

THE ROLE OF DETENTION OFFICERS AT RECREATION TIME AMONG WOMEN  
INCARCERATED IN A SOUTHWEST COUNTY JAIL

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Interdisciplinary Health

Northern Arizona University

May 2023

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## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE OF DETENTION OFFICERS AT RECREATION TIME AMONG WOMEN INCARCERATED IN A SOUTHWEST COUNTY JAIL

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There are about a quarter million women incarcerated in the U.S. While incarcerated, many women deal with mental and physical health issues and inadequate access to healthcare services. One well-being program offered in most jail and prison settings is recreation time, a time for people incarcerated to exercise. Exercise and time outdoors can contribute to positive health outcomes, including alleviating depression. Women incarcerated value recreation time for fresh air, natural light, mental health benefits, and opportunity to exercise. However, a large portion do not attend recreation time and often face a variety of barriers to their attendance. Among the factors that influence women's rec-time attendance are detention officers (DOs). Further research is needed to explore DOs' role at recreation time. Using two cross-sectional questionnaires at the Coconino County Detention Facility, this study explored and compared women's and DOs' perspectives on DO-related factors influencing recreation time among women incarcerated. The results indicated that the DOs have a limited role at recreation time, which was primarily as a neutral and impersonal facilitator. While DOs and women shared similar views on the women's attendance of recreation time and the DOs' role as a recreation time facilitator, they had differing views about whether DOs could impact whether women attended recreation time and the barriers that women face in accessing it. Women incarcerated indicated the various types of roles DOs have at recreation time and offered recommendations for the jail and DOs about how to improve the program.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the women incarcerated at the Coconino County Detention Facility and the detention officers, who participated in this research. Thank you to the jail administrators for the efforts in support of our research, including Sheriff Jim Driscoll, Commander Mathew Figueroa, and former Program Coordinator Jim Bret. This research only exists because of their willingness to share their views about recreation time and open the doors of the jail to our team. This project would not have been possible if not for the generous support and effort of the “Physical Activity among Women Incarcerated in Jail” team: Dr. Ricky Camplain, Dr. Heather Williamson, Dr. Julie Baldwin, Dr. Sara Shuman, Dr. George Pro, Crystal Luna, Bethany Robinson, and Maria Evans. Thank you to everyone who has read portions of this research and contributed their comments and edits, including Dr. Ricky Camplain, Dr. Heather Williamson, Dr. Sara Shuman, Dr. Shaylynne Shuler, Stanley Njikhoh, and Billy Scheibner. Thank you to all my family members, friends, and mentors, who have guided me and supported me throughout my education.

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## CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

### **Background**

In 2019, 222,455 women were incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons, the most of any country in the world.<sup>1</sup> While prisons are usually operated by the state or federal government, jails are operated in local jurisdictions such as counties and cities. About one quarter of all people incarcerated in the U.S. are incarcerated in jails.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, there were 647,200 people incarcerated in jails.<sup>3</sup> Approximately one in six people in jails are women (i.e. 110,000).<sup>4</sup> Women in Arizona are incarcerated at nearly double the rate of U.S. women on average.<sup>5</sup>

There are a lot of similarities between jails and prisons. They are both places housing confined people, which are operated by government entities and officials. In general, there are similar racial disparities, rates of mental health issues, rates of substance abuse issues, and levels of poverty among people in both jails and prisons.<sup>6,7</sup> Many of the basic functions in jails and prisons are the same, such as screening people for mental health issues upon entry, supervision by law-enforcement officers, and basic well-being programs for people incarcerated.<sup>7,8</sup>

There are also key differences between prisons and jails. Jails often house people who are sentenced for minor crimes and for unsentenced people awaiting trial, while prisons house people who have been sentenced for a more serious crime. Due to the shorter nature of jail stays, many different people cycle through jail each year and jails are less supportive of rehabilitative goals than prisons.<sup>9-12</sup> An average prison sentence in state prisons is 2.6 years<sup>13</sup> and the average length of stay at a jail is 8-10 days,<sup>12</sup> though some people incarcerated in jails can remain detained for months or even years before being released and some are repeatedly incarcerated in jails.<sup>14</sup> Jail facilities are more likely to be co-inhabited by both men and women than prisons, which often house exclusively women or exclusively men.<sup>15,16</sup> The women in jails may have

higher rates of mental health problems than women in prisons, or their male counterparts in jail, but with fewer services available in jails.<sup>10,17</sup> Women incarcerated in jails are more likely to experience stress in incarceration than their male counterparts in jail.<sup>17</sup> In addition, women incarcerated in jail may be more likely to have male officers, compared to women in a women's prison.<sup>15,18</sup> Many male officers may not be as equipped from an individual or institutional level to meet the complex health needs of women incarcerated.<sup>19</sup> I would also highlight that a main difference in jail v. prison is pre-trial detention. A lot of people don't know this and it's pretty important when talking about physical and mental health.

Many women bring a host of mental and physical health issues into jails when incarcerated. Women incarcerated in jail are more likely than the general population to require services to meet their health needs.<sup>20-23</sup> The experience of incarceration can change the trajectory women's lives and have a major impact on their wellbeing.<sup>24</sup> While it is generally the policy of jails to have elements of rehabilitation by providing women with supportive programs and services, the realities inside jails indicated these services are underfunded and sometimes hard to access and inadequate to meet their needs. Some research has found that the even short experience of incarceration can have negative mental health consequences, particularly for women.<sup>24-29</sup> Other research has suggested that the incarceration of women creates conditions where health improvement and health deterioration are both possible, yet deterioration is more likely.<sup>30-32</sup>

While incarcerated, many women have access to programs aimed at increasing well-being and reducing recidivism among other goals. Substance abuse programs, for example, are well studied and some have been shown to have positive impacts on the health of people incarcerated.<sup>33</sup> In some cases, incarceration may provide opportunities for women to transform their lives through providing safe and secure housing, opportunities to make healthy choices, and

impactful mental health program options.<sup>32,34</sup> The impacts of incarceration on the health of women incarcerated in jails is an understudied topic.

The programs to promote health and wellbeing in jails often include recreation time (rec-time), that is, time outdoors dedicated to exercise. In many cases, rec-time is a loosely defined program that is offered on a weekly basis without a program facilitator.<sup>18,35</sup> In other cases, it includes recreation specialists, who coordinate and delivery recreation time programming.<sup>36</sup> In some cases, attendance of rec-time can lead to rewards from officers, such as increased access to exercise equipment or improved evaluation reports leading to other earned privileges.<sup>37,38</sup> Recent research has found that women incarcerated in a jail valued rec-time as an opportunity for fresh air, natural light, and time to move around.<sup>39</sup> Rec-time may aid in improving relationships with staff,<sup>40</sup> reduce incidences of violence and aggression towards staff,<sup>38</sup> and even possibly reduce recidivism.<sup>38</sup> More research is needed to understand the possible benefits of rec-time.

Other research has confirmed that time outdoors and fresh air are important to people's health and well-being<sup>41</sup> and that physical activity while incarcerated can aid in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases and mental health conditions.<sup>42,43</sup> In addition, physical activity may increase adherence to substance abuse treatment programs.<sup>44</sup> Research done with other marginalized groups of women in the U.S. has highlighted the significance of environmental and interpersonal constraints and facilitators, which helped to shape exercise patterns.<sup>45,46</sup> Other research done in an Australian prison found that women engaged in different types of exercise than men in the same facility, including more moderate walking and less weight training.<sup>47</sup>

Though research has indicated that women value rec-time and physical activity while incarcerated and utilize opportunities to exercise in some prison and jail contexts,<sup>42,48-51</sup> other research has shown that they have low participation rates in physical activity and rec-time

attendance.<sup>39,52</sup> More research is needed to understand why women in some correctional facilities are less physically active or not frequently participating in rec-time. While some research has identified barriers such as restrictive scheduling,<sup>53</sup> lack of appropriate space,<sup>42</sup> and lack of equipment<sup>39</sup> as barriers to rec-time attendance, others have indicated that the role of officers may be significant as well.<sup>17,39,53,54</sup>

Officers in jails are the primary staff responsible for the care and custody of people incarcerated. Across both jail and prison facilities in the U.S., there were 392,600 officers employed in 2021.<sup>55</sup> In prisons, 62% of officers are white and 72% are men.<sup>56</sup> There is usually one officer for every 10-15 people incarcerated. Notably, Arizona has one of the highest concentrations of prison and jail officer jobs.<sup>55</sup> Officers' responsibilities include supervising and facilitating the delivery of basic services and some programs for people incarcerated.

In jails, the officers are often called detention officers (DOs). The job duties of a DO include controlling, supervising, and documenting the movement and activities of people incarcerated.<sup>57</sup> They also are responsible for the general care and welfare of people incarcerated in jails, such as referring people incarcerated to medical staff as necessary and assisting nursing staff during intake periods.<sup>58</sup>

Research on the views of DOs and people incarcerated about the goals of corrections indicates that the two groups hold similar and different views about what is supposed to happen in jails.<sup>59</sup> Research on officers' impact on the health of women incarcerated is limited, especially in jails, but appears to show they can sometimes have deleterious effects, such as through withholding medical resources or access to medical personnel when requested.<sup>60-63</sup> Other studies have shown that sometimes officers can advocate for meeting the health needs of women

incarcerated.<sup>32,64</sup> Few studies have explored officers' role in the health of women in U.S. prisons or jails, even fewer have explored officers' role at rec-time.

### **Project Background and Setting**

The current study is an extension of a larger Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board-approved pilot project called "Physical Activity among Women Incarcerated in Jail," which was funded by NIMHD/NIH U54MD012388 and focused on recreation time behaviors of women incarcerated at the Coconino County Detention Facility (CCDF). CCDF is a regional holding facility and county jail, which houses sentenced and unsentenced individuals on a regular basis.<sup>14</sup> The jail has 596 beds, and frequently fills up to 80% of this capacity. In 2019, detention officers process 11,000 bookings into the facility.<sup>18</sup> There are 21 dorms, containing 28-32 beds each, which are segregated by sex.<sup>65</sup> Between 2001-2017, CCDF incarcerated over 1,000 women per year.<sup>65</sup> The majority of the women incarcerated at the facility are either Black (8%), Native American (58%), or Latina (18%), especially those who have been repeatedly incarcerated.<sup>14,39</sup> Many of the people incarcerated at CCDF have mental and physical health issues.<sup>14,39,65</sup>

CCDF has a variety of well-being programs and a mental health task force to meet the needs of its incarcerated population.<sup>18</sup> One of the well-being programs offered at CCDF is rec-time, which is time outdoors dedicated to exercise for one hour, five days a week. According to a 2019 stakeholder report from the Coconino County Sheriff's office, the jail provides access to outdoor recreation yards, which each include a piece of exercise equipment and access to a small handball.<sup>18</sup> The report also claimed that well-being programs "are regularly reviewed and updated to meet the needs of the inmates."<sup>18</sup> In addition, it stated that all CCDF DOs are required to complete the Detention Officer Training Academy and field training prior to supervising

people incarcerated, and also engage in ongoing training including the Arizona Detention Association curriculum.<sup>18</sup>

The pilot study included three data collection phases. The first phase involved systematic observations of women during rec-time opportunities inside the jail. The second phase involved administering a survey to DOs about recreation time among women incarcerated. The third phase of data collection was based on a second questionnaire administered to adult women incarcerated at CCDF. I was part of a team that carried through all phases of the pilot study.

When we went into the jail, we not only saw low attendance and low levels of vigorous exercise, but we also saw very busy DOs, who would frequently cancel or postpone rec-time. We saw some DOs determining who gets to go out to rec-time, including for minor rule violations. We explored the literature and saw that officers could be gatekeepers, advocates, and counselors, among other roles in the health of women incarcerated.<sup>64,66,67</sup> This preliminary investigation into the literature, combined with our direct observations, inspired us to develop a questionnaire for the DOs to explore their role in rec-time (phase two). The answers to that questionnaire then informed our third phase of research and second questionnaire, which included prompts to elicit women's views on the role of DOs at rec-time.

The findings from the women's questionnaire showed that rec-time was a way for women at CCDF to generally improve their physical and mental health and social lives. As one participant stated, "People use rec-time to cope with depression[.]" Most women (56%) indicated that lack of equipment was a barrier to their attendance of rec-time. Though not as common, some women indicated that "DOs invite us when they want to" as a barrier (16.2%). This mirrored a study in Canada, which found that officer discretion over rec-time attendance was sometimes a major barrier to attendance.<sup>54</sup> As some identified DOs' actions as potential barriers or facilitators to

women's access to rec-time, lingering questions remained. Hence, I developed my main research question of my dissertation research study, which was: what is the role of DOs during rec-time for women incarcerated in jail?

Given the findings in the literature and the lingering questions about DOs' role at rec-time, I developed the follow three overarching aims:

- 1) Describe DOs' perception of their role in rec-time attendance of women incarcerated.
- 2) Describe the perception of women incarcerated on DOs' role in the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated.
- 3) Explore the differences of perceived detention officers roles between detention officers and women incarcerated.

