manner with step-by-step guides on how to arrange speeches and how to persuade audiences (Cazacu, 2011). Regarded as famous rhetoricians because of their unique style of teaching, Demosthenes and Gorgias laid groundwork for rhetoric as a discipline (Roberts and Goods, 1993). Unlike Corax or Tisias who relied on technical construction, Demosthenes and Gorgias approached rhetoric in an entertaining fashion. Their style consisted of speech that Plato would criticize

as “flattery” (Nichols, 1998). Rather than working on a technical argument, these Sophists worked to persuade audiences by engaging in stories and speaking in exciting tones. Regardless of the two thoughts of teaching the discipline, the majority of Sophists’ goals were to teach rhetoric with the intent of persuading audiences (Cazacu, 2011). Very few Sophists varied from this goal. However, there was one Sophist who taught the discipline of rhetoric in a unique way.

Known as the father of debate, Protagoras was a Sophist who believed that debate was critical to public discourse (Conley, 1994). Furthermore, unlike most Greek citizens during the time, Protagoras believed that truth was “unattainable” and virtues such as prudence and honor were all “contestable” (Conley, 1994, pp. 5). Protagoras’ perspective held that only by constructing and deconstructing arguments could a person understand the logic behind them, gain empathy for the position, and ultimately understand which position should be taken (Conley, 1994). His unique look at rhetoric paved the way for philosophers and debaters to advance the discipline for centuries. Due to the Sophists’ work, particularly Gogias’ and Protagoras’, the implementation of rhetoric in the free citizen’s life became more prominent. This prominence led Plato to examine rhetoric, its origins, and its potential virtues.

In 385 B.C.E. Plato’s Gorgias dialogue emerged as the first written criticism of rhetoric. This dialogue bridged the disciplines of philosophy and politics, asking essential questions about rhetoric in the attempt to find a definition for the discipline and to find an answer to the question of rhetoric’s morality (Nichols, 1998). The Socratic work depicts a conversation between Socrates and the rhetorician Gorgias at a dinner party. Plato, through the questioning of Socrates, establishes a distaste for rhetoric, calling it “flattery” (Conley, 1994). Plato posited that emotions clouded the mind and should be avoided in rational

decision making (Conley, 1994). Throughout the work, Socrates challenges Gorgias by saying that while rhetoric can be just an art (as Gorgias claims) it often functions as a tool of manipulation (Nichols, 1998). Plato concludes that philosophy must be involved with rhetoric to understand what is moral and just. This dialogue ultimately described the initial stages and problems of rhetoric. Plato believed that the primary use for rhetoric was person gain, and he could not deem it as just an art because of its irrational and manipulative tendencies (Nichols, 1998). According to Plato, philosophy was the ultimate discipline that should be studied and prioritized in decision making (Furley and Nehamas, 1994). Plato's student Aristotle expanded the discipline of rhetoric by crafting an antithesis of Plato's views.

Aristotle's philosophical groundwork concerning rhetoric was in direct contrast to Plato's viewpoints. Although Plato found rhetoric to be manipulative, Aristotle believed rhetoric was central to civic engagement and decision making (Furley & Nehamas, 1994). Rhetoric acted as a counter to dialect—which utilized deductive reasoning to form a singular truth (Furley and Nehamas, 1994). Rhetoric acted in this way because it utilized abductive reasoning (a form of reasoning which seeks the simplest answer to an observation) to present new probabilities and answers to old questions (Furley & Nehamas, 1994). Aristotle is also credited with broadening rhetoric to include the three modes of persuasion: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos.

