

The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Reducing Recidivism Through Work  
Release Programs

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research paper is to explore whether or not work release programs are effective and efficient at reducing recidivism. Not only do work release programs help reduce recidivism, they help inmates obtain employment, gain an education and become productive members of the society. This research paper will expose limitations of work release programs and use theory and statistics to show that work release programs can be successful despite those limitations. Ultimately, this research paper will identify the benefits of work release programs and explain why these programs are and will continue to be an effective and predominate resource for inmates, the criminal justice system, and the community.

## Statement of the Problem

Due to the increase of individuals incarcerated in the United States, there is a vital need for programs to help reduce crime, reduce recidivism and decrease incarceration rates. As of 2014, there are currently 2.2 million people incarcerated in United States prisons and jails (The Sentencing Project, 2014). To help reduce this number, work release programs were implemented in prisons, and jails all around the United States to allow inmates to obtain employment in the community during incarceration. The details of work release programs can vary from state-to-state; however, the overall goal of work release programs are to help inmates gain work experience and become valuable assets to the job market.

Work release programs are seen to be a contributing factor to the reduction of recidivism amongst inmates. Through work release programs, offenders can gain work experience, and an education to help improve his or her abilities to participate successfully in the labor market. For some inmates, these opportunities are enough of an incentive to adhere to social norms. According to Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, if one establishes bonds to prosocial values, people and institutions, he or she is less likely to commit crime (Hirschi, 1969). Overall, not only are work release programs an effective way to at reduce recidivism, they provide inmates with the prosocial values needed to make a positive transition back into mainstream.

There are many different viewpoints and perspectives pertaining to the effectiveness of the work release program. Sometimes these different viewpoints and perspectives can shed light on the limitations and/or challenges of work release

programs. These limitations and/or challenges can range from the cost effectiveness of work release programs to the overall effectiveness of the program.

Overall, research will show that work release programs are both efficient and effective at reducing recidivism, crime and improving the personal development of inmates. Ultimately, this is achieved by helping inmates obtain employment, and gain education, which helps build morale and increase his or chances of making a positive transition back into the community.

### **Methods of Approach**

This research paper will consist of secondary sources that will explore the benefits and challenges of work release programs. These sources will include: research studies, statistics and accredited journals. Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory will be referenced to illustrate why work release programs are effective. Evidence-based practices will be addressed as a way to improve the challenges work release programs face.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

Work release programs allow inmates the opportunity to obtain employment, and it gives inmates the opportunity to earn an education. This combination is the driving force behind the reduction of recidivism. Work release programs give inmates the incentive not to re-offend through building positive relationships with the labor industry and promoting economic growth. Work release programs give inmates a sustainable goal of becoming productive members of his or her community.

**Table of Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Approval Page</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Title Page</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
A. Statement of the Problem	<b>4</b>
B. Methods of Approach	<b>5</b>
C. Anticipated Outcomes	
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>I. Introduction:</b> The purpose of work release programs and whether they are effective and efficient at reducing recidivism	<b>9</b>
<b>II. Literature Review</b>	<b>12</b>
A. Purpose of the Study	
B. The Components of Work Release Programs	
C. The Cost Effectiveness of Work Release Programs	
D. Work Release Programs Reduce Recidivism	
E. Work Release Programs Benefit Inmates	
<b>III. Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>17</b>
A. Travis Hirschi's Four Elements of Social Bond Theory in Relation to Work Release Programs	

1. Attachment
2. Commitment
3. Involvement
4. Belief

- B. Work Release Programs are Positive Resources for Inmates
- C. Work Release Programs are Beneficial to the Criminal Justice System
- D. Work Release Programs are Beneficial to the Community

**IV. Recommendations 23**

- A. The Need for Additional Resources to Support the Effectiveness of Work Release Programs
- B. Evidence-based Practices
  1. Eight Evidence-based Principles and Practices
- C. Evidence-based Practice Barriers

**V. Conclusion 28**

**VI. References 31**

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## **I. Introduction: The purpose of work release programs and whether they are effective and efficient at reducing recidivism**

As the number of individuals incarcerated in the United States continues to grow, the need for programs to help reduce crime and recidivism has become crucial. According to the Sentencing Project, as of 2014, there are currently 2.2 million people incarcerated in United States prisons and jails. Of that 2.2 million, approximately 650,000 people are released from states prisons and over 7 million are released from state and local jails each year. Of those released, approximately two out of every third person will be re-arrested within the first three years of being released (Re-Entry Policy Council, (n.d.)). One program that aims to reduce crime and recidivism is the work release program. This seminar research paper will focus on work release programs, and its ability to help reduce recidivism, reduce crime and help inmates make a positive re-entry back in to the community.

