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Revisiting Reasons and Kaplan 1975: Towards an Open Wall Approach to Rehabilitative Prisons

Roger Schaefer, Central Washington University  
Danielle Neal, The Donor Motivation Program, Kansas City  
Madison Kneadler, Heritage Law Office: Cle Elum, Washington

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## **Abstract**

This paper reexamines the evolution of the latent and manifest functions of American prisons originally outlined by Charles Reasons and Russell Kaplan in 1975. Reasons and Kaplan posed an important and timely question about prisons in America – tear down the wall? Reasons and Kaplan’s question emerged at a time when Americans were challenging the purpose and intended outcomes of imprisonment. Today, we find ourselves in a similar situation as we address the issue of mass incarceration – which began in the years immediately following Reason and Kaplan’s provocative and critical assessment of prison functions. Since Reasons and Kaplan posed their quasi-rhetorical question, the American prison system has transformed into an epidemic of excessive over reliance on incarceration. Consequently, penologists, policy makers, and practitioners are once again seeking answers regarding the immediate and long-term future of American prisons. In pursuit of these answers, it is imperative that we revisit Reasons and Kaplan’s article, examining our current correctional discourse.

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The purpose of this article is to begin a dialog regarding correctional transformation which recognizes how complex social factors influence our perspectives on the purpose and intended outcomes of incarceration. Understanding that prison is an institution, which exists within the larger social milieu, this article addresses prison’s role within multiple frameworks. In an effort to place this discussion within a historical context, this article utilizes Reasons and Kaplan’s (1975) article *Tear down the walls? Some functions of prisons* as a historical bench-mart from which to examine prison as a social institution over the past forty plus years.

In the October 1975 issues of *Crime and Delinquency*, Charles Reasons and Russell Kaplan posed an important and timely question – tear down the wall? Reasons and Kaplan’s question emerged at a time when Americans were challenging the purposes and intended outcomes of

imprisonment. Reasons and Kaplan (1975) identify the prison abolitionist movement as a response to a belief that “prisons have failed to solve the crime problem” (p. 13). This belief was supported by multiple reports outlining both the failures of prisons to reduce crime (most notably Martinson’s 1974 contention that nothing works) and the detrimental impacts of incarceration (Reasons & Kaplan, 1975).

Today, we find ourselves in a similar situation as we begin to address the issue of mass incarceration – a movement that began in the years immediately following Reasons and Kaplan’s provocative and critical assessment of prison functions. Since Reasons and Kaplan posed their quasi-rhetorical question, the American prison system has transformed into an epidemic of excessive reliance on incarceration (Mauer, 2006). Consequently, penologists, policy makers, and practitioners are once again seeking answers regarding the immediate and long-term future of American prisons. Given the current reality of prison dysfunction and disruption, often referred to as correctional crisis, (see Lutze, 2014) it is not surprising that the abolitionist perspective is once again emerging. McLeod (2015) takes a dual approach to this issue, arguing from both the legal and ethical perspectives, McLeod discusses how proactive crime reduction practices and systematic decarceration can more efficiently achieve the desired outcomes of criminal law. It is worth noting that the four desired outcomes of criminal law identified by McLeod are the exact manifest functions discussed by Reasons and Kaplan (1975) which further illustrates our collective inability to orient our correctional efforts towards a specific philosophical foundation. While McLeod’s discussion on the legality and ethics of prison abolition provides a framework for reform, the reality of prison’s multiple functions remains problematic. Therefore, it is imperative that we revisit Reasons and Kaplan’s article, exploring current correctional discourse. While Paul Keve’s (1995) text *Crime control and justice in America: Searching for facts and answers* examines the twenty-year period between 1975 and 1995, it provides only a limited discussion on the issue of correctional discourse and its evolution.