Ethos, coming from the Greek word for “nature” or “disposition,” dealt with the ethics of an argument and the character of the speaker (Freeley & Steinberg, 2014). Ethical proof is paramount to the strength of an argument. Without ethical proof, the listener often grows critical of an argument (Freeley & Steinberg). Ethos is also important because it deals with the relationship between the rhetor and the listener. The character or disposition of the

rhetor is essentially the way a listener perceives a message, and if the rhetor is not credible, his or her words will fall on deaf ears. The actions of the speaker play a foundational role in the audience's perception of the rhetor and his or her message. According to Austin Freeley and David Steinberg, "an audience will favorably evaluate speakers who live up to their values but importantly, they are most likely to favor the rhetor that expresses and demonstrates what they consider to be good values" (2014, pp. 51). Ethos in the opinion of Plato, had very little room for flattery. worked to do away with Plato's skepticism by expanding the discipline in these ways.

Pathos is another aspect of rhetoric which establishes a relationship between the rhetor and the listener. Pathos, meaning "suffering" in Greek, deals with the emotions invoked in the listener by the rhetor's language (Freeley and Steinberg, 2014). Often called an appeal to emotions, Pathos is used to create a dynamic between the rhetor and listener. Once this dynamic is established the rhetor is more effective in persuading the listener. Politicians utilized pathos for generations to persuade the masses. Marcus Tullius Cicero, a Roman politician, was famous for his ability to utilize Pathos and sympathize with the common man. Although Plato ardently advocated against allowing emotions to be an influencer in decision making, Aristotle argued that emotions had value in the decision-making process.

The final mode of persuasion for which Aristotle advocated for is Logos, or "reason" in the original Greek (Freeley & Steinberg, 2014). Logos, logical proof and rational argumentation, strengthens the foundations of arguments used in debates. Aristotle also used Logos to bridge the gap between philosophy and rhetoric (Furley & Nehamas, 1994). Aristotle used Logos to construct three distinct syllogisms. Syllogism, the Disjunctive Syllogism, and the Conditional Syllogism were three forms one could use to build a rational

argument (Freeley & Steinberg, 2014). Each form had inherent strengths and weaknesses, and it was up to a skilled rhetor to differentiate when a syllogism should be used.

Rhetoric as a discipline spread to Rome where Cicero, a Roman politician, lawyer, and consul, used it to become a prominent figure during the 1st century B.C.E. (May, 2002). Cicero was unique in his oratory style, as he was one of the first politicians to use rhetoric to connect to the average citizen (May, 2002). Though Cicero drew heavily from Aristotle's models of persuasion, he broadened the discipline by introducing a fourth model: *mythos* (Dyck, 2004). Cicero posited that understanding the culture, history, and political milieu of an audience was essential to successfully persuading them (May, 2002). Cicero expanded the potential of rhetoric by combining Greek traditions with those of the Romans. This resulted in critically constructed arguments that utilize the four models of persuasion to deliver a powerful and persuasive speech. By meeting this criterion, Cicero was able to strength his reputation as an orator (May, 2002). Cicero's rhetorical legacy spread to Greece and to Europe where it made impactful contributions to the study of rhetoric throughout the dark ages (Kennedy, 2011).

Over time Christianity became a dominant force across Europe. As the Church's power grew, church officials deemed many academic disciplines to be blasphemous. Rhetoric was one of the few disciplines that persisted through the period (Kennedy, 2011). Rhetoric became a common discipline taught in schools. According to George Kennedy, rhetoric, grammar, and dialect made up the Trivium which was the primary stage of instruction (Kennedy, 2011). This trivium formed one of the seven liberal arts (Kennedy, 2011). Texts from Cicero and anonymous rhetoricians were popular during this time, and inspired scholars to publish treatises throughout the Dark Ages and securing the survival of rhetoric in academia.

Rhetoric survived through the Dark Ages in part due to the work of Saint Augustine, who published *De Doctrina Christiana* sometime between 396-426 A.D.. This collection of books dealt with the proper ways to be a Christian, to understand and interpret the Bible, and, most importantly, how to use rhetoric to create impactful sermons (Kennedy, 2011). Cross-referenced by Middle Age scholars, Augustine's work on rhetoric of sermons became an influential work examining the Bible (Kennedy, 2011). Although the influence of the Church and the Academy shifted rhetoric away from the Aristotelian or Cicerian roots, rhetoric remained a steady discipline well into centuries to follow.