The first work release program was developed in North Carolina in 1957. However, it was not until the Federal Prisoners Rehabilitation Act of 1965, that other states began to follow suit. By 1973, 44 states had developed some sort of work release program (Berk, 2008). Although the structure of work release programs can vary from state-to-state, the purpose is congruent. The purpose of work release programs is to allow inmates the opportunity to obtain employment in the community during his or her period of incarceration. This will not only help inmates make positive transitions back into the community, it will help him or her become a valuable asset to the job market.

Work release programs are seen to be a contributing factor to the reduction of recidivism amongst inmates. Work release programs not only allow inmates the opportunity obtain employment, it gives inmates the opportunity to earn an education. Many inmates enter and/or exit the criminal justice system with minimal education, and minimal work experience (Astray-Caneda, Busbee and Fanning, 2011). Just to be given the opportunity to gain job experience and obtain an education is enough incentive for some inmates to adhere to social norms and refrain from committing future crime. Studies have found that providing inmates with an education, job training and/or program placement during incarceration promotes positive outcomes and helps reduce recidivism. The recidivism rates for inmates participating in educational, vocational and/or work release programming is said to be 20 to 60 percent lower than non-participants (Re-Entry Policy Council, (n.d.)). Overall, the work release program reduces recidivism through promoting positive growth for inmates. It gives inmates the opportunity to obtain employment and an education, which helps he or she make a positive transition back into his or her community and become a productive member of his or her society.

The creation of any program does not come without criticism. One criticism against work release programs is it is a deficit to the community due to the costs to implement such a program. Another criticism against work release programs is it is ineffective. According to Gunnison (2007), state work release programs are expensive and do little to reduce recidivism. Some studies have supported this statement, finding that work release participants are most likely re-offend. Gunnison also argued that work release programs have “hidden costs,” that make it difficult for such a program

to be effective and efficient (Gunnison, 2007). Some studies have found not only are work release programs costly, they do nothing to increase employment for offenders.

Any program created does not come without trial and error. For work release programs, although the purpose of work release programs is congruent for many jurisdictions, there are oftentimes-unforeseen circumstances that may alter the effectiveness of the program. Some of these unforeseen circumstances could include: the size of the community, the number of inmates incarcerated in the community, the overall condition of the job market (i.e. are there jobs available), budget issues, etc. Although there are, and will continue to be, unforeseen circumstances that may effect work release programs in a negative way, studies have shown that work release programs do serve their purpose of helping inmates find and obtain employment (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2014). Even though the negative criticism against work release programs could be seen as a justified reason to denounce the program, research has shown that work release programs are working and is an effective tool towards reducing recidivism amongst inmates.

Overall, the purpose of work release is to provide inmates with the opportunity to obtain employment in his or her community to help reduce crime, reduce recidivism and decrease incarceration. Although there is criticism against work release programs, research has shown that work release programs have served and surpassed its purpose. Not only are work release programs helping inmates obtain employment and gain an education, work release programs are helping inmates become productive members of his or her society, through building positive relationships with the very community he or she once offended upon.

## **II. Literature Review: Purpose of the Study, The Components of Work Release Programs, The Cost Effectiveness of Work Release Programs, Work Release Programs Reduce Recidivism, Work Release Programs Benefit the Community**

### **A. Purpose of the Study**

This research paper will explore whether work release programs in Wisconsin county jails, also known as Huber release, are cost effective, reduce recidivism, and benefit the community. It will also discuss the challenges and structure of a successful work release program. Most counties in Wisconsin have work release programs.