These aims correspond to the three subsequent articles presented and are based on data collected in the last two phases of the pilot project (i.e. the two questionnaires administered to women and DOs between October 2020 and July 2021).

CHAPTER TWO: “It all Depends on if the Female Wants to Attend”: Views of Detention officers on Detention Officers’ Role at Recreation Time among Women Incarcerated at a Southwest County Jail

**Abstract**

*Background:* Women incarcerated value recreation time but have low recreation time attendance in U.S. jails. Detention officer-related factors may be an important influence on attendance rates. It is not well understood how detention officers understand their role in the recreation time attendance of women incarcerated. *Methods:* In this study, detention officers at one county jail in Arizona participated in an online questionnaire regarding their role and attitudes towards the recreation time attendance of women incarcerated.

*Results:* The 24 detention officer participants all agreed that it is important to keep a strict recreation time schedule. In addition, 95.8% agreed that detention officers must offer recreation time. Only 58.33% agreed that detention officers have total discretion over women’s recreation time attendance. Also, while detention officers supported recreation time attendance among women incarcerated, most did not perceive women to have barriers to their attendance despite their low attendance rate. For example, 95.83% agreed that recreation time benefits women incarcerated, while only 20.83% agreed that women have barriers to attending recreation time.

*Conclusion:* Detention officers perceive they have various roles in women’s recreation time attendance, but that their overall impact on attendance is minimal. They indicated that women benefit from recreation time and have little to no barriers when accessing the program. Policy implications are discussed.

## **Background**

There are a quarter million women incarcerated in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Women in Arizona are incarcerated at nearly double the rate of U.S. women on average.<sup>5</sup> Nearly a quarter of people incarcerated in Arizona are held in municipal and county jails.<sup>68</sup> While women's experiences in jails vary according to region, facility, and other factors, one constant is that detention officers (DOs) are the key gatekeepers for access to services and resources while incarcerated. In jails, DOs are the main staff members responsible for the custody and care of people incarcerated. DOs have the most frequent contact with women incarcerated when compared to all other jail staff. The behavior of officers may sometimes prevent access to services and resources among women incarcerated.<sup>54,64,69</sup> While prisons have more services than jails, one important service provided by many jails is recreation time (rec-time), i.e., time outside set aside for exercise.<sup>35</sup> A key component to understanding the access of women incarcerated to rec-time may be the DOs.<sup>64,67</sup>

Rec-time is highly valued by women incarcerated in jails.<sup>39</sup> If women have improved access to rec-time, they may experience the benefits of natural light and fresh air.<sup>41</sup> They may also become more physically active, which can lead to improved mental and physical health.<sup>70</sup> Studies suggest that the disposition of DOs may impact whether women have access to rec-time.<sup>17,39,48,54</sup> Additionally, people who have served as DOs for two years or more are less rehabilitative in their orientations towards people incarcerated and thus may not value or support rec-time as much as DOs just starting in their careers.<sup>10,71</sup> Two years is about the average number of years that a DO stays in a job.<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, there has been no research on DOs' perception of DOs' role in rec-time attendance of women incarcerated and their views of rec-time among women incarcerated. Nor

have any studies examined the significance of years of service as a DO in predicting the orientations of DOs on these two topics. Thus, the objective of this study was to describe DOs' perceptions of DOs' role at recreation time among women incarcerated and DOs' perception of women's rec-time attendance at a southwest county jail. A sub-objective was to estimate the association between DOs' role and women's rec-time attendance by years of service as a DO.

## **Methods**

### *Setting*

The current study is set in Coconino County Detention Facility (CCDF), a jail located in Flagstaff, Arizona. CCDF houses a daily average of 450 people incarcerated.<sup>65</sup> Between 2001-2017, CCDF incarcerated an average of over 1,000 women per year.<sup>65</sup> Approximately 23% of people incarcerated at CCDF are women. The jail segregates people by gender. More specifically, the study's focus is on CCDF's rec-time.(? odd placement) Rec-time is offered to women 5 days a week, one hour per day. There are two recreation yards which women who are incarcerated use for rec-time.<sup>73</sup> In each yard the women use, there is one piece of workout equipment, an exercise chair, which is bolted into the center of the outdoor spaces.

At the time of the study, there were 93 DOs working at CCDF, including primarily housing and intake officers and sergeants.<sup>18</sup> According to a recent job posting for DOs at CCDF, the job duties of a DO include "controlling, supervising, and documenting the movement and activities of inmates".<sup>57</sup> In addition, they are responsible for the "supervision, care, and welfare" of people incarcerated at the facility.<sup>57</sup> DOs at CCDF are expected to move people incarcerated from each dorm to rec-time for one hour, five times per week. During rec-time, DOs can offer people incarcerated a small handball to use at rec-time. DOs decide the timing of the rec-time based on a variety of factors, though they generally are expected to follow the pre-scheduled

periods established for each dorm's rec-time.<sup>73</sup> DOs were recruited to participate in study through an email from the jail's Programs Coordinator. The email recruitment letter included a description of the study and a link to the online questionnaire. DOs were eligible to participate if they were 18 years or older and were employed by the jail at the time of the study. The Programs Coordinator sent two follow-up reminder emails, one week apart, to facilitate further recruitment. Participation was voluntary. DOs who finished the questionnaire received a \$25 e-gift card. All study activities were approved by the Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board and all participants gave informed consent.

### *Data Collection*

Data collection occurred from October 9, 2020, to October 29, 2020. DOs took a 38-item questionnaire, which they completed online using Qualtrics, an online survey tool. Items for the questionnaire were formulated based on first-hand observations made by researchers and designed based on the researchers' prior knowledge and experience. Participants answered questions regarding their demographic information, DOs' role, DOs' role at rec-time, and women's rec-time attendance. All Likert-scale questions in the study were composed of six response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree; they excluded the neutral option to avoid a lack of clarity on the perspectives of DOs. The percentage of all DOs at CCDF that completed the questionnaire was 26%. There was one incomplete questionnaire. The DOs were emailed one time by the Program Coordinator of the jail.

### *Variables*

Aside from demographic questions and two open-text box prompts about the DOs' role and women's rec-time attendance, there were 16 Likert scale agreement prompts under two categories: "DO Role" and "Rec-Time Attendance." The items in in the sixteen Likert scale

prompts were developed through prior research at the facility<sup>73</sup> and direct observations by the project team members.<sup>74</sup>

The “DO Role” variable category focused on DOs’ perceived role in women’s rec-time attendance. This category included the following seven prompts: 1) DOs encourage female inmates (FIs) to attend rec- time, 2) FI’s attendance of rec-time is important to DOs, 3) DOs choices impact whether FIs attend rec-time, 4) DOs choices impact whether FIs exercise during rec- time, 5) It is important to keep a strict rec-time schedule, 6) DOs must offer rec-time to FIs, 7) DOs have total discretion over rec-time attendance.

The “Rec-Time Attendance” variable category focused on the DOs’ views of women’s rec-time attendance. This category included the following nine prompts: 1) FIs generally attend rec-time, 2) FIs usually want to attend rec-time, 3) FIs have barriers to attending rec-time, 4) FIs have barriers to physical activity while at rec-time, 5) FIs have access to appropriate equipment to exercise at rec-time, 6) FIs exercise during rec-time, 7) FIs engage in less exercise than male inmates at rec-time, 8) If FIs engage in regular exercise, FIs will experience benefits (e.g. improved attitude), 9) If FIs exercise, this benefits the DOs (e.g. increased compliance).

### *Data analysis*

Descriptive statistics, including medians, interquartile ranges, frequencies, and relative frequencies, were used to characterize the data and determine DOs’ perceived roles and attitudes related to women’s rec-time attendance. The median was the most appropriate measure of central tendency as it allowed for an understanding of which of the Likert scale responses best represented the DOs’ views. Interquartile ranges were calculated to understand whether each variables’ outcomes are clustered together or spread out across the possible Likert responses. In addition frequencies and relative frequencies were used to describe the number and proportion of

each Likert response, as well as the overall agreement and disagreement for each variable. There were also a limited number of open-text responses related to DOs' views of the behaviors of

Table 1: Detention Officer Questionnaire – Demographic Characteristics (n=24)		
Characteristic	Freq	%
Gender		
Female	3	12.5%
Male	20	83.3%
Prefer not to answer	1	4.2%
Age		
18-24	9	37.5%
25-34	10	41.7%
35-44	3	12.5%
45-54	2	8.3%
Race		
Other <sup>a</sup>	4	16.7%
White	20	83.3%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	4	16.7%
Non-Hispanic/non-Latino	19	79.2%
Prefer not to answer	1	4.2%
Education Level		
High school diploma or GED	4	16.7%
Some college	10	41.7%
4-year college degree or more	10	41.7%
Marital Status		
Single	13	54.2%
Married	11	45.8%
Length of Time as Detention Officer		
<2 year	7	29.2%
≥ 2 years	16	66.7%
Unknown	1	4.2%
Total	24	100%
<sup>a</sup> Other race includes American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black/African American, and prefer not to answer		

women incarcerated related to rec-time. These open text-box responses were used sparingly to illuminate certain statistical findings. Finally, two independent sample t-tests were used to estimate the association between “DO Role” and “Rec-Time Attendance” variables and years of service as DOs.

## Results

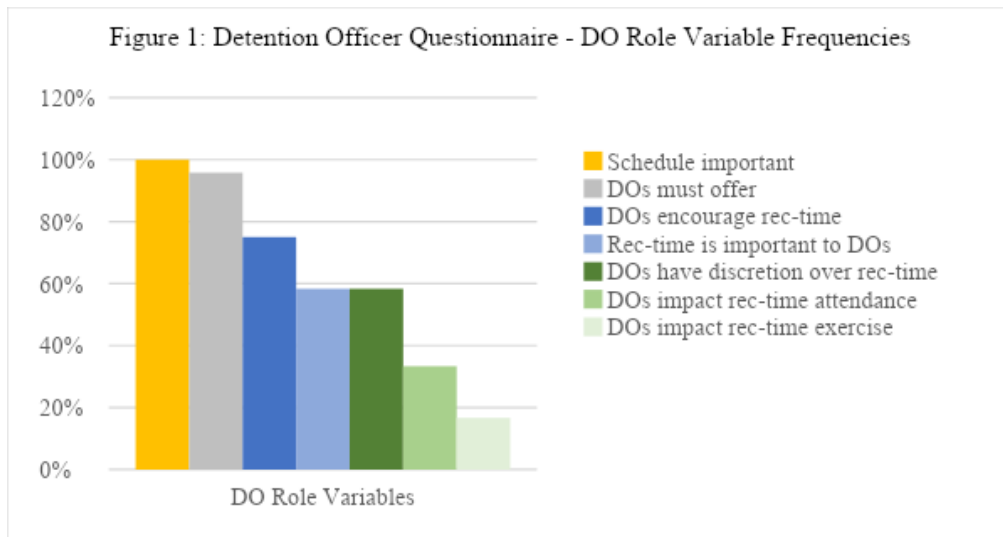
### *Demographics*

The sample of 24 DO participants (25% of total DOs employed at CCDF at the time of the study)<sup>18</sup> was largely homogeneous (Table 1). Most of the participants were male, non-Hispanic white, single, under 35 years of age, and college educated. The average length

of time as a detention officer was 4.8 years.

### *DO Role*

Respondents generally “slightly agreed” to “DOs encourage rec-time” and “rec-time attendance of women incarcerated is important to DOs” (median = 4). DOs generally “slightly disagreed” that DOs impact women’s rec-time attendance (median = 3) and “disagreed” that DOs impact women’s exercise (median = 2).



On the prompt “DOs must offer rec-time”, DOs generally “strongly agreed” and 95.8% of

participants agreed with this prompt (median = 6). Contrastingly, DOs “slightly agreed” that DOs have total discretion over rec-time attendance (median = 4). When prompted that “It’s important to keep a strict rec-time schedule,” DOs “agreed” and 100% of participants agreed with the prompt (median = 5). For a complete view of levels of agreement on the “DO Role” prompts see Figure 1.

### *Rec-Time Attendance*

In the “Rec-Time Attendance” variable category, DOs generally “agreed” that “women usually attend rec-time” and “women want to attend rec-time” (median = 5). They also “slightly agreed” that “women exercise at rec-time” (median = 4) and “agreed” that “women exercise less than men” (median = 5). Specifically, 91.67% agreed that the women exercise less than their counterparts in the male dorm. DOs “agreed” that rec-time benefits women incarcerated (median

= 5) and “slightly agreed” that women’s rec-time attendance benefits DOs (median = 4). Only one participant (4.17%) disagreed that women have access to appropriate equipment at rec-time. In addition, only 20.8% agreed that women have barriers to attending rec-time and exercising at rec-time.

### *Years of Service*

Time as a DO at CCDF was not associated with most DO role and rec-time attendance prompts. However, DOs with more than two years of services were less likely to agree that rec-time is important to DOs, that DOs encourage rec-time attendance, and that women have barriers to attending rec-time compared to their more recently hired counterparts (Table 2). They were also more likely to agree that DOs must offer rec-time.