As rhetoric became further entrenched in academia, universities and scholars began to congregate to study and progress the discipline. Literary societies formed with the intent to study and practice rhetoric. These literary societies began shifting into debate societies around the 18th century. Across Europe, coffee bars, underground societies, and universities became beacons of free speech and debate. Cogers, founded in 1755 in London, is the world's oldest existing debate society ("History of Cogers", n.d.). Members of parliament, lawyers, and other prominent members of society have called Cogers a haven for free speech ("History of Cogers", n.d.). In the United States, universities such as Princeton and Harvard had debate societies in the early 1700s. However, these societies were often sporadic and often did not last. The Philolexian Society of Columbia University was established in 1802 and is one of the oldest debate societies in the country ("History", n.d.). As the country became more developed, debate societies spread out to the state institutions. Universities held joint orations where members of the society would publicly debate significant issues of the day. From these orations, universities began to foster debate by competing among one another in speech tournaments.

By the 1800s, rhetoric and debate had evolved significantly since its founding in Ancient Greece. Students across the United States engaged in different styles of competitive oratory events. During this time, there was not a formalized competitive debate, but rather tournaments in which individuals would give speeches in favor or in negation of an issue. It was not until the introduction of Policy debate in the early 1900s that competitive debate began to find organization (Edwards, 2008). While many styles of debate sprung up in the 20th century, the primary styles utilized in prison are based on the principals of the foundations of Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA), National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA), and International Public Debate Association (IPDA).

Cross Examination Debate Association is a form of policy debate that came about in 1971. It was created as an alternative form of debating to the forms provided by the National Debate Tournament (NDT), and it had incredible success. CEDA became the most widely used form of intercollegiate debate until the 21st century (Freeley and Steinberg, 2014). While originally formed to encourage debate rounds discussing the validity or preferability of a value, CEDA acted as a form of policy debate where debaters would construct policies, argue the benefits, and advocate for change through their plan for the majority of its tenure (Edwards, 2008). CEDA maintains the same topic for six months and allows students to create intricate cases to debate. This form of prepared debate offers benefits of research and critical thinking, but some universities turned toward extemporaneous styles of debating.

The National Parliamentary Debate Association began in 1991 and offered students an extemporaneous style of debate where the topic would change for each round of the tournament. NPDA started out audience-centric, but it has evolved overtime to become more complex. Now, due to the increase in technical judges, the style has become policy-heavy

(Freeley and Steinberg, 2014). Individuals who participate in CEDA and NPDA receive all the benefits of individual debate, but also the benefits gained through working with teams.

The final form of debate that has grown prominent in prisons is the International Public Debate Association. Founded in 1997, IPDA operates on a one-vs-one system of extemporaneous debate. IPDA has remained centered around the concept of “layman debate”. This philosophy allows debaters to focus on persuasive arguments and audience analysis rather than technicalities and meta-debate (debate about debate) (Edwards, 2008). While IPDA has only been around for twenty-one years, it’s participation rates have increased significantly (“IPDA”, n.d.). This debate program, and programs like it, help give prisoners exposure to new ideas, benefits such as critical thinking, research, and confidence, and aids in solving problems such as loss of autonomy, verbal aggressiveness, and managing social triggers.

Education has been incredibly successful in aiding the inmates’ rehabilitation process. However, education alone cannot solve all the problems that plague inmates. This discrepancy is where supplementary programs are essential to the rehabilitation process. Allowing supplementary programs to help extend the benefits of education falls in line with Gill’s Professional Model. Supplementary programs target specific problems within the prison. Debate is beneficial in the fight against in-prison violence and recidivism.