### **B. The Components of Work Release Programs**

Work release programs were introduced in Wisconsin in 1913 under the Huber Law developed by state senator Henry Huber. The purpose of the Huber Law was to allow trusted prisoners to temporarily leave confinement for work (Wikipedia, 2014). Through work release, inmates are typically allowed to leave jail up to 12-hours a day, six days a week for work release. However, the duration of time an inmate is out on work release can be dependent on Huber personnel. Implementation of work release programs cost money and vary from county to county. The cost effectiveness of work release programs can be analyzed by comparing the cost of administering the program to the revenue the program generates.

### **C. The Cost Effectiveness of Work Release Programs**

Inmates participating in work release programs generate a significant amount of revenue for the program in three ways. First, inmates are oftentimes charged for room and board, the cost of travel expenses to and from work, and for work release fees.

This makes inmates responsible for a large portion of the financial burden affiliated with the program. Second, an inmate's wages are disbursed accordingly upon compensation for employment to pay for fees and/or other financial commitments. The authority for jails to charge inmates for work release is codified by state statute.

“Every prisoner who is gainfully employed or who receives unemployment insurance or employment training benefits while in custody in the jail, shall be liable for charges not to exceed the full per person maintenance and cost of the prisoner's board in the jail as fixed by the county board after passage of an appropriate county ordinance” (Wis. Stat. Sec 303.08 (4)).

Third, through work release, inmates are allowed to work off their sentence, which decreases his or her time spent in jail. For example, in Marathon County, inmates can earn one day off of their sentence for every 12-hours worked (R. Zastrow, Marathon County Sheriff Department-Huber Program Coordinator, June 19, 2014). As a result, the jail benefits financially for each day an inmate is not in jail. All three of these circumstances help support the theory that work release programs are cost effective and helps generate revenue.

Administrative costs contribute to a majority of the costs affiliated with work release programs. However, most administrative costs are budgeted within the actual jail budget. For example, in Marathon County, Huber release is not a separate budget program. The Huber personnel consist of jail staff that is assigned to Huber on a rotating basis. As a result, the work release program does not add any additional costs to the jail, making the program both cost effective and a true generator of revenue (R. Zastrow, Marathon County Sheriff Department-Huber Program Coordinator, June 19,

2014). Unfortunately, not every county will have the financial abilities to fund work release programs within their jail budget. As a result, counties are forced to seek help from outside sources, such as state grants, to compensate for the financial hardship affiliated with the program. Work release programs cannot exist without having Huber personnel available to run and oversee the program.

#### **D. Work Release Programs Reduce Recidivism**

A huge theory about work release programs is that it helps reduce recidivism. One way work release programs help reduce recidivism is it allows inmates the opportunity to obtain work and an education, which helps motivate him or her not to re-offend. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance, research has shown that in-prison and post-release vocational training and/or work release programs have helped delay and/or prevent recidivism within the first three years of an inmate being released from either program. Inmates also benefit from any educational services and/or other services offered within the program upon release. Many inmates who are released from prison or jail are disadvantaged socially and economically due to their lack of educational attainment and employment history (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2014). Work release programs not only provide educational and employment opportunities for inmates, it helps promote social stability, and encourages economic growth. Even if work release programs only delay recidivism, they are producing a positive message and positive results for inmates and the community. The overall positive message is the fact that work release programs are effective and have been proven to work. The positive results for inmates and the community is that work release programs not only

motivate inmates to not re-offend, it helps inmates make positive transitions back into the community, which will help improve societal morale.

#### **E. Work Release Programs Beneficial Inmates**

Work release programs are beneficial to inmates because they allow inmates the opportunity to search for employment, obtain employment, complete community service, and attend school. This allows inmates the opportunity to pay restitution, pay child support (if needed) and pay for his or her work release fees. Allowing inmates to pay restitution helps him or her become productive members of his or her community. Inmates may also have other financial commitments, such as court costs and attorney fees. Work release programs present inmates with the opportunity to better his or herself; be responsible and pay off his or her debts to the community for the crime he or she committed. Overall, work release programs are efficient and effective at helping offenders become a productive part of the labor industry and make a positive re-entry back into his or her community.

Even though research as shown work release programs are beneficial to both the community and inmates, work release programs do not come without challenges. Financial hardship and safety concerns are two issues that can be detrimental to a work release program. Two counties referenced with either examples of financial hardship and/or safety concerns are Eau Claire County and Marathon County.