The current discussion re-conceptualizes the notion of prison functions as articulated by Reasons and Kaplan within the current correctional discourse<sup>1</sup>. While Reasons and Kaplan assess prison from a social functionalist perspective, the present discussion explores the various aspects of prisons, which they identified. Contemporary penologists are beginning to reexamine the principles, assumptions, and utility of prisons. Recently, Lutze and Schaefer (2014) highlighted how the changing socio-political climate has exposed the economic realities associated with mass incarceration and the need for enhanced utilization of community-based corrections. Stohr and colleagues (2014) suggest a movement towards decarceration, including an increased use of community-based correction, stemming from the reality that the current correctional practices are simply not sustainable. The current evolutionary period, marked by the transition from correctional crisis to evidence-based corrections (see Lutze, 2014) provides scholars with the unique opportunity to both critique and build upon previous articulations of correctional dynamics.

Reasons and Kaplan suggest that the functions of prison can be understood as either manifest or latent. Within the context of their discussion, Reasons and Kaplan maintain that the manifest functions of prison are those aspects of correctional discourse that are aligned with the broad philosophical orientations of corrections as a social institution (i.e. rehabilitation/reformation, incapacitation, retribution, and deterrence). Recently, the social institution of corrections has endured paradigmatic shifts (see Kuhn, 1996) following the philosophical trajectory of the ideological pendulum (Rothman, 2002). The years immediately following Reasons and Kaplan’s publication, the socio-political climate – coupled with wide-spread consumption of Martinson’s “nothing works” doctrine (see Martinson, 1974) – influenced a paradigmatic shift towards punitive criminal justice policies and practices in general, as well as the abandonment of correctional rehabilitation in particular (See Cullen and Jonson 2017). The social, political, and correctional

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<sup>1</sup> The discussion presented in this paper is not an exhaustive review of the literature published between 1975 and today, rather it highlights the key intellectual contributions which have guided correctional discourse.

consequences of this shift towards the punitive include community devastation (see Clear, 1994), tough-on-crime rhetoric and policies (see Mauer, 2006), and an unprecedented prison expansion characterized by mass incarceration, prison overcrowding, and a general dehumanization of correctional discourse (see Eisen, 2018; Polizzi, 2014). While the changes in the socio-political as well as correctional climate do not invalidate Reasons and Kaplan's examination of correctional discourse, they do invite scholars to reexamine the functionality of prisons within the current correctional context.

The functionalist approach presented by Reasons and Kaplan provides a critical assessment of the prison as an institution of social control while simultaneously challenging prison abolitionists' perspectives. Reasons and Kaplan's apprehension towards the prison abolitionist movement seems to be somewhat ironic considering the massive expansion of prisons in the years following the publication of their article. However, the reality of incarceration practices has changed the role of the American prison system, demanding the revisit of Reasons and Kaplan's approach toward understanding the role of prison in America.

### *Reasons and Kaplan's Prison Functions*

In 1975, prisons in America were transitioning from the Progressive Era, which began with the reformatory movement following the Cincinnati Congress in 1870, to an era of correctional crisis (Christianson, 1998; Pisciotta, 1994). Following more than a century of correctional discourse, which emphasized rehabilitation, benevolence, and individualized treatment programs, political and social pressures – coupled with an unparalleled increase in crime rates – led to the abandonment of the rehabilitative ideals in favor of punitive responses toward the criminal rather than crime itself. However, the full magnitude of the damaging effects of this transformation would not be realized until long after Reasons and Kaplan published their paper. Yet, Reasons and Kaplan present a critical assessment of American prison functions, which emerged before the transition into crisis – questioning many of the social functions related to the use of prison as an institution of social control.

For Reasons and Kaplan, the notion of latent functions of prisons can best be understood as both the intentional and unintentional consequences of imprisonment – for both the individual and society. Reasons and Kaplan suggest that the latent functions or consequences, which impact the individual, include: the maintenance of a crime school, self-enhancement, the satisfaction of authoritarian needs, do-gooderism, and birth control. Conversely, increased politicization, provision of jobs, slave labor, reduction of unemployment rates, scientific research, and a safety valve for racial tensions are societal consequences of latent functions.