Category	Prompt	T-statistic	P-value	Significant (p ≤ .05)
DO Role	DOs encourage FIs to attend rec-time.	-2.36	0.028	yes
	FI’s attendance of rec-time is important to DOs.	-2.67	0.014	yes
	It is important to keep a strict rec-time schedule.	0.31	0.756	no
	DOs choices impact whether FIs attend rec-time.	-1.28	0.216	no
	DOs choices impact whether FIs exercise during rec-time.	-2.07	0.051	no
	DOs must offer rec-time to FIs.	2.71	0.013	yes
	DOs have total discretion over rec-time attendance.	-1.33	0.196	no
Rec-Time Attendance	FIs generally attend rec-time.	0.34	0.739	no
	FIs usually want to attend rec-time.	-0.36	0.720	no
	FIs have barriers to attending rec-time.	-2.09	0.049	yes
	FIs have barriers to physical activity while at rec-time.	-1.34	0.194	no
	FIs have access to appropriate equipment to exercise at rec-time.	0.49	0.632	no
	FIs exercise during rec-time.	-0.46	0.654	no
	FIs engage in less exercise than male inmates at rec-time.	-0.54	0.598	no
	If FIs engage in regular exercise, FIs will experience benefits	-0.23	0.819	no
	If FIs exercise, this benefits the DOs (e.g. increased compliance).	-0.75	0.464	no

## **Discussion**

The results of the “DO Role” prompts of the questionnaire revealed that DOs agree most consistently that they are responsible for keeping the rec-time schedule and must offer rec-time to women incarcerated. Results were split on DOs’ discretion over rec-time and whether women’s rec-time attendance was important to DOs. DOs with two or more years of service were less likely to agree that rec-time was important to DOs. The potential reasoning behind these results was partially illuminated by the small proportion of participants that filled in the open text-box portions of the interview. As one DO explained, “It all depends if the female wants to attend. Rec is not mandatory it is a choice.” This perspective demonstrated a belief among participants that the DOs’ role is to offer rec-time, but that they play little or no role in whether the women accept that offer. Nevertheless, the DOs indicated that keeping the schedule is one of the roles at rec-time. The DOs also indicated that rec-time attendance of women incarcerated was beneficial to women incarcerated and DOs and that women want to attend rec-time. They, however, disagreed that women face barriers to rec-time attendance and exercise. They agreed that women had access to appropriate equipment at rec-time.

Our findings that service as a DO at CCDF for two years or more was predictive of less support for rec-time for women incarcerated may be reflective of the finding that DOs were less rehabilitative in their orientation towards people incarcerated after two or more years of service. In addition, our findings suggested that such veteran DOs were less likely to perceive that women had barriers to rec-time attendance, which may reflect a similar disposition. Finally, the veteran DOs were more likely to agree that they must offer rec-time, which may reflect some of the shifts in orientation that veteran DOs are known to experience.<sup>75</sup>

DOs’ attitudes towards the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated indicated they held generally supportive views towards the activity and recognized its value and function within

the facility and as it related to their job. This was similar to one study that showed that DOs value rec-time.<sup>36</sup> Our study expanded on prior research by looking at not only DOs' perspective on the value of rec-time but also their perspective on women's rec-time attendance patterns, specifically among women who have low rec-time attendance levels. Four participants used the open-text box prompt to further explain their views that women do not seem to use rec-time attendance to exercise. As one stated, "Female Inmates do not exercise regularly..." Another stated, "Many of the females will just go outside and walk laps." These types of statements may be an important indicator that DOs may not fully understand that the women highly value rec-time, though not always for vigorous exercise. It suggests that reframing rec-time as free outdoor time and excluding exercise language in describing the program may be a way to emphasize the different ways that it can be valued by people incarcerated.

Previously published research at the facility indicated that women perceive themselves to have a variety of barriers to rec-time attendance.<sup>39</sup> This contrasted with the findings in the current study, in which most DOs did not view women as facing barriers to rec-time attendance. Future research is needed to explore areas of agreement and disagreement about rec-time perceptions between women incarcerated and DOs. In addition, the DOs disagreement among themselves as to what level of authority they have over rec-time attendance indicates the need for clarification on this topic. Jail administrators may be able to address this by reinforcing and repeating the current policy around the role of DOs' discretion over movements to rec-time. Another solution may be to communicate that women incarcerated should not have their rec-time restricted for any minor behavioral issues. Future research should consider how to generate more clarity on DOs authority over rec-time attendance, including possibly through DO training and/or jail policy changes.

Our questions to participants were part of a questionnaire. Had interviews or focus groups been conducted, this would have provided further insight on the DOs' role in the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated. Further, as a result of the pandemic protocols implemented at the jail, the DOs had recently experienced an unpaid increase related to their job duties around rec-time including wiping down equipment between each session and keeping newly incarcerated people quarantined for 14 days.<sup>58</sup> This may have skewed the data including some of the responses to DOs' role on women's exercise patterns. Further, the sample size for our study was small, which limits the generalizability of our findings to other sites. Finally, the lack of input from jail administrators limits our understanding of the protocols and policies that DOs are expected to follow when it comes to rec-time.

## **Conclusion**

DOs have a positive attitude towards rec-time, but view themselves playing a limited role in the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated. Jails may benefit from clarifying language in their manuals around the relationship between DOs' discretion and women's rec-time attendance. Ongoing training throughout a DO's career on the importance of rec-time and other programming for the health of women incarcerated and the wellbeing of the facility may further benefit both DOs and women incarcerated. Future research may improve an understanding of the DOs' role in the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated by exploring the perspective of women incarcerated and comparing both perspectives to understand how to improve clarity among DOs and women incarcerated on the role DOs play, and to focus on areas where improvements in enhancing or reducing DOs' role are needed.

## CHAPTER THREE: “They Usually Offer it”: Views of Women Incarcerated at a Southwest Jail on the Roles of Detention Officers at Recreation Time

### **Abstract**

*Background:* Women incarcerated in jail may have low attendance of recreation time, which may contribute to physical and mental health issues while incarcerated. One reason for low rates of attendance may be the influence of detention officers, that is the law-enforcement officials inside jails, in discouraging or encouraging recreation time among women incarcerated. Yet no research has explored women’s perceptions of detention officers’ role in their recreation time attendance. The objective of this study is to explore the perception of women incarcerated about the role of detention officers in the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated.

*Method:* A paper questionnaire was administered to women incarcerated (n=99) at a county jail in Flagstaff, Arizona. Qualitative content analysis was performed on participants' responses to five open-text box prompts in the questionnaire that related to detention officers’ role at recreation time.

*Results:* There were four themes that emerged in the participants’ responses. The themes reflected the participants’ perceptions of the types of roles that detention officers have at recreation time. The four recreation time roles discussed were: 1) facilitator, 2) gatekeeper, 3) caretaker, and 4) timekeeper. Participants viewed detention officers as most commonly in a facilitator role at rec-time, in which the detention officers’ capacity to meet basic job expectations influenced recreation time attendance.

*Conclusion:* Detention officers were viewed by participants as capable of influencing recreation time, especially as impersonal and neutral facilitators of recreation time attendance. DOs were also perceived to influence how recreation time operates and women’s access to it in their roles

as timekeepers, gatekeepers, and caretakers. Recommendations for how detention officers may increase recreation time attendance among women incarcerated are discussed.

## **Background**

There are more than 20 million women incarcerated<sup>1</sup> and their experiences in correctional settings may contribute to poor health outcomes among women in jail, such as weight gain<sup>30</sup> and increases in depressive symptoms.<sup>31</sup> For people incarcerated who have mental illness, the experience of incarceration may worsen their conditions.<sup>22</sup> Whether a woman's mental illness improves or worsens while incarcerated can depend on the organizational structure of the correctional facility and the program options available.<sup>76</sup> Women may be at particular risk of mental health issues, because rates of mental illness are higher among women incarcerated than men incarcerated, especially in jails where there are fewer services.<sup>10,17</sup> Inside jails, women seek ways to maintain or improve their health in the face of such possibilities. One service offered in jails that is valued by women is recreation time (rec-time), which is regular time outdoors dedicated to exercise.<sup>8,35</sup> Women in prisons have recognized the value of participation in physical activity while incarcerated to address mental health issues, boost self-esteem, and provide a sense of empowerment and freedom.<sup>37,40</sup> One study found that most women incarcerated at the Coconino County Detention Facility (CCDF) valued rec-time for fresh air (82.8%), natural light (73.7%), and exercise (71.7%).<sup>39</sup>

Even though they value rec-time at CCDF, an earlier study found that women incarcerated at CCDF have low rec-time attendance rates (28%).<sup>48</sup> One recent study conducted in U.S. jails found that women exercise 72% less than men while incarcerated.<sup>77</sup> The reasons why many women do not attend or exercise at rec-time, even while they value it as a program, may relate to a variety of factors understudied in the U.S. For example, a pilot study found that

Indigenous women incarcerated in Australia have similarly low exercise levels because of a lack of a rec-time space that is amenable to their preferred ways to exercise, such as a larger space.<sup>47</sup> At CCDF, the top two barriers to rec-time attendance among women incarcerated were lack of equipment (55.6%) and lack of proper footwear (48.5%).<sup>39</sup> Some also identified detention officers (DOs) not inviting women to attend rec-time (16.2%) as a barrier to their rec-time attendance while incarcerated in the jail. Like correctional officers in prison settings, DOs are the primary staff of jails that are responsible for the care and custody of people incarcerated in jails. The view by some women at CCDF that DOs impact their rec-time attendance is like findings in other correctional settings. For example, the Monster et al.'s study in Canada found that correctional officers' personal discretion and attitudes may present barriers to outdoor recreation for women incarcerated.<sup>54</sup>

In general, DOs have an important role for women incarcerated when accessing programs and services and for the quality of life experienced while incarcerated. In a qualitative study of women's interactions with correctional officers, correctional officers acted as women's advocates or gatekeepers, and sometimes both at different times.<sup>64</sup> There was an immense power differential between women and correctional officers in which the officers decided, for example, whether or not to allow women to go to the infirmary. Women must go through correctional officers for access to services that affect their health, who sometimes advocate for them to receive services and sometimes use their authority to deny them services.

While previous research has explored DOs' role in the women's access to other health-related activities and services in jails and DOs and women generally value rec-time for women incarcerated in jails, no studies have explored women's perspective on the roles of DOs in

accessing rec-time. Hence, the objective of this study is to describe the views of women incarcerated on the role of DOs in accessing rec-time while incarcerated in jail.

## **Methods**

### *Setting*

Coconino County Detention Facility (CCDF) is a jail located in Flagstaff, Arizona that houses a daily average of 450 people.<sup>65</sup> Approximately 23% of people incarcerated at CCDF are women.<sup>14</sup> DOs supervise people incarcerated and are responsible for the security and safety of individuals incarcerated and working in the facility. The DOs at CCDF move women incarcerated to rec-time one hour per day, five times per week. There are two recreation yards which women incarcerated use for rec-time.<sup>73</sup> There is one piece of workout equipment bolted into the center and one partially private toilet in each yard. Neither yard has a cover to protect it from rain or snow.

At CCDF, prior research has indicated that DOs are generally expected to follow a set of steps at rec-time. The order of the steps may change slightly depending on circumstances and personnel. First, they post an updated rec-time schedule in the dorms. Then, DOs communicate in face-to-face interactions about rec-time or rec-time changes during non-rec-time periods. Prior to the rec-time announcement, DOs are expected to clean the recreation yard toilet, restock toilet paper, and wipe down the equipment. The DOs then announce rec-time or rec-time cancellation on the intercom. If rec-time is to occur, a DO then enters the dorm and announces again for women to gather by door for rec-time. Next, DOs move the group of women to a recreation yard, and sometimes provide equipment or jackets or a handball. During time outdoors, DOs do not allow the women incarcerated to leave until they all want to leave, or the rec-time one-hour period expires. While at rec-time, the door outside generally remains closed, though on rare

occasions the door opens so that DOs can pass through supplies (e.g. tampons) to the women in the rec-yard. The final step of the DOs' rec-time process is to facilitate and supervise the movement of the group in the recreation yard back to their dorm.

### *Study Sample*

We recruited adult women incarcerated at CCDF from March 29 to July 26, 2021 to complete a questionnaire about their recreation-time behaviors and perceptions. Participants were not eligible to participate if they were incarcerated in juvenile, men, and/or administrative segregation dorms. A research team member employed by the jail recruited women using a video recorded by research personnel and played for potential participants in their dorms at CCDF. The video reiterated the paper copy of the consent provided by clearly explaining the voluntary nature of their participation and outlining the purpose of the project. No identifiable information was collected. Participants were provided the questionnaire and envelopes to seal their finished questionnaires so that their answers could remain confidential. Women were provided with pre-stamped envelopes for their participation in the research, which was determined to be a permissible item of value to the women by jail staff and administrators.

The 51-item paper questionnaire generally focused on the women's rec-time habits and health status and collected demographic data about the participants. Of 100 women recruited from CCDF during the study period, all consented to participate in the study. One woman returned a blank questionnaire giving us a final sample of 99 women.