In 2013, Eau Claire County, who has a work release program, began to discuss whether or not the program was cost efficient. The Huber program cost the county an estimated one million dollars a year. As a result, the county began to look for better ways to utilize the money used to fund the program (WQOW.com, 2013). So far, the

work release program still exists in Eau Claire County. The question now is, for how long?

In 2006, Marathon County also questioned whether their Huber program was cost efficient. As a result, they began to discuss closing their Huber facilities to delay having to spend additional money on expanding an overcrowding jail. According to Parks, Krager and Huber, eliminating the work release program would reduce the jail population over 28%. As a result, this would eliminate the County from spending an estimated \$ 35,000,000 on future jail expansions, lower the cost to \$19,250,000, and ultimately save the County an estimated \$15,750,000 (Salscheider, 2006).

An example of safety concerns took place in Marathon County. In 2013, due to low staffing levels, Marathon County inmates on work release were not being strip searched upon re-entry into the jail, and therefore, were smuggling drugs into the facility (Jones, Koeppel, Balk, Schremp, Beck, & Billeb, 2013). This presented huge safety concerns for both the inmates and staff in the facility. Overall, these are the types of concerns that have triggered a debate amongst many counties, oftentimes, promoting the possibility of eliminating Huber programs all together.

Although there are significant costs and other preventable issues that go along with work release programs, research has shown that the costs and benefits of work release programs outweigh the possible risks and detriments of the program. Overall, the work release program is a cost effective and viable tool to help reduce recidivism, increase revenue for the community, and help offenders make positive transitions back into the community.

### **III. Theoretical Framework: Travis Hirschi's Four Elements of Social Bond Theory (Attachment, Commitment, Involvement, Belief) in relation to Work Release Programs, Work Release Programs are Positive Resources for Inmates Work Release Programs are beneficial to the Criminal Justice System, Work Release Programs are beneficial to the Community**

#### **A. Travis Hirschi's Four Elements of Social Bond Theory in Relation to Work Release Programs**

According to Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, one must be able to dismiss and/or control their desire to indulge in criminal behavior. Hirschi believes if one is involved and/or has established bonds to prosocial values, people and institutions, he or she should be able to control his or her urge to commit crime (Hirschi, 1969).

Hirschi's social bond theory is made up of four elements: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. These four elements, combined with the significance of this study, will show that there is a correlation between work release programs and Hirschi's Social Bond Theory. It will also show why work release programs do work.

##### **1. Attachment**

According to the attachment element of Hirschi's social bond theory, attachment refers to the bond a person shares with his or her family, peers, significant other and an institution. Hirschi believes the stronger the bond a person has to prosocial values, people and institutions, the less prone they will be to committing crime (Hirschi, 1969). In relation to Hirschi's social bond theory, work release programs help inmates establish positive bonds with the labor industry, his or her families and the community. Through these established bonds, inmates are motivated to become a

productive part of the labor industry and less motivated to commit crime. Research has shown that in-prison and post-release vocational training and/or work release programs have helped delay and/or prevent recidivism within the first three years of an inmate being released from either program (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2014). According to Hirschi, if a person is not motivated to commit crime they are less likely to commit crime.

## **2. Commitment**

According to the commitment element of Hirschi's social bond theory, a person uses the significance of his or her social relationships as a deterrent to commit crime. For work release participants, he or she chooses to adhere to social norms and conform to laws because of the fear of not successfully completing the program and/or re-incarceration. Through work release, inmates can obtain employment, gain income, and earn a degree (R. Zastrow, Marathon County Sheriff Department-Huber Program Coordinator, June 19, 2014). This is sometimes seen a huge achievement for some inmates. According to Hirschi, people are less like to engage in deviant behavior if they felt this would impact his or her current situation negatively. As aforementioned in Section II, many inmates who are released from incarceration (not involved in work release program) are disadvantaged socially and economically due to their lack of educational attainment and employment history (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2014). Work release programs not only help inmates gain employment, and earn an education, it helps motivate inmates not re-offend, and become a productive member of his or her community. Hirschi would be a true advocate for work release programs because it serves as a source of social control and deterrent of criminal behavior.