### **Manifest Functions**

The manifests function identified by Reasons and Kaplan are reformation (rehabilitation), incapacitation, retribution, and deterrence. In the years immediately preceding Reasons and Kaplan's discussion, penologists and practitioners had embraced the reformation perspective (Rothman, 2002). The consequence of this reformation-oriented focus was a critical examination of the reformatory properties of the American prison, which highlighted the disjuncture between rehabilitation and punishment. The paradox between rehabilitation and punishments continues to foster an ideological divide, despite the growing popularity of rehabilitative principles supported by the evidence-based movement (see Cullen & Jonson, 2017).

Arguing that rehabilitation has become the primary manifest function of American prisons is shortsighted. While there is certainly sufficient evidence that rehabilitation is gaining support among some academics, policy makers, and practitioners, it remains one of four manifest functions of American prisons (Cullen & Jonson, 2017). Resistance towards prison reform at both the state and federal levels suggests that the punitive concepts of incapacitation, retribution, and deterrence continue to influence correctional discourse (Austin & Irwin, 2012).

The growth of rehabilitation as a manifest function of prisons is well documented in the social science literature. Perhaps the most significant contribution to the rehabilitative shift came from Andrews and Bonta's first publication of *Psychology or Criminal Conduct*, which served as the catalyst for the widespread adoption of the Risk Needs Responsivity (RNR) approach to offender change (Andrews & Bonta, 2010)<sup>2</sup>. Since its emergence, the RNR model has been a staple of the evidence-based approach and has been widely cited as must-have for rehabilitative corrections (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990).

The popularity of the RNR model is not universal, and has been subject to scrutiny. Tony Ward and Mark Brown (2004), who advocate for the Good Lives Model of offender rehabilitation have criticized the RNR model as too simplistic – failing to recognize the complex nuances of personal change towards self-actualization. Ward's critiques are mirrored by Polizzi's (2014) criticisms, which suggest that the RNR model is inherently dehumanizing as it constructs the individual as a risk, impeding the development of an adequate therapeutic relationship. Polizzi (2014) maintains that the RNR approach is less of a therapeutic model than a crime control model, meaning that the guiding function is not so much rehabilitation but incapacitation, retribution, or deterrence. Ward and Brown's, as well as Polizzi's critique of the RNR approach to correctional discourse are both supported by Forde's (2018) analysis, which suggests that the RNR modalities are not as theoretically and empirical sound as many believe them to be.

The notion of incapacitation has been particularly important since 1975, as many scholars attempt to explain national crime trends in the era of mass incarceration. Two prevailing arguments emerged during this period – mass incarceration caused the reduction in crime, or crime rates maintained their downward trend, which was inconsequential to mass incarceration (Blumstein, 1995). James Q. Wilson (1995) argues that, among other factors, increased incapacitation of some offenders (e.g. a robber) did lead to a decrease in such crime. While Wilson's argument has limited empirical support, America's prison did not exceed capacity with such offenders; instead, America's imprisonment binge was focused on drug offenders, particularly young men of color (Alexander, 2012). Contrary to Wilson's general argument supporting incapacitation is Todd Clear's (1994) *Harm in American Penology*, which maintains that incarceration/incapacitation fails to address the criminogenic needs of the community while exacerbating social forces conducive to criminality. The reality that punitive correctional practices often do more harm than good suggests that the spirit of prison, and therefore the actual manifest function, is simply a vindictive expression of power or retribution.

As a manifest function of correctional practice in general, and prisons in particular, retribution has the longest and most recognizable history (Christianson, 1998; Foucault, 1977). Due to a combination of social forces, punitive or retributive correctional practices became normative in the mid to late 1970s (Cullen & Jonson, 2017). The normalization of retributive correctional discourse was founded on the 'just desserts' perspective and included the abandonment of inmate programming, decreased utilization of community-based corrections, and the inclusion of mandatory minimum sentencing (see Lutze, 2014). When these retributive correctional practices failed to produce the desired outcomes, scholars began to question the utility of such Draconian practices. While liberals demanded a rehabilitative reformation of correctional discourse, conservatives argued for the continuation of retributive practices for the purpose of deterrence.