Benefits of Debate

Violence among inmates is a significant challenge to overcome. Prisons often are dangerous environments for inmates to coexist. This setting leads to a thought process of “Get them before they get me,” and thus, a male inmate is eighteen times more likely to be physically assaulted than a free citizen (Wolf, Blitz, et. Al, 2007). For female inmates, the percentage is twenty-seven times higher. While factors such as age, gender, and the crowd

capacity of the prison affect the rates of violence in prison, evidence has also shown that internal environmental pressures cause higher rates of violence. The environmental pressures placed on prisoners are manageable through education. Managing the external influences placed on prisoner helps increase an inmate's sense of autonomy.

Qualities attributed to inmates who participate in debate programs include increased empathy and tolerance, a decrease in verbal aggressiveness, and a proclivity for creating safe and productive social spheres. Advancing these qualities among inmates can lessen the negative impacts that environmental pressures and aggressive confrontations can have on inmates. In the book *Reasoned Rationales: Exploring the Educational Value of Debate*, editor Joseph P. Zompetti found that those who engage in debate programs tend to have more tolerance and cultural empathy than non-debaters (2011). Race is often a high-risk triggering factor, but engaging in debate programs can allow prejudiced inmates to expand their viewpoints. Furthermore, debate programs foster tolerance. Exposing oneself to various arguments and advocating for positions regardless of individual views allows inmates to “Develop a wider view of differing social perceptions” (Zompetti, 2011, pp. 39). Debate widens the perception of the participant, but also aids in decreasing vocal aggressiveness.

Vocal aggressiveness is another high-risk trigger for violence. The risks of in prison violence increase when inmates engage in vocal aggressiveness (Wulf-Ludden, 2013). Simple arguments can quickly become altercations. Debate programs teach individuals to manage their vocal aggressiveness and to use their words in a productive manner. Training a debater involves teaching the constructing of arguments, and this process requires that each word is essential. Having a calmer tone and a better sense of one's word economy can help lessen the risk of in-prison violence because inmates are able to engage in more constructive conversations.

Individuals who engage in debate programs also seek to create productive environments for themselves. A study conducted in 2001 found that debaters are more likely to concern themselves with constructing a social sphere that is conducive to their well-being (Zompetti, 2011). This hypothesis is supported by interviews with David Register, the coach of the Bard Prison Debate Union, and Malcolm X, who participated in the Norfolk prison debate team. Register stated in an interview with *The Guardian* that many of his debaters practice with non-team members (Register, 2013). Malcolm X also claimed in his autobiography that he would practice with anyone willing to lend him an ear (Haley & X, 1992). This desire to share experiences with non-team members shows that inmates who participate in debate programs not only concern themselves with creating a positive social circle, but also seek to expand that circle with other members of the prison community. Allowing more inmates to participate in debate programs can potentially decrease the impact that situational triggers have in prison. Reducing in-prison violence is just one way that debate can help reduce recidivism rates.

One of the largest factors of recidivism is the inmate's inability to readjust to society upon release. Two factors of recidivism that can be solved through programs during incarceration is that of employment status and educational attainment. Recidivism rates of inmates who previously held employment before incarceration are lower than non-employed inmates. Furthermore, the higher the wages an inmate can receive also decreases their chance of returning (Ellison, Szifris, et. Al, 2017).

Freed inmates typically have a recidivism rate of 31 to 70%. However, inmates who are able to find employment upon release have recidivism rates of 3.3 to 8% (Cove & Bowes, 2015). This tremendous drop in recidivism rates shows that it is vital that inmates can return to the work force upon their release. However, with the stigma of a criminal

record and a lack of education, inmates are more likely to return to prison within three years (Tahmincioglu, 2013). Educational attainment greatly reduces recidivism. Inmates with a bachelor's degree have a rate of recidivism of 5.6%, however, an inmate with less than a high school education has a statistical likelihood of recidivating at 55% (Zoukis, 2014). Instituting Gill's Professional Model of prisons allows for programs to engage inmates and solve problems. Education is the first step, but debate offers unique benefits to expand the solutions.