### **3. Involvement**

According to the involvement element of Hirschi's social bond theory, the amount of time a person spends being involved in other activities, they are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. As inmates obtain steady employment post-work release, they have less time to devote to criminal behavior. Work release programs present inmates with the opportunity to obtain employment to help better themselves. According to Hirschi, when a person devotes more of his or her time to prosocial activities, this leaves less time and/or chance for involvement in antisocial activities (Hirschi, 1969).

### **4. Belief**

The last element of Hirschi's social bond theory is belief, which suggests a person is less likely to commit crime if he or she believes those activities are morally wrong. According to Hirschi, if a person values adhering to social norms, he or she is less likely to engage in deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Work release participants are less likely to commit future crime due to the fear of going back to prison and/or jail. Inmates begin to value freedom, and therefore make conscious decisions to weigh the pros and cons of committing crime and follow the law (Hirschi, 1969). Positive relationships established through the labor industry also influence inmates to adhere to social norms and follow the law. Oftentimes, the risk of jeopardizing employment and/or such relationships is enough of a deterrent to not engage in deviant behavior.

Both the implications of this study and Hirschi's social bond theory have shown that work release programs do work. Research has shown that work release programs work because they give inmates an opportunity to establish a better future through

gaining employment and establishing an education. Hirschi's social bond theory shows that work release programs work through using four particular elements: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. According to Hirschi, these four elements help inmates control his or her behavior and dismiss the natural urge to participate in criminal activity. Overall, both Hirschi's social bond theory and this study have determined that work release programs do work and can continue to work as long as there are bond and/or motivations to help deter inmates from engaging in criminal activity.

#### **B. Work Release Programs are Positive Resources for Inmates**

Since its development in 1913, work release programs have become a successful bridge between life in confinement and life in the community for inmates. This success can be defined and supported through both research and theory. The purpose of work release programs when it was first introduced in 1913 was to allow inmates to leave confinement to establish employment. Through continuous development and maturity, work release programs have become an effective and efficient way to help inmates make positive transitions back into the community.

As aforementioned in the introduction, everyday in the United States, there are approximately 650,000 people released from states prisons and over 7 million released from state and local jails each year. Of those released, research has proven that approximately one-third of those released will likely be re-incarcerated within three years of being released (United States Department of Justice, 2014). Work release programs act as a efficient buffer between inmates re-offending and recidivism. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance, research has shown that in-prison and

post-release vocational training and/or work release programs have helped delay and/or prevent recidivism within the first three years of an inmate being released from either program. This is a complete opposite of the aforementioned statement made by the United States Department of Justice.

### **C. Work Release Programs are Beneficial to the Criminal Justice System**

Work release programs have been proven to be beneficial both the criminal justice system and surrounding communities. One way work release programs have been beneficial to the criminal justice system is it allows inmates the opportunity to gain educational services and/or work experience, which has been proven to reduce recidivism. Providing inmates with educational and vocational opportunities, according to the principals of effective corrections intervention, will increase their chances of finding and maintaining employment and decrease their chances of re-offending (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2014).

“This year, some 600,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if they can’t find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit more crimes and return to prison.... America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life”  
*(United States Department of Justice, 2014)*. --President George W. Bush,  
2004 State of the Union Address

### **D. Work Release Programs are Beneficial to the Community**

One way work release programs are beneficial to the community is it helps inmates make a positive transitions back into the community. Inmates gain the opportunity through work release to establish positive relationships with the labor industry and

become a productive member of their society. These relationships are oftentimes enough to help influence and motivate inmates to adhere to social norms and not re-offend.

Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, which is supported by the following elements: attachment, commitment, involvement and beliefs, suggests an inmates' decision to commit crime is dependent upon the bonds he or she has established to prosocial values, people and institutions (Hirschi, 1969). These bonds are highlighted through the work release program, which motivates inmates not to commit future crime. Through work release, inmates can obtain employment, gain income, and earn a degree (R. Zastrow, Marathon County Sheriff Department-Huber Program Coordinator, June 19, 2014). For many inmates, this is an opportunity he or she never thought was possible. That alone is a motivator for an inmate not to re-offend. According to Hirschi, people are less like to engage in deviant behavior if they felt this would impact his or her current situation negatively. According to Astray-Caneda, Busbee and Fanning, studies show that there is a positive correlation between prisoners obtaining an education and the reduction of recidivism.