Beccaria's philosophy of deterrence has been identified as the dominant theoretical perspective in American criminal justice and has had a substantial impact on the evolution of prisons (Pisciotta, 1994). Following the demise of the progressive era in the early 1970s, the deterrence perspective re-emerged as the primary function of American prisons, renewing academic interests amongst theorists (see Kubrin, Stucky, & Krohn, 2009). In the 1980s, criminologists critically examined the constructs of deterrence theory, concluding that swiftness and certainty of punishment are far more influential on criminality than the severity of punishment (Paternoster, 1987). Despite

the overwhelming amount of evidence to the contrary, populace demands, and political rhetoric pushed for increased severity of criminal sanctions. Consequently, America began the self-fulfilling process of mass incarceration, built on the false promise of severity-driven deterrence. Ultimately, severity-driven deterrence, which contradicts the proportionality aspect of Beccaria's utilitarian philosophy, is nothing more than the expression of collective retribution towards the criminal "other", or those beneath the shadow (see Jung, 1968).

Deconstructing the manifest functions outlined by Reasons and Kaplan illustrates a high degree of overlap, suggesting that these functions should not be understood as mutually exclusive functions. McMurrin (2002) summarizes this reality stating, "retributive and rehabilitative approaches co-exist in an uncomfortable alliance, while vying with each other for dominance" (p. 3). The fact that the community, not the offender, is identified as the client in correctional rehabilitation suggests that any intervention or modality is centered on crime control or retributivism rather than therapeutic engagement (Blackburn, 2002; Polizzi, 2014). The remaining three functions – incapacitation, retribution, and deterrence – can all be assumed under the same punitive philosophy of crime control (Packer, 1968). While Reasons and Kaplan were able to separate these four functions, correctional discourse over the past four decades has amalgamated these elements into a single function – crime control. The reality of this is a significant barrier to the evidence-based movement as it raises important philosophical questions about the use of correctional interventions. If we recognize rehabilitation as a holistic engagement between individuals to effect long-term change, we must be willing to divorce rehabilitation this from the other manifest functions.

Our collective inability to reconcile the theoretical and philosophical differences between these manifest functions is not an outright demand for prison abolition. The on-going debate regarding the paradigmatic orientation of prisons has initiated much the progress towards our current rehabilitative focus. The emphasis placed on criminogenic outcomes by the evidence-based approach has highlighted the necessity for proper intervention. While it is argued above that emphasizing criminogenic outcomes aligns with a crime control ethos, the inclusion of needs-based interventions, tailored correctional modalities, and the increased use of motivational interviewing in some jurisdictions (e.g. Washington State) suggests a renewed prioritization of reintegration-oriented rehabilitative efforts (Cullen & Jonson, 2017). Prisons which aim to emphasize reintegration as the ultimate outcome of rehabilitative discourse need not tear down their wall, rather they must open those walls – promoting the social, civil, and community synergies required for post incarceration viability.

### *Latent Functions*

Latent functions are those aspects of prison that are not explicitly identified as the intended purpose, or as Reasons and Kaplan state, outcomes that are "unintended and not generally recognized" (p. 366). In some regards, the latent functions of prison discussed by Reasons and Kaplan mirror the "pains of imprisonment" discussed by Sykes (1958) roughly twenty years earlier. As Sykes discusses, the pains of imprisonment are not the legally prescribed avenues of punishment, rather they are those collateral factors, which accompany the loss of liberty. For Sykes, these factors served as an extension of punishment; for Reasons and Kaplan, the latent functions reconstruct prisons, and those inside of them, as a means to accomplish various social functions for specific groups.

### *Maintenance of a crime school*

Reasons and Kaplan combine elements of the social learning theories and structural functionalism to illustrate the latent function of prisons as a crime school (See Kubrin, Stucky, & Krohn, 2009). Their arguments postulates that criminality is both learned and reinforced inside prisons as a means to ensure the continuation of state power expressed through the criminal justice system. From this perspective, the criminal, both current and future, is understood as necessary to uphold a social structure that would otherwise be self-eliminating. In essence, reducing the criminal

propensity of the offender will reduce the need for a system, or apparatus, which is predicated upon that propensity (see Foucault, 1977). Furthermore, this criminogenic reinforcement ensures continuity for those social forces or structures which contribute to the formalized criminal justice system, such as legal or criminological scholarship. While the expression of these aspects of this latent function have evolved, evidence suggests that this function remains (see Johnson, et al, 2017).