### *Data Collection*

Five open-text prompts related to DOs were included in the 51-item questionnaire. The prompts were: 1) "Detention officers encourage rec-time by doing the following," 2) "Detention officers discourage rec-time by doing the following." 3) "If the detention officers wanted to

make rec-time better, what do you think they should do?” 4) “If the CCDF administrators wanted to make rec-time better, what do you think they should do?” 5) “Is there anything else about rec-time and exercising at CCDF that we should know?” The last two questions were included as part of the data for this study because sometimes detention officers or detention officer-related topics were discussed in responses. There were 307 registered responses out of 495 possible responses from participants.

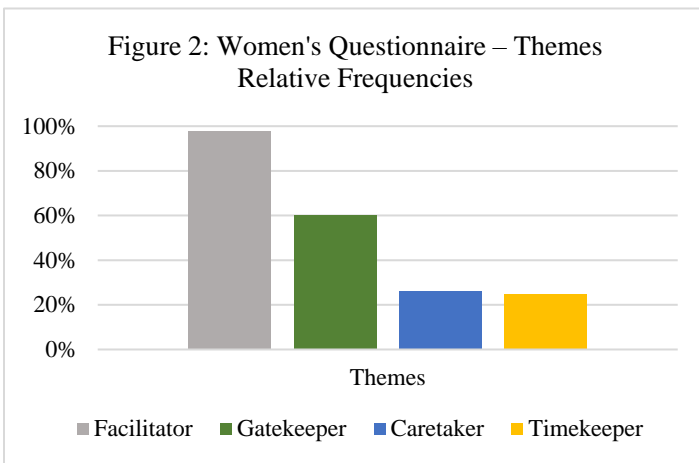
### *Analysis*

The open textbox response data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis.<sup>78</sup> The data were coded using MaxQDA 2022 qualitative analysis software. Non-DO related topics, such as the size and condition of the recreation yard space and non-answers such as “*not sure*” were left out of the coded data. After my initial step of line-by-line coding, codes were combined into a shorter list of codes based on similarities in the content of the data to create a codebook (Appendix I). Codes were then defined and tested for accuracy. The codebook was cross-checked by members of the team. Of the 307 registered responses, there were 224 coded segments which related to the focus of the study. From the codes, emergent themes were then developed to understand the types of roles that participants identified among DOs (Appendix II). If they could not be neatly put into a single theme, some comment segments were placed into two themes.

How well the codes and themes fit the data was determined through cross-checking by two members of the team. Two team members were given ten random open-text entries each. Each of the team members then determined independently which codes and themes the questionnaire responses fit in. After they had selected the appropriate code and theme for a random response from the questionnaire, they explained their decision to the group. The fitness

of the codes and themes were then discussed. The team members recommended some minor changes to ensure that the themes did not overlap with one another. After one session with the team members, the codes and themes were clarified and adjusted to improve their fitness. The improved themes and codes were then reviewed again in a subsequent team meeting. A new set of random responses were chosen for the team to independently place into a fitting code and theme. After a second discussion with the author, the team members decided that the codes and themes generally represented the data.

## Results



Of the participants (n=99), the majority (57.6%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, non-college educated (62.6%), low-income (52.5% had an annual household income of \$10,000 or less), and had been previously incarcerated (62.6%). The

majority of the women participants (69.7%) had been incarcerated for more than 18 days.

Most participants agreed that DOs play only a limited and neutral facilitator-type role in the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated (Figure 2). Many of the women, however, also described instances in which DOs' roles can become more pronounced and impactful. There were four types of DO rec-time roles which participants described in the open-text box responses: 1) facilitator 2) gatekeeper 3) caretaker and 4) timekeeper. The plurality of coded segments indicated that participants viewed DOs in a facilitator role (43.3%) at rec-time. Yet

many also viewed DOs in gatekeeper (25.0%), caretaker (16.1%), and timekeeper (15.6%) roles at rec-time.

*Facilitator.* The most common type of DO rec-time role described by participants was a facilitator role. The facilitator role type was discussed by participants as DOs impersonally following the most basic expectations of their job associated with rec-time, which included but was not limited to cleaning the recreation yard toilet ahead of time, announcing rec-time, and moving women out to the yard. Many of the women did not view the facilitator role in a positive or negative way, but simply as an extension of the DOs' job duties. Participants explained this view through comments such as, "*They just do their job and offer if available,*" "*Just by announcing like it's their duty,*" and "*All they do is ask do you want to go to rec.*" For the women that described the DOs playing a neutral facilitator role, they sometimes differed in the words they used to describe the DOs' actions when announcing rec-time. For example, some said they "offer" rec-time or "ask" them if they want rec-time. Others framed it as the DOs "announce" or "tell" women that rec-time is happening.

The general sentiment in comments identified as part of the facilitator role, however, seemed to be that the DOs announced and facilitated rec-time in an indifferent manner. Even when rec-time was not announced, some participants' comments indicated that the participants did not speculate about any reasons why DOs did not announce it. This can be seen in the following statements from one participant, who stated that DOs encourage rec-time when "*they just come on the intercom and say rec-time.*" The same participant commented that DOs discourage rec-time "*by not announcing rec-time.*" The two comments together reflect the participants' view that the DOs' role at rec-time was limited to their job of announcing rec-time.

Another aspect of this theme was the absence of any encouragement or discouragement. The participants made comments such as “*They don’t seem to care one way or other*” and “*They don’t discourage or encourage us.*” This type of explanation of the DOs’ role at rec-time was common and reflected a shared perception that the DOs are generally disinterested in whether women attend rec-time.

The impersonal way DOs do not offer rec-time was associated with weather for some participants. As one participant explained, “*So far that I been to jail I haven’t heard them encourage any of us but I know why because it’s cold.*” For this participant and others, the DOs’ choice to not encourage rec-time attendance related to the weather conditions. It is understood by the participants that rec-time was sometimes not offered to them because of inclement weather as DOs were not supposed to let them out under such conditions. However, there was some confusion about what types of weather conditions warranted the DOs to postpone rec-time. As one participant stated, “*We would like to go outside when it sprinkles a little.*”

Others viewed the DOs’ discouragement of rec-time in similarly neutral terms that related to DOs’ job duties. This sentiment seemed apparent in such statements as DOs “*getting too busy to announce rec-time*” and “*they don’t discourage but sometimes just get busy.*” For these and other participants, the DOs’ other job duties sometimes overlapped with their rec-time duties causing rec-time to not happen as expected. This was not framed by participants as a personal choice of DOs, but rather an extension of the DOs attempting to balance all that is expected of them during their shifts.

One other part of the DO facilitator role is that many participants viewed themselves as the primary motivators for their own rec-time attendance. For these participants, the DOs’ role was limited while their own role was vital. This could be seen clearly in such statements as “*I*

*guess they usually offer it and it's up to us*" and *"I do it on my own. I am personally motivated."*

This sentiment fit with other aspects of the facilitator theme as it demonstrated that the participants viewed the DOs' role as neutral and of little importance to their decision to attend rec-time.

Finally, while most comments that fit under the facilitator theme reflected the participants' view that the DOs were neutral in their facilitation of rec-time attendance, others highlighted ways that DOs did not meet the expectations associated with the facilitator role. In other words, some participants pointed out times that DOs did not fulfill their job duties associated with rec-time, such as announcing rec-time. One participant explained that DOs can discourage the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated by not *"speaking loud enough"* when they announce rec-time. Others simply highlighted that the DOs discourage rec-time attendance when *"sometimes they don't ask," "not bringing it up,"* or *"not calling rec."* Another part of what is expected of DOs at rec-time was cleaning the toilet. As one participant recommended, DOs could improve rec-time by *"cleaning the toilet."*

*Gatekeeper.* The gatekeeper type of role was described by participants as the DOs using their discretion to determine when and how women attend rec-time. It contrasted with the facilitator role as some participants described DOs as capable of making decisions on their own around rec-time and not simply following minimal job expectations. Some participants also explained that the DOs' own decision-making power was vitally important to whether the women attended rec-time. As one participant explained, it is important for women to *"respect the detention officers,"* if they desire to attend rec-time. They added, *"going outside is earned by following the rules."* In this participant's view, the DO was in the position to decide who had *"earned"* rec-time. One participant seemed to echo this sentiment when they commented, *"I'm*

*very grateful for [rec-time].*” Two participants indicated that DOs can sometimes be perceived to abuse their authority at rec-time when determining the conditions under which rec-time happens. One wrote, *“D.O.s don’t let us whistle”* and the other stated, women *“aren’t allowed to play cards outside.”* Another way that participants indicated the importance of the DOs’ gatekeeper role was in how they perceived rec-time to happen. For some of the participants, they indicated that rec-time only happens when the DOs allow it to happen. This sentiment was apparent in the following statements, *“We have to hound them to get it”* and *“we beg to go.”* These statements framed the DOs’ power as vital to their own attendance of rec-time. It also indicated DOs were falling short of using their authority to ensure rec-time occurs.

Most responses under the gatekeeper role focused on the DOs’ capacity to provide access to resources during rec-time. DOs’ delivery of rec-time resources generally came up in the three recommendation prompts. The most common resources requested from DOs were sports equipment items. The most common sports equipment item requested was basketballs. Other common resources requested were coats, playing cards, and yoga mats. It is unclear, based on the responses from women, which of these items are allowed or available.

Participants recommended that DOs use their authority to affect access to rec-time, such as to allow women to spend *“more time”* at rec-time. One participant recommended that DOs not employ an *“all or none”* approach to deciding who can attend rec-time. The participant may have been implying that DOs sometimes decide not to allow rec-time for any women in a dorm, if they perceive not enough of the women want to attend. One participant recommended that DOs *“allow us to go to rec every day especially in the summertime.”* She then recommended that DOs *“allow us to have rec everyday of the week instead of just 5 days.”*

*Caretaker.* The caretaker theme was described as DOs' disposition and behaviors influencing the sense of wellbeing and safety of women at rec-time. For many participants, the caretaker role may have been apparent in how rec-time was announced. As one participant put it, the DOs encourage rec-time by "*asking*" if the women want to attend and discourage rec-time by "*telling*" women to attend. The simple contrast between asking and telling was a common framing that the participants used in their comments. DOs' attitudes towards women were seen as capable of both encouraging or discouraging rec-time attendance. One participant summarized this view of the importance of DOs' attitudes in rec-time attendance by stating that rec-time attendance "*depends on how the individual [DO] feels.*"

Participants suggested that DOs can encourage rec-time attendance when they have a positive attitude towards women. For example, participants explained that DOs encourage rec-time attendance when they "*give good energy to go outside & not just cooped up.*" Another suggested that DOs encourage rec-time attendance when they "*use manners.*" One participant even indicated that the DOs could be "*nicer*" and added "*we are human still.*" This same participant, then named two officers whom she felt demonstrated the caretaker role well and that "*more of the staff should be trained by them.*"

DOs with a supportive attitude towards women, in some instances, directly influenced women's rec-time attendance. For example, one participant commented that some DOs encourage rec-time by "*noticing the inmate is having a bad day or going through emotional whirlwinds*" and so "*offer you to go outside.*" This was like other comments such as the DOs encourage rec-time "*by asking if we're okay, or we need to take a walk outside to feel better.*" For these and other participants, the DOs' caretaker role was directly tied to their rec-time attendance. One added, "*I think some officers should encourage rec-time*" and that the

experience could help with women's mental health: "*just for people to get out of their minds for a while.*" Another participant recommended that DOs "*just keep people safe and encouraged to participate to get fresh air – exercise.*"

By contrast, others pointed out that DOs can fall short of fulfilling a caretaker role when they have a negative or careless attitude towards women. For example, one participant explained that DOs discourage rec-time attendance when "*some are grumpy, I don't even want to be around.*" Another added that DOs can sometimes "*act as if it is too much work to take us out there.*" One participant explained, "*The girls ask but they don't listen at times.*" Still another explained that DOs will sometimes have "*rude comments/disrespectful comments on the way in or out.*"

Women discussed how DOs have the role of keeping women "*safe*" at rec-time, but sometimes failed in that role or abused that role. Three participants described being discouraged from attending rec-time because of touching or looking, or general fear related to past negative sexual experiences. For one participant, they were discouraged from attending rec-time because of a "*body search,*" which DOs perform "*before + after*" rec-time. A second participant explained that they felt discouraged from attending rec-time when DOs were "*acting like they want to touch us/look at us in a sexual way.*" Another participant seemed to describe a general fear of the officers. She wrote in a final thought related to officers, "*We just all sat here. The police are vicious so I get scared.*" For these participants and others cited above in this theme, the DOs' attitude and behavior towards women was far from supportive and, instead, seemed to show a disregard for their humanity and dignity.

*Timekeeper.* The participants described this theme as DOs' responsibility for keeping on schedule for rec-time sessions, providing reminders and time to get ready, and communicating

the schedule and any changes to it. The most common way that participants discussed the DOs' timekeeper role was in terms of DOs rushing women at the dorm door to attend rec-time and DOs not following the rec-time schedule.