#### **IV. Recommendations: The Need for Additional Resources to Support the Effectiveness of Work Release Programs**

Although both research and theory can support and prove that work release programs work, there is still the need for additional research on the program to truly validate its impact on reducing recidivism as a unit in the United States. In 2006, the Washington State Institute of Public Policy could only find four quality studies of work release programs. On average, these studies did suggest that work release programs reduced recidivism; however, there is still a need for more rigorous research on the program to truly highlight the positive results the program can have on the criminal justice system, inmate participants and the community (Turner & Petersilia, 1996).

In 2014, Marathon County collected and established data to support the success of their Huber release program. According to Zastrow, the Huber Program Coordinator of Marathon County, on 06-18-13, there were 310 inmates in custody at the Marathon County Jail and 91 in Huber. As of 06-18-14, there were only 249 inmates in custody and only 56 in Huber. These numbers support both research and Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory that work release programs do work. More data similar to that of Marathon County, should be collected, organized and published together throughout all 50 states, to help solidify the importance and positive necessity work release programs present to inmates, the criminal justice system and the community.

## **B. Evidence-based practices**

To improve the current statistics and listed results of work release programs, evidence based practices should be addressed and utilized. According to Strickland and Collins, evidence-based practices pertaining to work release programs would take the best available evidence compiled on the program and place that evidence at the core of policy development and implementation for work release programs as a whole. Overall, the utilization of evidence-based practices would help organizations make well-informed decisions on the policies and productivity of work release programs (Strickland & Collins, 2008).

### **1. Eight Evidence-based Principles and Practices**

According to Strickland and Collins, there are eight evidence-based principles and practices that organizations should implement while utilizing evidence-based practices. The first evidence-based principle and practice is, *target highest risk offender*, which states offenders who are at the highest risk of re-offending should be provided rehabilitation and treatment programming first before low risk offenders. Second, is *assess offenders needs*, which states the risk factors of offenders should be assessed using research-based instruments in an effort to diminish those risk factors. Third, is *design responsivity into programming*, which states programming should be adjusted to accommodate any characteristics of an offender that impedes his or her ability and motivation to learn. Fourth, is *develop behavior management plans*, which states a behavior management plan should be developed for each offender, including a priority and sequence of his or her treatment programs, what he or she will gain from this treatment program and goals to prevent recidivism. Fifth, is *deliver treatment*

*programs using cognitive-based strategies*, which states cognitive-behavioral treatments plans should be utilized to address the criminal thinking and behavioral patterns of inmates. This treatment plan is seen as more effective and beneficial to offenders than other treatment plans. Sixth, is *motivate and shape offenders behaviors*, which states programming should be structure-based rewarding offenders for positive behavior and punishing them for negative behavior. Seventh, is *engender the community as a protective factor against recidivism and use the community to support offender re-entry and re-integration*, which states programs should use the offender's family and social service agencies in the community as a support system to help reduce the chances of an offender re-offending. Eighth, is *identify outcomes and measure progress*, which states treatment programs should identify outcomes and ways to measure an offender's progress towards objectives, and his or her performance. The treatment program should also present ways an inmate could improve his or her performance. Overall, according to Strickland and Collins, utilizing these eight evidence-based principles and practices for work release programs would not only help organizations develop effective offender intervention and supervision practices, it would help work release programs become successful in initiating and maintaining its purpose (Strickland & Collins, 2008).

### **C. Evidence-based Practice Barriers**

Unfortunately, there are barriers that go along with implementing evidence-based practices. According to Strickland and Collins, one barrier is institutional constraints. Any institutional limitations, for example, changes in law and involvement of legislature, could create weaknesses in the sustainability of a program. Another

barrier is external pressure. Any external pressure could interfere and/or impact the implementation of evidence-based practices in a negative way. The two examples Strickland and Collins gave were negative media exposure and economic challenges. Both examples could hinder the implementation of evidence-based practices in a negative way. Another barrier is the inability to understand the language and/or vocabulary of an issue and its solution. This barrier could cause issues and or topics to be misunderstood and/or misinterpreted, which could weaken the overall purpose of a study. Another barrier is the behavior of staff and the treatment of subjects. This could prevent the effectiveness of the program as a whole. Another barrier is the limitation of resources. The limitations Strickland and Collins mentioned were economic limitations, staffing limitations, time limitations, and programming space limitations. All these limitations could negatively affect the implementation of evidence-based practices. The last barrier is prolonging the integrity of a program by setting realistic goals. Setting realistic goals will only help programs maintain its integrity and increase its chances at being successful (Strickland & Collins, 2008). Overall, these barriers could place a burden on implementing evidence-based practices pertaining to work release. As a result, these barriers should be addressed, reduced to maintainable levels and/or eliminated prior to implementing any type of evidence-based work release practices.