Although educational skills can be attained through multiple different programs, debate is unique in the sense that it creates the most significant and largest improvement in critical thinking skills for participants (Zompetti, 2011). According to a meta-analysis of several studies,

participation in communication skill building exercises consistently improved critical thinking. Participation in forensics demonstrated the largest improvement in critical thinking scores whether considering longitudinal or cross-sectional designs (Zompetti, 2011, pp. 60).

By constructing and deconstructing critically thought out arguments, inmates are able to obtain skills. Alongside critical thinking skills, debate also fosters public speaking, presentation skills, writing, research, and data-analysis skills (Zompetti, 2011). These skills can be learned in classrooms and then utilized and honed through practical application in the form of debate. Debating with other inmates helps them hone the skills learned in the classrooms, but also gives them a sense of autonomy.

Autonomy according to Dr. Wayne Osgood, Enid Gruber, Mark Archer, and Theodore Newcomb is defined as "independence and self-determination" (1985, pp. 72). Prisons strip inmates of their autonomy for the sake of security, which should be the first

priority of a prison (Gill, 1931 & 1962). However, it is important to allow the inmates to retain a fraction of their autonomy. Research conducted across twenty-three prisons found that programs that offered inmates' a voice and independence were more favorable because the prisons' goals were more easily accomplished. (Osgood, Gruber, et. Al, 1985). When inmates are cooperative with prison administrations, programs run smoother, guards and inmates alike feel safer, and the program can better prepare inmates for reentrance into society. Debate has shown a direct correlation with increased confidence, independence, and self-determination.

Debating gives inmates an outlook to voice their opinions. Often in prison, inmates begin to feel that they have no freedom over their own lives. Debating gives them an outlook to not only forget about being a prisoner, but to engage their minds and voices in a way that appeals to their sense of autonomy (Register, 2015 and Haley & M, 1992). Debating greatly increases an individual's confidence (Zompetti, 2011). These benefits are not limited to student or professional debaters. As such, these benefits have been witnessed in multiple prisons where pilot programs exist.

Debate programs are not new to prison education and reform. However, debate programs in prisons have experienced rapid growth in the past decade. While once a novelty, debate programs are now scattered through the country from New York to Texas to California. Admittedly, the participation rates at these prisons provide for a small sample size, but the benefits shown through case analyses suggests the merit in expanding the programs and engaging in further research.

Case Studies

I. Massachusetts Correctional Institute at Norfolk

Historically, the Norfolk Prison Debate Society is the oldest prison debate program still in existence in the United States. Norfolk was founded in 1930 under the guidance of Howard Belding Gill. A Harvard graduate of the school of Sociology, Gill aimed to put an end to the stagnation of prison reform efforts that existed in the late 1800s (Simpson, 1936). Combining old theories of classification with radical new ideas of self-government and education, Gill created what was known as a “model community prison” (Gill, 1931). Prisoners were conscripted in the labor of the prison. Gill postulated that an inmate would know more than anyone else on the needs of an inmate. This belief led to inmates constructing the piping, electrical work, landscaping, and more (“Secrets of Norfolk”, 2013). Like Osborne’s institutes, Norfolk’s self-government approach gave inmates a sense of freedom and a voice in the community. Furthermore, the Norfolk colony was also progressive because of the unique exposure it offered inmates. Inmates, regardless of crime, were required to be involved in a supplementary activity. Very few inmates did not participate in work, education, or recreation. Norfolk offered workshops where inmates could learn a trade such as metal work, plumbing, welding, or animal husbandry. Norfolk also taught academic classes to both white inmates and African American inmates. This allowed many African American inmates to receive a better education than they would have received as non-incarcerated citizens (Branham, 1995). Many inmates also engaged in recreational activities such as baseball teams (“Secrets of the Norfolk Prison”, 2013). The freedom provided by Norfolk and the persistence on supplementary programs led to the creation of the country’s oldest prison debate team.