Since 1975, advances in criminology have impacted our understanding of the criminogenic properties of prisons. From a criminogenic perspective, the evolution of social learning and labeling theories support Reasons and Kaplan's notion of the prison as a crime school (see Akers, 2009). Each of the four constructs of Aker's original theory: differential association, imitation, definitions, and differential reinforcements are magnified in prison where the realities of incarceration provide a social context for inmates to enrich their criminality (Johnson et al, 2017). Braithwaite's (1995) discussion of shaming and the marginalizing effects of stigmatization also illustrate how the prison continues to function as a crime school. Within the context of shaming, the stigma of having been incarcerated, which is a collective reality amongst the inmates, reinforces criminogenic identity.

The reality of stigma internalization for those who are, or have been incarcerated demonstrates a need for the open-walled prison model. Within this context, the open walled prison can reduce the social construction of the stigma-based typificatory scheme (see Berger & Luckmann, 1967) by demystifying the reality of the incarcerated. Empowering citizens and policy makers to see beyond the superficial label of *offender* can reduce the impacts of this stigma during the period of reintegration.

### *Politicization*

The social and political realities of the mid-1970s provided Reasons and Kaplan with a natural laboratory to examine politicization as a latent function of American prisons. From this perspective, the prisons and those inside of them became objects of political discourse. They argue that this objectification exacerbated or accelerated the vilification of specific groups of citizens. Consequently, these groups became the scapegoats of societal problems, empowering politicians to gain favor with voters by uniting against a common enemy – the imprisoned. The divisive, us-versus-them perspective has had a long tradition in American political discourse of igniting passion through rhetoric and prioritizing ideology over research (Currie, 1998; Obama, 2017).

Despite the incendiary rhetoric of the 2016 general election and the first few years of the Trump Administration, research suggests that the politicization of crime has decreased in recent years. Petersilia and Cullen's (2015) article *Liberal but not stupid: Meeting the promise of downsizing the prison*, highlights the decrease in the politicization of crime control and incarceration. According to Petersilia and Cullen (2015), the tough on crime rhetoric that has been used to energize voters has been replaced by an emphasis on efficiency and the ability of government entities (e.g. prisons) to produce desired outcomes. Consequently, the political utility of prisons and those inside of them has transformed from a divisive us-versus-them approach to an objectifying dispute regarding return on investment, commodifying the lives of those on the inside. The movement towards the commodification of the prison is becoming increasingly apparent as the current administration moves to extend the role of private prisons – emphasizing and prioritizing short-term costs (Eisen, 2018).

The reality of prison exploitation for political gain suggests that the majority of American citizens are willing to accept the misguided or questionable *facts* being presented by politicians. This collective lack of knowledge regarding prisons is a consequence of the out-of-sight-out-of-mind or not in my back yard societal view on incarceration. By opening the walls and allowing citizen to see and understand the reality of prison, for both the offenders and corrections professional, we can empower citizens to question the rhetoric and demand concrete reforms.

### *Self-enhancement*

In their discussion of self-enhancement as a latent function of prisons, Reasons & Kaplan suggest that the subcultural or social realities of incarceration provide space for marginalized individuals to gain status. This argument mirrors that of Cohen's (1955) theoretical argument in *Delinquent Boys: The subculture of gangs*, in which he illustrates how the creation of an alternative social structure or subculture serves the function of status attainment and subsequent self-enhancement. Reasons and Kaplan diverge from Cohen however, suggesting that these prison-based subcultures can promote positive self-image, which can effect pro-social change. The idea of prisons as self-enhancing was provocative in 1975 as scholars were highlighting the detrimental impacts of incarceration stemming from the subculture of violence, intimidation, and hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 1999). At that time, scholars were unable to separate public and private expectation of behavior among the incarcerated.