In some of the responses, the timekeeper role overlapped with the facilitator and gatekeeper roles. For example, for some participants, keeping the schedule and announcing rec-time on time was seen as the DOs' main duties at rec-time. Responses often indicated that this timekeeper role was carried out in a neutral and impersonal manner by DOs. Sometimes DOs simply relayed schedule-related information that was beyond their authority to change. In other instances, DOs were seen as capable of using their authority to affect the rec-time schedule.

DOs' role in keeping to the schedule was discussed by many participants. For example, one participant explained that DOs encourage rec-time attendance when they "*put up a schedule 7 days a week.*" Another explained that they are encouraged to attend rec-time when DOs call "*out for rec when scheduled.*" By contrast, a common comment related to DOs not keeping the schedule. This could be seen in comments such as, "*Not following the schedule!*" "*Not being consistent,*" "*most recs are canceled,*" and "*taking the rec schedule off the wall.*" For one participant, the DOs' lack of knowledge of the schedule was a way that DOs could discourage the rec-time attendance of women. They explained that DOs discourage rec-time by "*Saying they 'don't know if we're going outside today' or 'don't know when let me check the schedule.'*" The participants seemed to suggest in their response that they would want the DOs to be better sources of information about the rec-time schedule. Other participants explained that the DOs in their role as timekeepers both discouraged and encouraged rec-time attendance. As one stated, they were encouraged when DOs were "*reminding and keeping the schedule*" and discouraged when DOs were "*not reminding and not asking when time permits.*" Similarly, another stated

they were encouraged when DOs were “*calling out for rec when scheduled*” and discouraged when DOs were “*not calling out for rec when it’s on the schedule.*”

One of the most standout examples of DOs failing at their perceived timekeeper role was during the period when women line up with a DO at the dorm door before being moved to rec-time by that DO. This example stood out because it seemed to represent a key inflection point in which DOs’ capacity for impacting rec-time attendance was highlighted by participants. This example of DOs not fulfilling their timekeeper role was cited as a concern by eight different participants. Each discussed how the DOs rushing them out the door was discouraging their rec-time attendance. The word “*rush*” was used consistently in this scenario. It was described in the following ways: DOs discourage rec-time attendance by “*yelling at us to hurry up and get ready to go out or not,*” “*not waiting for women who want to go out but are using the restroom or showering,*” “*closing the door too fast when you’re with child you can’t run to get there in time,*” and “*they only ask you once they don’t give you time. They walk right out if you are not ready at door.*” As an alternative to rushing the women, one participant suggested that DOs can encourage rec-time attendance by “*giving a second chance to go out if [we] change our mind.*” This was seen by many women as an important area where DOs could improve. Some participants suggested that DOs may offer a “*warning*” or “*reminder*” to help women prepare and be ready to attend rec-time.

## **Discussion**

The present study indicated that DOs may impact rec-time attendance through the various roles they are perceived to have during rec-time. Participants in the present study indicated that DOs generally take on a neutral facilitator role at rec-time and, less commonly, timekeeper, gatekeeper, and caretaker roles. They discussed that “*sometimes*” or “*some*” DOs behave in ways

that either encourage or discourage rec-time attendance, indicating that DOs' influence is not always the same. Many women described DOs playing more than one role at once during rec-time.

The findings of the present study differ somewhat from research findings discussed in other studies. At Whitemoor Prison in the U.K. and in a U.S.-based state prison, people incarcerated felt staff-prisoner relationships were important for gatekeeper and caretaker reasons, such as acquiring access to services and resources.<sup>64,66</sup> In Suarez's study, the level of compassion the officers showed was vital to pregnant women's access to healthcare services and some officers were unclear on what was expected of them.<sup>64</sup> For example, DOs were unclear about how to determine whether a pregnant woman needed to go to the infirmary based on symptoms she was having. Somewhat differently, despite the acknowledged opportunities for DOs to influence barriers to women attending recreation time, many women in the present study perceived the DOs in a more neutral influence when it came to rec-time.

The findings in this study have similarities and differences with the findings of a questionnaire administered to DOs at CCDF. The DOs indicated that they view themselves primarily as timekeepers of rec-time and less as gatekeepers between women and rec-time. For example, 100% of DOs agreed that it is important to follow a strict rec-time schedule. Many women in the present study's findings agree that timekeeping is vital (see Chapter 2); however, many also perceive that sometimes DOs do not maintain a consistent schedule. More research is needed to determine scheduling topics women and DOs perceive as similar versus diverging.

One limitation of the study is that we are left with lingering questions about what is in the DOs' power to change regarding their role in rec-time. It is important to note that the participants were not always consistent in what they perceived the DOs can or should do when it comes to

rec-time. In addition, some of the recommendations for how DOs might improve how they supervise rec-time may not actually be within the DOs' power to change. For example, some women cited DOs conducting body searches and making the women feel sexualized as barriers to rec-time attendance. Yet it is not clear if body searches are done often, required, or if they are done selectively when a woman is suspected of carrying contraband during rec-time periods. Other questions remain about rec-time policies as well. Future research would be needed to better understand rec-time policies at CCDF.

Our recruitment of women began when the weather was still relatively cold in Flagstaff. This may have been impacting the responses of some of the earlier participants. Another major limitation of the study is that responses were often short, leaving room for some variations in interpretations. For some participants, they seemed to disagree with the premise of some of the prompts related to discouragement and encouragement from DOs. As one simply stated in response to "DOs discourage women to attend rec-time by doing the following": "*No, I disagree.*" Another seemed to understand the prompt as only asking whether DOs verbally encourage rec-time. "*They don't ever say anything encouraging.*"

One key limitation of the current study was the lack of more extensive cross-checking of the qualitative analysis. Two additional team members were able to examine a small and random subset of responses from the women's questionnaire and discuss the fitness of the themes and codes during two one-hour sessions. However, had they been prompted to examine more response and had the team had more session to discuss and improve the codes and themes, the qualitative results could have been improved. The qualitative results of this study may be improved for future publication by further involvement from team members in the development and implementation of another round of qualitative analysis of the women's responses as well as

through a more direct application of the findings, insights, and themes found in previous studies on DOs' roles in prisons and jails.

In retrospect, the research team may have been framing the DOs' roles as caretakers and gatekeepers more on the literature and our prior research than what the results reflected. Our research could not illuminate which roles were the most impactful to rec-time attendance. Nevertheless, our research was still able to show that various DO roles were important for the rec-time attendance. Most participants used the prompts to make comments about the various ways that DOs can influence their rec-time attendance, beyond just verbal encouragement or discouragement. Future research with women incarcerated on the topic of the DOs' roles at rec-time would help to further illuminate how important DOs' behaviors and actions are to their rec-time attendance. Further research is needed to compare women's perceptions of DOs' impact on rec-time attendance and DOs' perceptions of their impact. In addition, analyzing the results of the multiple-selection and Likert scale responses related to the influence of DOs on rec-time from the questionnaire would also help to add further context to the findings of this study.

## **Conclusion**

DOs let the women out to rec-time depending on what their job duties dictate. Yet there are many other roles the DOs can have through their capacity to show care for the women incarcerated, their capacity of keeping a clear and consistent schedule, and through using their authority to make rec-time more appealing. The participants' responses showed that DOs play a vital role in their rec-time attendance through the various roles they take on when providing this service. Rec-time is seen as vital by women incarcerated to their physical and mental well-being and that DOs can improve the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated by adjusting their practices.

CHAPTER FOUR: “Just Another Movement”: Views of Detention Officers and Women  
Incarcerated on the Role of Detention Officers at Recreation Time

**Abstract**

*Background:* The relationship between detention officers and women incarcerated impacts the delivery of services in jails. One of the important services offered in most jails is recreation-time, a time dedicated to exercise outdoors, which research has indicated is valued by both women incarcerated and detention officers. No research, however, has compared perspectives of women and detention officers regarding the role of detention officers influencing recreation time attendance of women incarcerated. The objective of this research was to explore the differences of perceived detention officers roles between detention officers and women incarcerated..

*Methods:* Two questionnaires were administered at the Coconino County Detention Facility to understand detention officers’ role at recreation time and recreation time attendance patterns among women incarcerated. One questionnaire was administered to women incarcerated (n=99), the other to detention officers (n=24) at the same facility. Detention officer role and recreation time attendance variables were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics carried out in Jupyter Notebooks. Two independent sample t-tests were used to estimate the association between detention officer role variables by status as women incarcerated or detention officers.

*Results:* On mirrored Likert scale prompts, women incarcerated (59.1%) had higher levels of agreement than detention officers (33.3%) that detention officers impacted women’s recreation time attendance. T-test indicated that the differences between the mean scores of the impact variables were statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). Though there were other differences between the results of other variables, they were not statistically significant. Detention officers and

women incarcerated had similar perspectives on the recreation time attendance of women incarcerated. They had similar views on whether detention officers encourage rec-time.

*Conclusion:* While holding many similar views about the role of detention officers at recreation time and the attendance of women incarcerated, most women agreed, while most detention officers disagreed that detention officers impact women's rec-time attendance in jail.

Understanding these and other differences between the perspectives of detention officers and women incarcerated may aid in improving the delivery of recreation time programs in jails.

## **Background**

Research in the U.S. on the role of detention officers (DOs), that is security staff in jails, indicates they can influence the mental and physical health of people incarcerated in jails.<sup>19,62,69,79-82</sup> This is of particular concern for women incarcerated, who have higher rates of mental health issues and more health needs than their male counterparts.<sup>54,64,83</sup> Officers use their power to decide whether to allow pregnant women to visit the infirmary when requested.<sup>64</sup> Mothers discussed that, unless they could prove they were in labor, the officers sometimes did not allow them to receive care. The participants also discussed that sometimes officers made sure they could see the medical staff when they felt they needed it.

The above findings may relate to the findings of a study on the goal of incarceration at one U.S. jail. Collins et al. found that people incarcerated at a U.S. jail viewed rehabilitation as the main goal of corrections, while jail staff ranked incapacitation as the primary goal.<sup>59</sup> The authors' findings indicated the need to use the perspectives of incarcerated people to help improve organizational culture to be more rehabilitative and encourage outcomes such as reduced recidivism and improved mental health. In addition, their research findings suggested that jails may benefit from involving people incarcerated in the development of goals for the

facility. Studies in incarcerated settings have found that the health of women incarcerated was better understood and addressed when the women themselves had a voice in the research, compared to other approaches focusing on correctional staff and administrators.<sup>82,84</sup>

One correctional program provided in most jails and prisons is recreation time (rec-time), that is, non-mandatory time outdoors dedicated to exercise. Women incarcerated may have low rates of rec-time attendance.<sup>73</sup> Officers in correctional facilities may impact recreation time attendance among people incarcerated.<sup>53,85</sup> Depending on the recreation time policies of the prison or jail, the officers may be more or less inclined to encourage recreation time attendance. For example, one study done with women incarcerated at a Spanish prison, found that DOs encouraged participation in recreation time by using recreation time attendance in their evaluations of the women's behaviors.<sup>37</sup> The study authors found that women perceived themselves to have "earned points" if they participated in a rec-time activity. These points then informed the officers' reports, which were used to reward or punish the women based on their behaviors. A Canadian prison study found that officers' personal discretion and attitudes during regular work shifts may present major barriers to outdoor recreation and exercise for women incarcerated.<sup>54</sup> For instance, officers may classify a woman incarcerated at an overly-high security level,<sup>14</sup> which may then prevent them from participating in rec-time programming.<sup>17,86</sup> None of these studies, however, have directly asked about the role of detention officers at rec-time, nor have any focused on U.S. jails exclusively.

Beyond the need of understanding DOs' role at rec-time, very little research has examined the views of DOs or women incarcerated on the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated. According to Carter and Russell's 2005 study at a Colorado jail, detention officers and people incarcerated have similar perspectives about the value of rec-time.<sup>36</sup> People

incarcerated valued rec-time for its impact on their emotional and physical well-being. This mirrored the findings of Camplain et al.'s 2022 study, which found that women incarcerated valued rec-time as a change in environment and for mental and physical health reasons.<sup>39</sup> Carter and Russell's study also found that staff, including detention officers, agreed that rec-time was important for people incarcerated to get fresh air and exercise.<sup>36</sup>

DOs' views of rec-time and its value to people incarcerated may impact their approach to delivering rec-time. No studies, however, have compared the perspectives of officers and people incarcerated on the role of officers at rec-time. Hence, the question of the current study is: do women incarcerated have differing views about the role of detention officers at rec-time and the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated?

## **Methods**

### *Study population*

The current study was conducted among women incarcerated and officers working at the Coconino County Detention Facility, a regional holding facility for sentenced and unsentenced individuals in northern Arizona. The facility houses people in both male and female dorms. Administrators, people in male dorms, and people incarcerated in higher security level areas in the jail were excluded. Women incarcerated in higher level areas do not have the same access to the rec-time as the general population. This cross-sectional study is based on two questionnaires, one conducted with detention officers (n=24) and the other women incarcerated (n=99) at CCDF between October 2020 and July 2021. Women incarcerated in the facility's dorms were recruited by a CCDF staff member. DOs were recruited to participate in the study via an email from the jail Programs Coordinator. Participation was voluntary.