Cerise C. Jack and a group of dedicated inmates founded the Norfolk debate team in 1931 (“Secrets of the Norfolk Prison”, 2013). Jack was a long-time prison reform advocate and served as the society’s first coach. Her work as Coach was influential to the team as she created the foundation that would prepare the inmates to compete against prominent schools across the Northeast Coast. By 1933 the inmates of Norfolk were debating top schools such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard, and West Point. The team would spar against outside colleges every few weeks. After weeks of intense research in the prison’s expansive library, the debates would draw crowds from all walks of life. From lawyers to farmers, the townspeople of Norfolk would flock to the prison yard for the chance to hear the debates (Cannato, Will, Et. Al, 2011). Much of the team’s history was lost due to poor record keeping and limited exposure in the media. Oral histories, scarce formal records, and autobiographies of former prisoners hold the remains of the debate team’s history.

The oral histories, formal records, and autobiographies differ on small details such as dates and resolutions. Nevertheless, one thing is constant throughout the media: the Norfolk Prison debate society was a massive success. Through the work of Natasha Haverty and Adam Bright, dozens of interviews with previous debaters have been recorded. Through their work, evidence of debate members reentering society as successful and productive leaders in their communities exists. There is also evidence of Norfolk debaters going on to become lawyers, advisors for the White House, and even a Supreme Court Justice in Canada (Bright & Haverty, 2011). Norfolk’s prison debate society produced hundreds of reformed citizens over the course of three decades. Malcolm Little, an alumnus of the Norfolk prison debate team, would go on to change the course of history in the United States of America.

Malcolm Little entered the Norfolk system in 1948 after a transfer request from Charlestown, Massachusetts was accepted. Imprisoned for the crime of burglary, Little was given access to the many educational resources that he, as an African American, may not otherwise been granted at that time (Branham, 1995). This education would become the foundation for his transformation into the world renowned Civil Rights leader, Malcolm X. Malcolm X took advantage of every educational opportunity afforded to him. In his autobiography he told Alex Haley,

Let me tell you something: from then until I left that prison, in every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading on my bunk. You couldn't have gotten me out of books with a wedge...months passed without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life (Haley, 1992, pp. 176) . . .

The knowledge Malcolm X learned enthralled him. Before long X was not satisfied with simply reading and absorbing the knowledge; Malcolm needed to share his newfound knowledge with others. The debate team offered him the desired outlet (Branham, 1995).

Within weeks of his inclusion in the team's weekly practices, Malcolm X was the prison's most prolific debater (Branham, 1995). Malcolm X engaged in in-house debates with his fellow inmates that were incredibly popular among inmates and guards alike (Branham, 1995). Malcolm X also pushed the team to greatness through his competitiveness with outside teams. Malcolm X thrived off the environment debates provided him. Malcolm X, an African American Muslim, debated on the same stage as white scholars from Harvard, M.I.T., Yale, Cambridge, and Oxford, and often, he put them to shame (Branham, 1995). The Norfolk debate team "went six years without losing a debate" according to Coleman Bender who coached the team during the 1950s (Branham, 1995). While many of the

resolutions the team debated have been lost to the ages, Malcolm made note of topics such as Shakespeare's identity, compulsory military service, and even whether or not banks of the time were too easy to rob (Branham, 1995). While the guards tended to censor topics that dealt with "hot button" issues such as censorship, the death penalty, or segregation out of the inmates' debates, Malcolm X tactfully brought attention to relevant issues to light. The lessons he learned as a debater would go on to positively influence his years as a Civil Rights activist.

Malcolm X's unique crowd presence earned him the attention of the United States during the civil rights movement (Branham, 1995). The lessons he learned while at Norfolk directly influenced his rhetoric and presentation style. The debate team inspired his viewpoints on interpersonal communication and taught him that each encounter whether it was a personal speech or a political debate, could be treated as though he was attempting to win a debate. His confrontational style caught the attention of Civil Rights Era-United States in the fight for equality (Branham, 1995). Throughout his career, Malcolm X debated in over twenty public fora over significant issues of equality and segregation. Capturing the attention of the masses through unique rhetoric and aggressive presentation styles, Malcolm X's success was directly tied to his time with the Norfolk debate society (Branham, 1995). The Norfolk debate team was, unfortunately, cut a few years after Malcolm X's release from prison due to a lack of funding.