Johnson and colleague's (2017) notion of prison niches and public-versus-private discourse in prisons demonstrates our contemporary understanding of the duality of social reality in prison. Johnson and colleagues (2017) argues that the public space expectations exacerbate criminogenic self-enhancement, while the private space or niche provides space for pro-social transformation. Recently, correctional scholars have focused on how to better use the private space in prisons for rehabilitative purposes. Expansions in correctional programming have empowered inmates to challenge their definitions of self-enhancement towards a more socially integrated self (see Cullen & Johnson, 2017).

By emphasizing self-enhancement towards social integration, contemporary correctional discourse utilizes multiple forces related to desistance from crime including educational, vocational, and counseling programs. This reality is illustrated by Bronson's (2006) qualitative analysis of inmate narratives; the dominant themes related to self-enhancement addressed by Bronson emphasize the notions of trust and respect. The narratives highlight how participation in positive, trust-oriented programming empowered offenders to change their self-concept in a way that made long-term change feasible. Self-enhancement in correctional facilities is not just a function of the correctional socialization, but rather of the psychological attributes, which accompany the transition from community to prison life. Through survey analyses, Dhimi and colleagues (2006) found that upon incarceration, offenders report unrealistic perceptions of self-enhancement processes and opportunities while in prison. Prisoners were likely to provide self-enhancing forecasts of their potential for not recidivating upon release. The overall "unrealistic optimism" among prisoners is likely due to their removal from society, the social structure of the prison facility, as well as other psychological factors such as stress or anxiety (Dhimi, Mandel, Loewenstein, and Ayton, 2006). Here the open walled prison promotes the continuation of social discourse and viability, making the period of transition from prison to community less arduous when the offender is paroled or otherwise released from incarceration.

### *Provision of Jobs*

In 1975, American prisons employed more than 70,000 individuals, including treatment, custody, and administrative staff (Reasons & Kaplan, 1975). Reasons and Kaplan argue that these jobs were necessary to ensure employment for unskilled laborers or bachelors-level professionals, which provided political favoritism at the administrative level. Collectively, the prison was a public sector employer protected from private sector competition where lower-skilled workers found job security. The reality of this function represents the social foundation for what became known as the prison industrial complex.

Since 1975, the prison industrial complex has undergone unparalleled growth due to mass incarceration. During this time, the prison industrial complex reached far beyond the prison walls, as overcrowding led to the development of new facilities, which generated numerous jobs in construction and architecture. Efforts to capitalize on the imprisonment binge fostered the creation of private prisons, which emerged as a viable alternative to state-operated prisons for lower risk offenders – those who represent a majority of the U.S. prison population (Stohr & Walsh, 2019). In

many communities, prisons began to provide opportunities for economic stimuli as local municipalities increasingly viewed prisons as a conduit for state funding to improve infrastructure or increase tax revenue (Martin, Champion & Gibney, 2002).

As the number of individuals employed by prisons has grown, so too has the need to professionalize the correctional domain (Lutze, 2016). Efforts to professionalize corrections, which bridges the gap between research and practice, require substantive expansions in academic penology (Lutze, 2016). Consequently, institutions of higher education embraced the demand for such scholarship through the creation or extension of criminology and criminal justice programs, which created a plethora of jobs within colleges and universities – both academic and administrative. As research on prisons continues to grow, the reach of the prison industrial complex will become even more apparent. Despite demands for evidence-based approaches to correctional interventions, researchers continue to experience challenges with accessing prison data or when attempting to conduct research behind the prison walls. Opening the prison walls will invite academics to engage in more research, which will inform our understanding of the complex realities of living and working in prison.

### *Satisfaction of authoritarian needs*

In their discussion of satisfying authoritarian needs, Reasons and Kaplan highlight the rigid confines of institutional discourse in prisons. Alluding to Goffman's (1961) notion of the total institution, Reasons and Kaplan describe prisons as a site for social processes, which allow those in the position of power to exercise complete control. Being critical of those who chose to work in prisons, Reasons and Kaplan suggest that such employment is sometimes sought-out specifically for the expression of dominance in daily routines.