### *Questionnaires*

Two questionnaires were developed to explore rec-time facilitators and barriers to women incarcerated at the jail. For the current study, DO participants responded to seven six-point Likert scale items on DOs’ role at rec-time and nine about the rec-time attendance patterns of women incarcerated. Women participants were prompted to respond to five six-point Likert scale items on DOs’ role at rec-time. The women were also asked multiple-response prompts, which included fourteen DO-related items among five large lists of rec-time barriers, benefits, or

Category	DO Questionnaire		Women Questionnaire	
	Type	Prompts or questions	Type	Prompts or questions
DO Role	Likert Scale	DOs encourage FIs to attend rec-time.	Likert Scale	Detention officers encourage women to attend rec-time
		DOs choices impact whether FIs attend rec-time.		Detention officer actions impact whether or not women attend rec-time
		DOs choices impact whether FIs exercise during rec-time.		Detention officer words impact whether or not women attend rec-time
		Detention officer actions impact whether or not women exercise during rec-time		
		Detention officer words impact whether or not women exercise during rec-time		
Rec-Time Attendance	Likert Scale	FIs generally attend rec-time	Select one	How often do you attend rec-time each week? <input type="checkbox"/> Every time it is offered (about 5 days a week) <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 time a week <input type="checkbox"/> Never
		FIs exercise during rec-time.		How often do you exercise at rec-time each week? <input type="checkbox"/> Every time it is offered (about 5 days a week) <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 time a week <input type="checkbox"/> Never
		If FIs engage in regular exercise, FIs will experience benefits (e.g. improved attitude).	Check all that apply	For you personally, what benefits do you think result from attending rec-time? (Check all that apply)
		FIs have barriers to physical activity while at rec-time.		Please select the option(s) that best describe why you have not or would not attend rec-time. (Check all that apply)
		It is important to keep a strict rec-time schedule.		Detention officers should keep a consistent schedule

motivators. The lists were created based on prior research, direct observation, and discussions

with a formerly incarcerated consultant. While some questions or prompts from both questionnaires were mirrored closely in language used and type of question, other questions just had overlapping topics to allow for basic comparisons (Table 3). Finally, the detention officers and women incarcerated were both asked similar demographic questions about their gender, race, ethnicity, age, and education level.

### *Data analysis*

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic and list data, including frequencies and relative frequencies. The Likert scale responses from the two questionnaires were described using relative frequencies, medians, means, and interquartile ranges (IQR). Inferential statistics were used to estimate the association between the mean “DO Role” scores from the mirrored Likert scale items in both questionnaires. The null hypothesis was that there was no difference between the mean “DO Role” scores based on status as women incarcerated and DOs. The two-independent sample t-test ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) was used to show if there is an association. Using G\*Power 3.1, a post hoc power analysis of the questionnaire data sample sizes ( $n = 24$  and  $n = 99$ ) revealed that a two independent sample t-test would be properly powered. The power analysis found that there is a 71% chance of detecting a medium sized effect (Cohen, 1992). Finally, qualitative analysis previously performed on open-ended text responses in the questionnaires (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), was used to aid in contextualizing the findings in the discussion section.

The specific paired variables for the t-tests were 1) DO impact on rec-time attendance (“DO Impact Attend”), 2) DO impact on rec-time exercise (“DO Impact Exercise”), and 3) DO Encouragement (“DO Encourage”). Women were asked two separate prompts (one related to DO “words” and one related to DO “choices”), which were combined into a single “DO Impact

Attend” variable. For example, the DOs’ questionnaire included the following Likert scale prompt: “DOs’ choices impact female inmates’ rec-time attendance.” In mirrored language, the women’s questionnaire included the following Likert scale prompts: “DOs’ actions impact whether or not women attend rec-time” and “DOs’ words impact whether or not women attend rec-time.” A similar combined score was developed for women participant responses to two “DO Impact Exercise” prompts. In addition to these t-tests, t-tests were performed to explore correlations between women on “DO Role” variables by white and non-white races of women incarcerated.

Other Likert scale and multiple response responses from both questionnaires included views of rec-time attendance (“Rec-Time Attendance”) and rec-time exercise (“Rec-Time Exercise”) variables, of which the results were compared. Additionally, multiple response data from the women’s questionnaire was analyzed based on variables from four large lists in the questionnaire, which included a total of twelve DO-related barriers, motivators, benefits, and recommendations.

## **Results**

### *Demographic Characteristics*

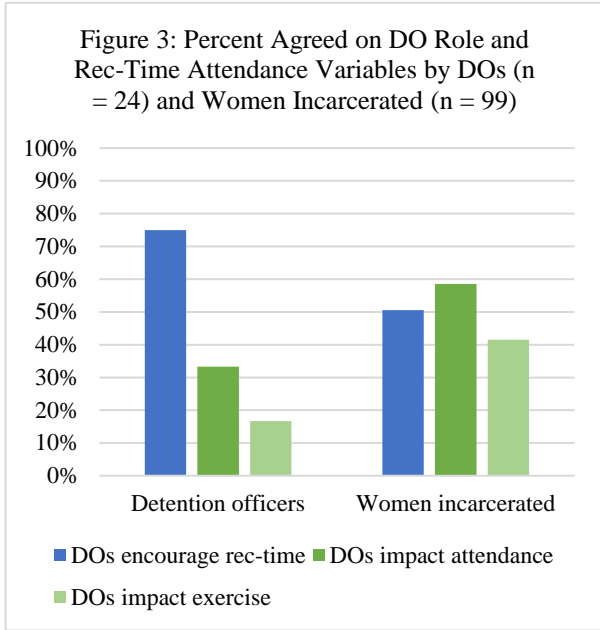
There were similarities and differences between the demographic characteristics of each sample in the study (Table 4). For example, women participants and DOs had some similarities in age. Among both the women (47.5%) and DOs (41.7%), a plurality was between the ages of 25 and 34, though there were more 18–24-year-olds among the DOs (37.5%) compared to the women incarcerated (11.1%). In addition, while 83.3% of DOs were white, only 33.3% of women participants were white. The largest portion of women participants (57.6%) were American Indian or Alaska Native (see Chapter 3). Another key demographic difference was

education level. For instance, while 83.3% of DOs indicated they had at least some college education, only 33.0% of women had the same level of education.

*DO Role Variables*

Table 4: Detention Officer and Women’s Questionnaires – Demographic Characteristics					
Detention Officers (n = 24)			Women Incarcerated (n=99)		
Age			Age		
18-24	9	37.5%	18-24	11	11.1%
25-34	10	41.7%	25-34	47	47.5%
35-44	3	12.5%	35-44	24	24.2%
45-54	2	8.3%	45-54	11	11.1%
≥55	0	0.0%	≥55	2	2.0%
Race			Race		
Non-White	4	16.7%	Non-White	66	66.7%
White	20	83.3%	White	33	33.3%
Ethnicity			Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	4	16.7%	Hispanic/Latino	18	18.2%
Non-Hispanic/non-Latino	19	79.2%	Non-Hispanic/non-Latino	61	61.6%
Education Level			Education Level		
Did not graduate high school	0	0.0%	Did not graduation high school	30	30.3%
High school diploma or GED	4	16.7%	High school diploma or GED	32	32.3%
Some college	10	41.7%	Some college	30	30.3%
4-year college degree or more	10	41.7%	4-year college degree or more	6	6.1%

Women participants had higher levels of agreement (59.1%) that DOs impact their rec-time attendance compared to DOs (33.3%) (Figure 3). The median level of agreement on the “DO Impact Attend” was “slightly agree” from women incarcerated participants and “slightly disagree” from the DO participants. The median response to “DO Impact Exercise” was “slightly disagree” and among DOs it was “disagree.” Finally, the median score on “DO Encourage” was “slightly agree” for both women and DO participants.



The two t-tests performed indicated that the mean agreement scores between the two groups were different on the “DO Impact Attend” and “DO Impact Exercise” variables. Based on these findings, we were able to reject the null hypothesis that the differences in perceived DO impact were based on chance. The results indicated, for instance, that the mean differences in the “DO Impact Attend”

variable were statistically significant (p-value = 0.007). The mean score differences of “DO Encourage” were not shown to be statistically significant between women and DOs.

On lists of rec-time benefits in the women’s questionnaire, 15.2% of participants indicated that getting along with DOs was a benefit of rec-time attendance. In addition, 16.2% indicated “DOs don’t invite us” was a barrier to rec-time attendance. No women indicated that DOs encourage it as a motivator for them to attend rec-time. Finally, many participants indicated that they supported various DO-related recommendations. For example, 60.6% of women selected “DOs should keep a consistent schedule” as a recommendation for DOs. After conducting two-sample t-tests, it was found that women incarcerated did not disagree with one another about the role of DOs to a significant level based on status as white or non-white participants.

*Rec-Time Attendance Variables*

Differences between DOs and women incarcerated about women’s attendance of rec-time were also examined. Most DOs agreed (75%) that women “usually attend rec-time.” In a

comparable prompt, women were asked how often they attend rec-time and 98.9% indicated that they attend rec-time at least once a week and 55.7% indicated they attend rec-time at least three times a week. Finally, women and DOs generally held similar views on the topic of women’s exercise at rec-time. DOs generally agreed (66.7%) that women exercise at rec-time. Women also showed a slight drop in agreement when asked whether they usually or sometimes exercise at rec-time; 81.6% indicated that they exercise at least once a week and 49.0% said they exercise at least three times a week.

<b>Similar or different</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>DO finding</b>	<b>Women Finding</b>
Similar	DO Role	DOs encourage rec-time	75% agree	51% agree
Similar	Rec-Time Attendance	Women exercise at rec-time	"They usually just walk around."	Top activity - walk around
Similar	Rec-Time Attendance	Women benefit from rec-time	"It's good for them to blow off some steam"	Benefits include fresh air, health
Different	DO Role	DOs impact women's attendance	Disagree	Agree
Different	DO Role	DOs must offer rec-time	Agree	"They only offer when they want to" (16%)
Different	Rec-Time Attendance	Women have access to appropriate equipment	Agree	Equipment top barrier (56%)
Different	Rec-Time Attendance	Women have barriers to rec-time attendance	Disagree	Barriers include lack of water and hygiene products

## Discussion

Our results showed that women and DOs have similar views on some topics related to the role of DOs at rec-time and women’s rec-time attendance in jail. Notably, however, while most DOs disagreed, most women agreed that DOs do have an impact on whether women attend rec-time. Results from multiple-response portions of the women’s questionnaire indicated DOs may sometimes prevent women’s rec-time attendance by not inviting women to rec-time on the days

and times scheduled. Qualitative analysis results from a previous study (see Chapter 3) support this view. For example, in the open-text responses a common way that women discussed how DOs may sometimes discourage their rec-time attendance was by simply “not doing their job,” which was viewed, in part, to involve keeping a consistent rec-time schedule. This seemed to be somewhat of a contrast with DOs, who all agreed (100%) that keeping a strict rec-time schedule was an important part of the role at rec-time (see Chapter 2). For instance, schedule issues were a key topic of concern for women incarcerated.

The similarities between DOs and women on rec-time attendance were further illuminated by other Likert scale and open-text responses on the DO questionnaire (see Chapter 2) and the women’s questionnaire (see Chapter 3). For example, DOs indicated in Likert scale responses and in open text responses their view that sometimes women don’t engage in vigorous exercise at rec-time. In open-text responses, five DOs indicated that women do not engage in vigorous exercise at rec-time, but rather walk, lie down, or “enjoy the sunlight.” This mirrored the findings from Camplain et al.’s study, which found that the women incarcerated at CCDF viewed fresh air, natural light, and moving around as top motivators to attend rec-time.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, 95.8% of DOs agreed that women benefit from rec-time and all women in the study selected at least one benefit they recognize in rec-time. This resembles the findings from Carter and Russell’s 2005 Colorado jail study, which also found that both jail staff, including DOs, and people incarcerated (including women) valued rec-time. In contrast to the Colorado study findings which suggested that all DOs in the facility valued rec-time, however, just 58.3% of DOs agreed in the current study that rec-time was important to DOs. Women in our study seemed to elaborate on this lukewarm perception of rec-time’s importance to DOs. For example, many women commented that DOs “don’t seem to care one way or the other.” This difference

may have been related to circumstances in the Colorado jail, which provided a large rec-time space (2,800 square feet), rec-time specialists (including a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist), and equipment and supplies for at least nine different recreational activities. In addition, the rec-time specialist scheduled all rec-times at the Colorado jail. Hence, the DOs in our study had more responsibility for rec-time and rec-time at CCDF had much fewer resources.