Because evidence-based practices would only improve the current statistics and listed results of work release programs, evidence-based practices should be recommended and utilized by all correctional facilities nation wide. This would only help establish and strengthen the validity of work release programs. According to

Strickland and Collins, correctional institutions must be susceptible to *change* in order for evidence-based practices to work. As a result, correctional institutions would have to be willing and open to change to help increase their chances of implementing a successful evidence-based practice on the work release program.

Overall, research and Travis Hirschi's Social Bond theory have outlined the cause and benefits behind the effectiveness and successes of work release programs. While there is evidence to suggest that evidence-based practices could help establish a more strategic and data-filled view on the effectiveness of work release programs in United States. The current practice for work release programs has been both positive and beneficial to the criminal justice system, inmate participants and the community.

## V. Conclusion

The purpose of work release programs is to give inmates an opportunity to obtain employment in the community. Many inmates post-incarceration lack the work experience and/or educational requirements needed to function as a productive member in his or her society. Statistics have shown for every 650,000 inmates released from states prisons and over 7 million released from state and local jails each year, approximately two out of every third person will be re-arrested within the first three years of being released (Re-Entry Policy Council, (n.d.)). In an effort to reduce these numbers statistically, work release programs not only offer inmates the opportunity to obtain employment, they present inmates with the opportunity to earn an education to help improve his or her overall chances of becoming a productive member of his or her society.

Work release programs also serve as a positive buffer between recidivism and inmates re-offending. According to the Re-entry Policy Council, the recidivism rates for inmates who participate in educational, vocational, and/or work release programming is approximately 20 to 60 percent lower than non-participants. Travis Hirschi, an American criminologist, developed a social bond theory that would credit this decrease in recidivism to an inmates' own personal ability to dismiss and/or control his or her desire to indulge in criminal behavior. The foundation for Hirschi's social bond theory is built upon four elements; attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. As a whole, these four elements create a continual connection between a person's ability to disengage from criminal activity and his or her ability to establish bonds to prosocial values, people and institutions. This continued connection provides

inmates with the motivation needed not to re-offend in an effort to establish his or her self as a model citizen. Work release programs work in correlation with Hirschi's social bond theory. Work release programs expose inmates to those four elements Hirschi suggests are essential to dismissing his or her desire to indulge in criminal behavior. Work release programs provide inmates with a purpose and the means to make positive and beneficial transitions back into the community.

In 1913, Henry Huber had one purpose for work release programs. That was to allow inmates to leave confinement to establish employment. In 2014, the purpose of work release programs still remains the same; however, with additional incentives. Not only does work release programs allow inmates to obtain employment, it gives inmates an opportunity to earn an education with hopes of becoming a positive contender in the work force.

Although research has shown that work release programs are effective and beneficial to all those involved, work release programs do not come without challenges. Some studies have found that there has not been enough research conducted on work release programs to validate its true impact on reducing recidivism. Other studies have found work release programs to be ineffective and a deficit to the community (Gunnison, 2007). These criticisms can be refuted by reviewing and applying evidence based work release practices. This would not only help put together the best available evidence pertaining to work release programs, it would provide critics with objective on the successes and needed areas of improvement for the program.

Overall, research has found that work release programs are effective. Not only does work release programs help reduce recidivism, it helps inmates obtain the necessary job skills and educational standards needed to become productive and effective members of his or her society. Because work release programs have been proven to be a fundamental and necessary program to help reduce recidivism, reduce crime and help inmates make a positive re-entry back into his or her community. Work release programs will continue to act as a haven and positive resource for inmates, the community and the criminal justice system as a whole.

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