The mid-late 1900s brought a wave of public outcry over public education. An educated prisoner was a dangerous prisoner in the public's mind. Mindsets like this struck down many education initiatives and pushed reform efforts back severely (Newell, 2013). It was not until 2016 that the Massachusetts Correctional Institute realized the error it had made and reinstated the Norfolk Prison debate society (Boeri, 2016). After nearly fifty years

of silence, the debate team was revived with the resolution “Resolved: The U.S. should impose a tax on greenhouse gas emissions” (Haverty, 2015). Debating on the side of the Affirmative, the Norfolk Prison debate society defeated Boston College by a mere 0.6 points (Haverty, 2015). This win would set the standard for future debates to come. At the team’s peak it boasted a record of 144 wins to eight losses (Haverty, 2015). To the members of the revived team, however, it is about more than continuing a winning record.

The Norfolk debaters use the program to give them a sense of agency. James Keown, a member of the Norfolk debate team who competed against Boston College in 2016, said that debate is “ a humanizing event...this is about we have a place in this world and we have a voice and we have something share...It’s less about the competition, and more about those outside the wall willing to come in and say, we’ll meet you where you’re at.” (Haverty, 2015). The program gives agency to the individuals incarcerated, and this benefits them in a way that classroom lessons cannot do alone.

II. Eastern New York Correctional Facility

Bard College began accepting students for their Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) in 2001. Over the course of seventeen years, the program has granted over 450 degrees, and allows inmates the opportunity to engage in over 165 courses (Adler, 2014). Annually, the Bard Prison Initiative enrolls approximately 300 students, and is the largest educational prison program in the country (Adler, 2014). The Bard Prison Initiative not only educates prisoners but gives them access to supplementary programs. Following the success of Norfolk’s debate society’s revival, the BPI expanded its programs to include a debate team.

Coached by David Register, the Director of Forensics for Bard College, the Bard Debate Union at the Eastern New York Correctional Facility began in 2013 (Register, 2015). Although small with approximately 15-20 inmates at their weekly meetings, the group has

seen incredible success. The team began its competitive career with a victory against the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. That win would lead the team to face off against eight prestigious universities. The team would go on to win six of the eight matches (Register, 2015). The debate team made the media rounds in the fall of 2015 when the Bard Debate Union defeated Harvard's debate team. The Bard Debate Union holds weekly meetings to help prepare for debates, but the individual members spend hours of their own time perfecting their presentations, creating strategies, and even competing with anyone who will participate (Register, 2015). From their determination, the inmates have received numerous benefits.

Like the debaters of the Norfolk program, participants of the Bard Debate Union found a sense of agency through the program. When interviewed by CNN, Carlos Polanco, an inmate incarcerated for manslaughter, said "We have been graced with opportunity... They make us believe in ourselves" (Hetter, 2015). His thoughts are not unique in this regard, as many members of the debate team find agency and opportunity through the program. David Register stated in an interview that the inmates wanted to do good in the world, and he believed that many of them would (Hetter, 2015).

III. Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility

Vermont Law School's SPEAK (Speech, Persuasion, Education, Advocacy, and Knowledge) student organization began a debate program in 2015 that worked with the inmates of the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility (Reidel, 2016). Speak is a student organization promoting debate and advocacy programs within the school and the community. Speak offers a unique approach to promoting debate in prisons by teaching a six-week program that increases inmates' skills in relevant areas such as critical thinking, oratory skills, and presentation skills ("Speak Vermont . . .", n.d.). The program is young

and has only just begun holding exhibition events, but the results are positive. Jessica Bullock, the founder of SPEAK, is optimistic for the program's success based on the inmates' reception. In an exhibition round hosted by SPEAK and judged by the Vermont Commission on Women and Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform and received positive reception ("Speak Vermont . . .", n.d.).