Women and DOs seemed to also agree that DOs often have a limited facilitator-type role when it comes to rec-time. Evidence for this may be apparent in responses to Likert scale prompts about the level of authority DOs have over rec-time attendance. For example, 95.83% of DOs agreed that DOs must offer rec-time to women incarcerated and only 58.33% agreed that DOs have total discretion over rec-time attendance. Importantly, more than half of the participants thus indicated that they have authority over who attends rec-time. Similarly, women indicated in open-text responses that DOs simply “do their job” and offer rec-time. Some of the women added that “it’s up to us” whether they go out to rec-time. Some DOs saw their general role at CCDF in terms of the security, supervisory, and custody roles they have; only one DO indicated, “care of inmates” was one of their roles as well. In addition, women incarcerated discussed the various roles that DOs take on during rec-time, including as gatekeepers and less commonly as caretakers. As one participant stated about DOs at rec-time, “We have to hound them to get it.” Another participant added that DOs can encourage rec-time attendance “by asking if we’re okay, or we need to talk a walk outside.” Women participants discussed that DOs can sometimes allow unscheduled rec-times as a minor form of care for women incarcerated facing mental health issues.

There were also notable differences between the open-text questionnaire responses of DOs and women incarcerated. For instance, one DO said that some days “behavioral issues”

among women incarcerated cause rec-times to be canceled. Some women remarked that “most recs are canceled” and discussed many DO-related reasons unrelated to the women themselves such as DOs getting “off schedule,” DOs getting “busy,” and DOs “not listening.” Differences were also apparent in perceptions about women’s desire for access to rec-time. For instance, one DO remarked that women tend to “want to come in after 15-20 minutes.” In the women’s questionnaire, however, many women recommended that DOs provide more access to rec-time and more time out on the recreation yard. No women requested the rec-time was too long. Another difference was noticed regarding DOs’ responsibility to care for women incarcerated. For one DO already quoted above, they claimed the DO role involved “care” of people incarcerated. Many women participants, however, highlighted ways that DOs sometimes showed a lack of care for their wellbeing. Finally, DOs indicated their disagreement that women faced barriers to rec-time attendance. For example, only 20.8% of DOs agreed that women have barriers to rec-time attendance. Yet when the women were asked to identify barriers to their rec-time attendance, all participants indicated at least some barriers they face; some even said DOs themselves sometimes acted as barriers. All but one DO agreed that the equipment in the rec-yard was “appropriate” to women incarcerated, while “lack of equipment” was seen as the top rec-time barrier for women.

Other studies provide important insight to help contextualize some of the incongruities cited above. For example, Collins et al.’s comparative study of people incarcerated and jail staff’s views on the goals of correction indicated that DOs viewed the goal of jail as incapacitation, while people incarcerated viewed the goal as rehabilitation. These contrasting concepts may be behind some of the responses from participants in our study. For instance, women in our study regularly pointed out the importance of DOs to their rec-time attendance,

and some highlighting ways that DOs will sometimes contribute to women's sense of wellbeing in the facility. DOs' responses, however, indicated their view that DOs have little impact on attendance and generally encourage it. As one DO put it, "It all depends if the female wants to attend." In general, these and other contrasts in our data may show that women expect somewhat more from DOs when it comes to rec-time than the DOs expect from themselves.

The current study relied on insights from women incarcerated themselves to understand potential ways that improvement to DOs' practices may help increase rec-time attendance among the women. It also highlights the shared understanding among women incarcerated and DOs at CCDF that rec-time is valuable and important to the jail overall function, including in maintaining normative relationships between women incarcerated and DOs. Collins et al. found that both people incarcerated and DOs help shape the overall organizational culture in jails. In addition, their study found that staff's goal orientations were also able to impact how programs and services are delivered. Our study seemed to support this view as women embraced the role we asked them to play in helping to understand and, hopefully, shape and improve rec-time at the jail. In addition, responses indicated that DOs' orientations were motivating various behaviors at rec-time that either encouraged or discouraged women's attendance.

Another possible explanation for some of the difference in DOs' and women's perspective may relate to demographic characteristics. A prison study found the work of officers is especially vulnerable to negative gender stereotypes around feminine care work and cruel and sexually dangerous male stereotypes, which lead prison officers to deride care for incarcerated people as a feminine weakness.<sup>87</sup> In response to the pressure from these gendered norms, the officers may distance themselves from people incarcerated and become prone to blaming people incarcerated for issues that officers themselves may have a hand in shaping. In addition, the

negative and gender stereotypes around officers' job duties may lead them to not pay as much attention to the difficult aspects of their work, such as their counseling roles. In our study, 83.3% of DO respondents were men. This gender dynamic, coupled with the gender stereotypes discussed above, may contribute to a lack of shared understanding in our study about the role of DOs at rec-time. In addition, it may help illuminate the ways the stereotypes about DOs' roles in jails and women's behaviors around physical activity may influence how each group interacts with one another and engages in rec-time. This highlights the need for future research to understand the prevalence of gender norms and gender stereotypes in the jail, which may shape the provision of rec-time programming.

An important limitation of this study is that the women's questionnaire took place during a peak period of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented the team from facilitating focus groups with women incarcerated as originally intended and also had important impacts on rec-time.<sup>58</sup> Had we had that opportunity to conduct focus groups or interview DOs as intended, we likely would have gained more insight into their perspectives about rec-time. Future research should build from these findings to explore a deeper understanding about rec-time in the jail, and develop ways to compare responses more directly, in a way that includes both DOs, people incarcerated, and jail administrators, who help shape rec-time policies. Our study was limited to just three variables ("DO Impact Attend," "DO Impact Exercise," "DO Encourage") that could be directly compared between DOs and women, and no administrators were surveyed.

One of the main recommendations that women had was for DOs to improve their adherence to the rec-time schedule. Most women who participated in our questionnaire, for instance, selected "keep a consistent schedule" as a recommendation for how DOs might

improve rec-time. In open-text responses they added specific recommendations on this topic, including adding “reminders” and putting up a schedule in the dorm.

## **Conclusion**

Our research has shown that there are perceived barriers to rec-time attendance that women face at CCDF, including from DOs. Yet DOs generally disagreed that the women face barriers to rec-time, and most disagreed that DOs have an impact on women’s rec-time attendance. The disparate perspectives of women incarcerated and DOs highlights the need to incorporate the understandings of both groups in any future policy decisions around rec-time. By providing an understanding of the issues around rec-time attendance from multiple perspectives, jail policy decision-makers may be better able to address concerns around low attendance of rec-time among women incarcerated. We believe that understanding these differences in perspective and working with women incarcerated to understand issues and develop solutions are key first steps in working towards improvements in DO policies and practices around rec-time.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

### Summary of Results

The purpose of this project was to describe what the women incarcerated and DOs at CCDF think the DOs should be doing at rec-time. The three aims of the project were 1) Describe DOs' perception of their role in rec-time attendance of women incarcerated. 2) Describe the perception of women incarcerated on DOs' role in the rec-time attendance of women incarcerated. 3) Explore the differences of perceived detention officers roles between detention officers and women incarcerated. We used the methods that were available to us at the time, two questionnaires (the second replaced focus groups with women, which was the original method intended), to explore the DOs' role in the rec-time process from the women's and DOs' perspectives. The current study built from the DOs' questionnaire, conducted in October 2020, and the women's questionnaire, conducted in between March and July 2021.

In both questionnaires, we had three closely mirrored Likert scale responses to understand basic perceptions on whether DOs had an impact on women's attendance of rec-time or not. In addition, other similar prompts and questions were posed to both groups (Table 3). In general, our results showed they had similar understandings about the value of rec-time and women's behaviors at rec-time and some differences about the DOs role at rec-time. The differences in agreement scores about the DOs' overall impact on rec-time attendance was significant ( $p = 0.007$ ). DOs and women, however, had different agreement levels on whether the DOs encouraged rec-time attendance, but the difference was not significant. Overall, "just another movement," a quote from a woman staff member at CCDF, who worked closely with DOs and women and witnessed many rec-times, seemed to contextualize some of the findings from both the women incarcerated and DOs' questionnaires.

DOs at CCDF have complex roles and a variety of tasks while on each of their shifts at the facility. In this way, rec-time may be viewed as just one among many tasks that DOs are charged with delivering on, and not generally a top concern as it is not “mandatory.” Future research is needed to determine if this interpretation fits with most DOs’ approach to rec-time. Our research has mirrored the findings from other studies that indicated that many DOs may not always be able to meet all that is expected of them, and so may sometimes miss or postpone scheduled rec-times. Nevertheless, women participants identified certain times in the DOs’ delivery of the program when the DOs had a role, such as when gathering women by the dorm door before moving women to the recreation yard or when communicating with women about the rec-time schedule.

We hypothesized that agreement with whether DOs’ had an impact rec-time was correlated with status as a DO or woman participant. Our findings indicated that women generally agreed that DOs impact their rec-time attendance, while DOs generally disagreed, and that the difference between the mean answers along a six-point Likert scale was significant ( $p = 0.007$ ).

We also found that DOs hold a variety of views and that sometimes their views contrast with the views of women incarcerated on the role of DOs at rec-time. Commonly, most DOs viewed themselves as keeping the rec-time schedule (100%) and understood that they had to offer rec-time to women (95.8%). Yet we found DOs with two or more years of service were more likely to disagree that women’s attendance of rec-time is important to DOs (44% compared to 0%). We also found that while both women and DOs value rec-time, see DOs in similar roles, and see similar patterns in women’s rec-time attendance, DOs were more likely to disagree that DOs impact rec-time attendance compared to women incarcerated (67% compared 41%). Open-

text responses from women helped to illuminate the types of roles that DOs are perceived to take on at rec-time including as neutral facilitators of rec-time, gatekeepers between women and rec-time, timekeepers of the rec-time schedule, and caretakers of women's rec-time needs. The most common DO role at rec-time discussed by women was a neutral facilitator.

## **Discussion**

The findings in this study expand upon, and have similarities and differences with, findings in other studies. For example, while tests were conducted to explore the association between the race of women incarcerated and their views on DOs' role at rec-time, no significant associations were found. This seems to contrast somewhat with literature that has suggested women's view of interactions with law-enforcement officers is dependent on their race.<sup>88-90</sup> Our study showed very few differences and no significant differences in views on the roles of DOs at rec-time based on women's race categories. This does not mean that women's experience in CCDF are not influenced by their past experiences and intersectional identities.

Two studies with overlapping topics to the present study found that officers' discretion was paramount for women's access to health services in prison.<sup>54,64</sup> Similar to the current study, these studies' findings indicated that DOs can oscillate between a variety of personalized roles including as advocates for women to receive health service support, gatekeepers between health services and women, and caretakers or counselors able to help address mental health concerns. Our study showed that DOs take on a similar variety of roles at rec-time such as gatekeepers and caretakers. Our study expanded on this literature, however, by also showing that DOs' delivery of services or programs, namely rec-time, can also be delivered in a highly impersonal manner, and in a manner that is often viewed as either unproblematic or even conducive to women's rec-time attendance. As one participant stated, "they usually offer [rec-time] and it's up to us [to

attend].” When women were unable to go to rec-time due to DO-related factors, some did not hold DOs personally responsible. For example, one woman participant stated, “They don’t discourage [rec-time,] but sometimes just get busy.”

The above findings seem to align with literature that has indicated there is a relationship between the DOs’ role at rec-time and the job duties associated with rec-time. For example, a study in Spain found that officers were instructed to evaluate women incarcerated based on their participation in rec-time, and officers let women know that rec-time attendance could “earn points.”<sup>37</sup> By contrast, DOs at CCDF provided no incentives to women and were not expected to track participation in rec-time. As one DO wrote in the study, “It all depends if the female wants to attend. Rec is not mandatory, it is a choice.” It is not clear whether attaching rec-time attendance data to reports on the behaviors of women incarcerated would be beneficial at CCDF, but DOs at the facility are more detached from the program participation and outcomes than they might otherwise be if their job duties required more involvement. One way that DOs at CCDF indicated their involvement was through their discretion over rec-time attendance. As one DO stated, “Some days [rec-time] is taken away due to behavioral issues or contraband.” This may align with some findings in the literature, which indicated that women may be prevented from attending rec-time based on their behavior.<sup>17</sup> However, no women participants in our study indicated that DOs prevented them from attending rec-time based on their behaviors. This could indicate that this policy is not seen as problematic to women or that it happens only rarely. Women indicated other reasons why rec-time is taken away. More research is needed to explore exactly when and how DOs make decisions that affect the occurrence of rec-time.

Our study also had similarities with other studies that looked at differences in perspective that arise based on status inside jails and prisons. For example, a study by Collins et al. of views

on goal orientation between people incarcerated and jail staff found that jail staff ranked incapacitation as the top goal of corrections.<sup>59</sup> By contrast, people incarcerated in the same facility perceived rehabilitation as the main goal. Our study found similar contrasts between people incarcerated and staff. For example, we found that DOs were less likely to agree that DOs impact women's rec-time attendance than women incarcerated at CCDF. This may relate to the study findings from Collins et al. For instance, it is possible that different beliefs about the main goals of CCDF would lead women incarcerated and DOs to have varying expectations of DOs at rec-time. These varying expectations may lead DOs to distance themselves from the concerns of women and view themselves as playing a limited role in helping to shape women's well-being. It may lead women to perceive DOs' lack of concern and attention around rec-time as DOs failing to help meet the rehabilitative goals at CCDF. Increased support for enhancing participation in rec-time, such as through more advanced rec-time programming, may increase participation and decrease the influence that DOs may have on rec-time attendance. For example, if a rec-time specialist was responsible for facilitating movements to rec-time, the DOs would not have the opportunity to discourage rec-time attendance through rushing women at the dorm door.