The evolution of correctional discourse has altered the daily routine of prison staff, lessening yet not eliminating opportunities for staff to express control and dominance over the incarcerated<sup>3</sup>. However, in an era when rehabilitative functions are growing in importance, the authoritarian attitude is less accepted. Given that the broader institution of corrections is realizing that rehabilitation reduces recidivism, the paradigm is shifting<sup>4</sup> (see Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Changes in hiring standards and practices coupled with advancements in education and training has transformed inmate-staff dynamics towards constructive engagements (Lutze, 2016). These changes aim to reduce the number of correctional officers who seek only to use their career as an outlet for expressing dominance and control. Again, an open wall prison model will increase transparency and allow the public to demand that such injustices are not simply hidden behind the rigid confines of prison concealment.

### *Slave labor*

One of the most daunting tasks for progressive penologists has been reconciling the complex relationship between desistance from crime and work/labor. Reasons and Kaplan highlight this reality by contextualizing prison-based labor within the confines of prison as an institution of control. Reasons and Kaplan's discussion of slave labor is centered on the fact that, in most prisons, inmates perform the daily tasks of prison maintenance and upkeep which decreases overhead costs for the state through correctional industries<sup>5</sup>. They argue further that prisons are inhabited by labor-ready individuals who are not afforded the benefit of market-driven compensation. This phenomenon was/is not unique to institutional corrections. Reasons and Kaplan also discuss how employment

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<sup>3</sup> While the opportunity to engage in abusive behaviors exists in any context where there is a rigid power imbalance, it is important to note that the majority of those who work within the correctional context do so with a high degree of integrity, working daily to promote the rehabilitative processes and therapeutic modalities.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the 2010 edition of Andrews and Bonta's text cites multiple meta-analyses to support their articulations.

<sup>5</sup> Correctional industries are quasi-private manufacturing and assembly jobs for incarcerated individuals.



requirements for individuals on community supervision allow those individuals to be exploited by private industry. While employment is essential to successful reentry (Lutze, 2014), the exploitation of these individuals is dehumanizing and can hinder rehabilitative progress (Polizzi, 2016).

The struggle to reconcile prison labor with criminogenic desistance continues to challenge penologists. While vocational programming has been shown to produce pro-social long-term outcomes (see Lutze, Drapela, & Schaefer, 2015), the line between vocational programming and exploitation is an important boundary. Perhaps the most contentious area of correctional discourse related to this boundary is the use of Correctional Industries (CI) in which incarcerated individuals work in various manufacturing capacities for significantly less than market wage, while fruits of their labor are sold on the open market. Opposition to CI programming is generally based on arguments related to the notion of exploitation. However, this critique is short-sighted as recent studies have highlighted the benefits of CI programs. Lutze and colleagues (2015) found that, compared to a propensity-score matched group, individuals who participated in CI programming while in prison had more favorable long-term outcomes including a lower rate of new convictions, and higher rates of employment and legal income. Similarly, Eisen (2018) found support for CI programs during face-to-face engagements with incarcerated individuals who discussed their desire to participate in CI as a means toward self-improvement. Collectively, over the past few decades correctional scholars and practitioners have begun to recognize the benefits of work to the human experience, yet the temptation for exploitation remains.

#### *Reduction of unemployment*

Reasons and Kaplan's latent function of the reduction of unemployment rates focuses on the reality that by incarcerating high proportions of individuals from economically depressed communities, such individuals are removed from the labor market – effectively shrinking the pool of potential applicants. From their perspective, incarceration reduces competition for low-skilled/low wage jobs. With fewer individuals competing for such jobs, the percentage of those identified as unemployed is reduced. At a time when unemployment was a substantial societal issue, it was in the interest of governments to decrease rates in any way.