The organization has received such positive reinforcement from the Vermont Law School, the community, and the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility that SPEAK has expanded their program to juvenile rehabilitation centers in the hopes of reaching youth (Reidel, 2016). SPEAK currently works with over thirty inmates across the various institutions they work with and are hoping to expand in the near future (Reidel, 2016).

IV. California Correctional Institute

As of 2017 the California Correctional Institute has begun experimenting with a pilot debate program. In November of 2017, six students from California State University Bakersfield competed against the California Correctional Institute inmate debate team. This was the first competition the inmates had experienced. The teams competed in an "Ethics Bowl" where both teams received a position or a situation and then would speak on a side of their choosing. Although this program is very new, the Warden, William Sullivan, has said that the experiences have been positive. The program has worked to "assist with reducing symptoms for those with a mental health diagnosis" (Grier, 2018) as well as reducing in-prison violence. The program also aids in creating agency for the inmates, teaching empathy, and promoting important skills such as public speaking, critical thinking, and presentation (Grier, 2018). In an article posted by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Newsletter, the inmates reported saying the experience made them feel

“human again” (Grier, 2018). Returning agency to inmates is critical, as it absolves many of the root causes of their problems.

V. Texas State Penitentiary at Huntsville

Adam Key, the coach of the Texas A&M debate team, began an inmate debate team at the Texas State Penitentiary at Huntsville in 2015. In 2016 the team began to compete against outside competitors in IPDA-style debates. Competing against various colleges such as Texas A&M has helped broaden the inmates’ perspectives and strengthen their soft skills (Knight, 2016). David Manis, an inmate debater said in an interview that “Even though we are offenders and don’t have a vote, we still have a voice” (Knight, 2016). Comments like his show the impact that debate has on the inmate population. Their positive receptions combined with the evidence showing the lowered recidivism rates suggests a reason to continue expanding and researching the program. Furthermore, in October of 2017 Wiley College partnered with the Texas State Penitentiary at Huntsville to debate inmates in an exhibition rounds. Coached by Adam Key, the inmate team of David and Craig are both participants of Lee College of Baytown’s college program. The inmates are working toward their degree and use debate to build soft skills such as critical thinking and public speaking (“Great Debaters . . .”, 2017).

Future Research

For future research projects I would like to expand on the thesis in this work. As of 2018, many of the programs under examination are young, therefore, it is difficult to fully assess the benefits derived from the programs. Furthermore, the current sample size is small, which makes finding conclusive evidence difficult. As the number of these programs grow, more case studies will be available for study. I would like to continue this project in the hopes of bringing more attention to the issues facing prisoners in the United States and the ways that education and debate can alleviate them. Furthermore, I would like to engage in research to discover the ways that other supplementary programs could help lower recidivism. Programs such as music lessons, prison governments, sports, or other forms of academic pursuit could potentially act as supplementary programs within Gill's framework and present benefits for inmates that should be accessed.

Conclusion

The United States' penal system has gone through multiple ground shifts since its origin in the 1700s. From the Penitentiary Houses of the early 1800s to the Correction Institutes of the late 1800s, differing views of criminal rehabilitation have driven policy. However, the path forward is clear: programs must be included in prisons that tackle the problems that cause inmates to be prone to crime. Following this philosophy of prison management upholds the Professional Model of prisons that Howard Belding Gill proposed and allows for beneficial programs such as education and debate to flourish. Education has a direct link to lowering recidivism and helping inmates reintegrate into society. Inmates who receive a college degree have significantly lower rates of recidivism (Zoukis, 2014). However, education alone cannot solve all the issues that cause crime. Having supplementary programs such as debate further helps limit the negative impacts. Debate gives inmates a sense of agency, builds their critical thinking skills, lowers the rates of violence, and even encourages positive social growth (Zompetti, 2011). Debate programs have been piloted in prisons across the country, and while the data is limited, the evidence is overwhelmingly positive. These encouraging results give credence to the idea of expanding the programs and engaging in further testing.

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