As Collins et al. concluded, this study also suggests the need to address misunderstandings in order to improve progress towards correctional goals, including in custody, care, and reduced recidivism.<sup>59</sup> For example, since it has already been found that women and DOs value rec-time to, for instance, make them calmer, but most women don't attend, and since the current study has indicated that women perceive that DOs are part of the reason they don't attend, while DOs disagree, it may be worth re-examining the DOs' job duties around rec-time and working to develop a more shared understanding of DOs' roles at rec-time. For example, perhaps if DOs were not instructed and reminded to view rec-time as a privilege that can be revoked, but rather

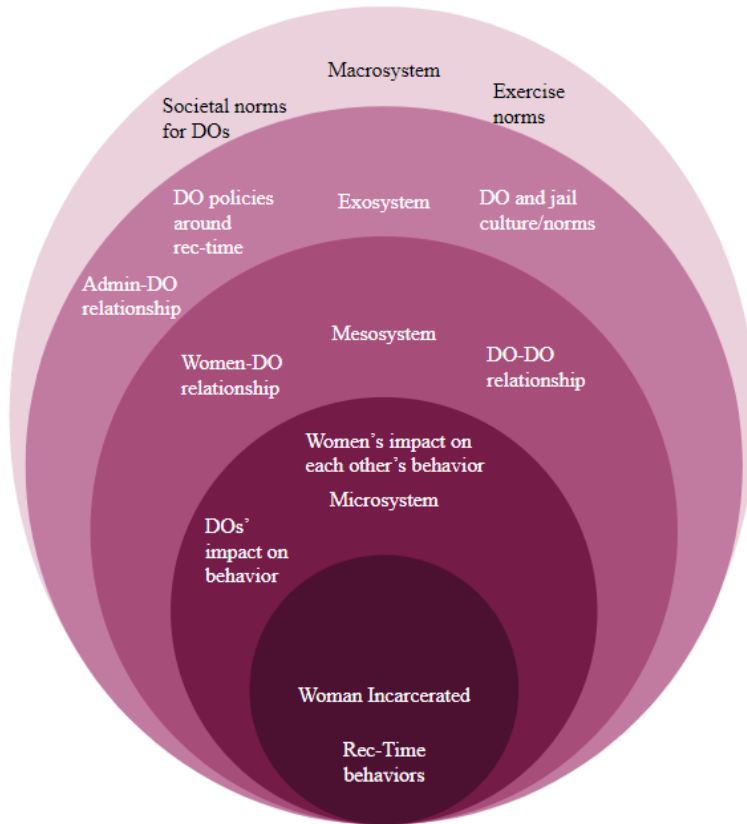
as a vital well-being program that improves the goals and functioning of the jail, they may be more likely to not restrict rec-time access and to ensure that the schedule is followed as closely as possible.

One theoretical model that may provide useful insight into the findings of this study is the Social Ecological Model (SEM).<sup>91</sup> SEM was developed to understand the dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors and bridge the gap between micro- and macro-level analysis of systems. According to SEM, influences at the micro-level (including family, friends, immediate supervisors, and other people one shares space with) exert a strong influence on the individual.<sup>92</sup> In the field of physical activity research, SEM has proven useful for understanding how people in close relations are key in helping to shape individual health.<sup>93</sup> One study, for instance, found that certain close and trusted community members could be used as leverage points on which to focus efforts at improving physical activity among a population of Black women.<sup>45</sup> In one study, researchers found that correctional staff reluctance to change their ways of working and the negative effects of staff-inmate relationships were key barriers to improving health for people incarcerated.<sup>94</sup> Such studies may indicate that DOs at CCDF may be in a position to enhance their support of women's rec-time attendance. Small changes in their interactions with women, as the women in our study indicated, may go a long way to increase rec-time attendance and thus enhance the program's capacity to benefit the women and improve the jail environment.

Other SEM studies have shown that correctional employees are sometimes restricted in their capacity to aid people incarcerated by their job expectations and by correctional policies. For example, another study found that prison policies helped to shape the role of prison interpreters, and in some cases made their jobs difficult.<sup>95</sup> They found that the role of the interpreter was

shaped by their individual choices, as well as the constraints placed on them through policies and the will of politicians to affect policy changes. Such dynamics are apparent in the literature

Figure 4: Social Ecological Model for DOs' Role at Rec-Time



focusing on prison and jail officers and in this study. The differences in perception between the DOs and women in this study highlight areas where the rec-time goals of both incarcerated people and the jail are similar, but with important differences in understanding about the DOs' role in the rec-time process. These differences may be adding to structural challenges the jail faces.

Following SEM, studies have shown that people incarcerated and correctional staff guide the co-formation of organizational culture and delivery of programs in prisons and jails. Our research has also suggested that there are probable benefits of applying a shared-goals approach to rec-time at CCDF as has been applied in other correctional institutions in ways that include the perspectives of women incarcerated. For example, the finding that veteran DOs do not support or value rec-time as much as newer DOs, and may feel powerless to affect rec-time, suggests that they may be influenced by institutionalization that increases over time. Future research may benefit from an approach to the topic of DOs' role at rec-time which applies SEM to understand the contextual factors

shaping the role (Figure 4), specifically an applied SEM approach to the development of methods (e.g. questionnaire prompts) to better understand intersecting factors in CCDF and beyond. Such a lens may be particularly relevant with respect to the macro-level factors influencing DOs' capacity to impact women's rec-time (e.g. administrative guidance pertaining to DOs' discretion over rec-time attendance).

Reasons why DOs might cancel rec-time, miss sessions, or otherwise limit women's access to rec-time, however, are still not well understood. Factors such as weather, the behaviors of women incarcerated, such as having contraband, and possibly DOs' whims, poor planning, or getting too busy, were all discussed as possible reasons why sometimes rec-times are canceled. Yet it is unclear which reasons are used most often and which reasons are based in jail policies. More research is needed to answer these questions. What seems evident from our research is that the DOs may view rec-time as "just another movement," but in reality there is more to it than that. They are expected to make decisions on whether to stick to, cancel, or postpone rec-time; they make decisions about who can attend rec-time based on such factors as women's behavior and weather; they sanitize the rec-yard toilet before the next group arrives, and have other rec-time job duties.

#### Limitations

Our study was limited by its small sample size and so cannot be used to generalize about DOs or women in other facilities, which may have different rec-time contexts. In addition, our study was a limited comparison about the general impact of DOs on women's rec-time attendance. Future research could improve upon this work by creating a more consistent set of questionnaire prompts that were guided by both findings and SEM and that would allow for a more robust and systematic comparison of the views of women and DOs, including on such

topics as DOs' reasons for canceling rec-time, DOs' rec-time responsibilities, and DOs' authority to provide rec-time resources and access outside of scheduled times.

One key limitation was a lack of understanding about terminology used inside the jail, an important way that organizational culture operates in corrections.<sup>37</sup> The reliance on the terminology "encouraged" and "discouraged" rec-time in our questionnaire was found to be a not-very-useful term in the context of the jail and did not fully illuminate the role variable as intended. The word seemed to have sometimes been understood by participants as DOs' verbal encouragement and not to understand DOs' general capacity to make rec-time happen or not. Research that developed terminology based on closer participant observations would have more potential to be based on language that has more localized meanings attached.

Finally, a missing component of the research has been in-depth perspective from both DOs and jail administrators in the form of interviews. Future research should consider exploring the topic through interviews with DOs and administrators, which would also present opportunities to present the research and elicit feedback on the feasibility of some of the changes proposed.

## **Recommendations**

One of the shared goals that this study has focused on among DOs and women is that, barring security concerns, weather conditions, and other mutually understandable reasons, women incarcerated should be allowed to go to rec-time regularly if they want to attend it. One possible way to accomplish this may be to change jail policy so that rec-time is not generally subject to DOs' discretion but is instead offered on schedule regardless of women's behaviors, barring critical risks to safety.

It is also the hope that DOs at CCDF may recognize how their different roles can, and sometimes do, impact rec-time attendance. Our findings suggest that DOs can impact attendance

in a variety of ways, including when they rush women out to dorm door, get off schedule, or act disrespectfully towards women.

Though not often included in the literature focusing on officers' roles, women incarcerated at CCDF have provided valuable perspective on how DOs facilitate the jail's rec-time program and provided possible recommendations on how DOs may aid in its improvement. Their recommendations can be summarized in three categories: 1) increased resources, 2) increased access, and 3) improved scheduling.

*Increased Resources:* Harner et al. asked women incarcerated in a U.S. jail about their experiences of health during incarceration.<sup>32</sup> Her research showed that the prison had limited resources to devote to improving mental health services, resources, and outcomes, but did not necessarily oppose making changes to the jail's policies. In response to this constraint, the researchers discussed the need for the prison to consider "innovative, alternative modes of delivering mental health treatment." One recommendation they offered was allowing women incarcerated to use MP3 players. Similarly, many women participants recommended that DOs play music through the intercom during rec-time. Another set of resources that women recommended DOs allow at rec-time involved sports equipment. One of the most requested sports items was basketballs. Other types of sports equipment were requested as well, including racket balls, volleyballs, and yoga mats. Women also requested non-sport resources be provided or allowed by the DOs including chalk, coats, toilet paper, soap, and books.

*Increased Access:* Women participants recommended that DOs increase rec-time access. They specifically requested that more time be allotted to rec-time by DOs. In addition, they asked that DOs not take an "all or none" approach to rec-time. In other words, that if a woman wants to go to a scheduled rec-time, she should be allowed to go, regardless of whether other

women in the dorm wish to attend. Finally, some women felt that access could be increased if DOs allowed women to attend when “time allows” and “when sprinkling” outside.

*Improved Scheduling:* DOs indicated that keeping a strict schedule is important to them. Nevertheless, many women participants noted that DOs did not keep a consistent schedule or allow for enough time to prepare to attend rec-time. Instead, women frequently discussed issues related to DOs’ communication about and adherence to the rec-time schedule. In response to these issues, women recommended that DOs put up a schedule in the dorm room, provide reminders ahead of rec-time, and cease rushing women at the dorm door before the movement to the recreation yard. By providing reminders at least ten minutes ahead of time, DOs may help to alleviate some women’s sense of being rushed.

## **Conclusion**

Women incarcerated and DOs hold similar and different views on rec-time. They agreed that rec-time was beneficial. However, women were more likely to agree that DOs had an impact on rec-time attendance and that women have barriers to attendance. The findings suggest the need for future research to explore the contextual factors helping to shape the DOs’ role at rec-time. While not all the above recommendations for DOs may be feasible from a policy or resources standpoint, they represent an important perspective on which to build common understanding about DOs’ roles at rec-time.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I – Women’s Questionnaire Codebook

Women’s Questionnaire – Codebook		
Code	Definition	Example
Schedule	Participant makes direct/indirect references to the rec-time schedule	Put up a schedule 7 days a week
Rushing	Participant reference to DOs not providing enough time for women to gather at dorm door	Not waiting for women who want to go but are using the restroom or showering
Bad Attitude	Participant comments about the DOs rude or otherwise negative attitudes towards women at rec-time	Rude comments/disrespectful comments on the way in or out.
Good Attitude	Participant comments about the DOs polite or otherwise positive attitudes towards women at rec-time	Smile, being nice, using manners
Access	Participant refers to DOs authority over access to rec-time	We have to hound them to get it
Wellbeing	Participant refers to DO actions, which impact their sense of wellbeing or safety	By asking if were okay, or we need to take walk outside to feel better.
Job duties	Participant refers to DOs as not encouraging or discouraging, but as just doing their job duties, including announcing rec-time and cancelling rec-time due to weather	Just by announcing it like it’s their duty
Job neglect	Participant refers to DOs as not encouraging or discouraging, but as just not doing their job duties, including not offering rec-time and not cleaning the rec-yard toilet	Most of them don’t ask if we want to go to rec
Resources	Participant refers to the DOs capacity to add or remove resources for rec-time	Providing coats for rec-time

## Appendix II – Women’s Questionnaire Themes

Women’s Questionnaire – Open-Text Responses Themes				
Theme	Definition	Example 1 – positive impact	Example 2 – negative impact	Example 3 – neutral impact
Gatekeeper	DOs have power over when and how women are given access to rec-time	Allow us to go to rec everyday especially in the summer time	We have to hound them to get it	They usually offer it and it’s up to us
Caretaker	DOs’ attitude and empathy influenced rec-time attendance	Smile, being nice, using manners	Rude comments/disrespectful comments on the way in or out.	They are doing fine
Facilitator	DOs simply announcing rec-time, canceling rec-time, and completing other rec-time tasks associated with their job duties	They just do their job and offer if available	Sometimes they forget about going outside	They don’t discourage or encourage us
Timekeeper	DOs capacity to keep on the rec-time schedule and provide enough time and reminders to prepare to attend rec-time	Put up a schedule 7 days a week	Not being consistent and rush us	They just go by the schedule and announce it