The trend of incarcerating those on the economic margins of society has continued over the past four decades (Reiman & Leighton, 2017). However, the evidence-based approach to correctional discourse has changed the prison's role regarding the issue of unemployment. Meta-analytic findings by Wilson, Gallagher, and MacKenzie (2000) have shown that vocational training in prisons can reduce various types of recidivism – a finding that has empowered many corrections departments to embrace vocational programming. By preparing those who are incarcerated to sustain employment upon release, the prison actively works to reduce unemployment rates by increasing employment rather than decreasing the number of those eligible to seek those benefits. However, the open walls approach to correctional discourse will change the dynamic of work by empowering both employers and offenders to develop or maintain employment connections. Such connections, which will promote suitable and sustainable employment opportunities upon release.

#### *Scientific research*

The eighth latent function of prisons addressed by Reasons and Kaplan is that prisons provide a group of research subjects: inmates. This discussion highlights two specific groups – the pharmaceutical companies and social scientists – which, according to Reasons and Kaplan, use inmates as *guinea pigs*. The inmate population allowed drug companies to test products without having to compensate participants at a fair market value. Furthermore, the realities of captivity made the inmate population an accessible sampling pool for empirical social science research and on-the-job skill development for emerging lawyers.

Around the time that Reasons and Kaplan published their article, the United States Congress began to address the issue of inmate exploitation in the name of science. With the establishment of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, inmates were classified as a protected population meaning that when they are utilized for research purposes, such proposals are

thoroughly evaluated for the possibility of harm (Mobley, Henry, & Plemmons, 2007). These changes in policy had an important impact on the reduction of inmate exploitation for research, especially with regards to medical and pharmaceutical studies.

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, correctional research has drastically proliferated, becoming a monumental entity in penology. As penologists attempt to answer the “what works” question, inmates and those under community supervision have become the primary units of analysis. However, unlike the intrusive medical research of the past, contemporary inmate research generally utilizes record data to track the long-term impacts of offender programming on various recidivism outcomes. Consequently, the necessary harm-benefit (see Kraska & Neuman, 2012) analysis associated with such research shows a decreased likelihood for harm with a substantial likelihood of benefits to both the individual and society. As argued above, open walls will aid in the advancement of our scientific knowledge on prisons by lessening those barriers to research endeavors.

### *Do-Gooderism*

Do-gooderism, as articulated by Reasons and Kaplan, identifies prisons as a functionary that allows “volunteers and civic organizations opportunit[ies] to discharge their humanitarian impulses at little economic cost” (p. 369). Here, the authors illustrate the showmanship of such practices. Within this charade or display of benevolence, the inmates themselves can be understood as either the audience who observes such acts or the objectified stage prop – regardless, the actual beneficiary is not the inmate. Essentially, the prison and/or the prisoner is an outlet for self-righteous and inconsequential actions that fail to address the social, legal or economic realities of incarceration.

The latent function of do-gooderism has evolved over the years, the primary focus of such efforts aims to address the individual challenges and barriers facing offenders both during and following incarceration. The emerging emphasis on long-term, pro-social outcomes has illuminated a continuous need to offender-community continuity. Some noteworthy examples of this include the Washington State Prison Debate Project at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center and Marcus Bullock’s Flikshop – a quasi-social media application that works to keep inmates connected to those outside the prison walls (Flikshop.com; <http://www.documon.org/?portfolio=coyote-ridge>). Not only do these examples illustrate the current status of the latent function of do-gooderism, but they also work to open the prison walls – emphasizing the importance of long-term social viability. While such efforts do not address the larger, structural or political mechanisms which influence the experience of incarceration; they attempt to promote a reintegration-orientation that empowers the offender.

### *Safety valve for racial tension*

In the years leading up to the publication of Reasons and Kaplan’s article, the issues of race and race relations in America were at the forefront of social and political discourse (Davis, 2006). Such realities led Reasons and Kaplan to identify prison as serving the function of a safety valve for racial tensions. Reasons and Kaplan support their position by citing rates of disproportionate ethno-racial incarceration and correctional supervision. They further support their position by arguing that such disproportionate rates reflected societal divisiveness along ethno-racial lines, which established and reinforced stratified power structures.

Unfortunately, since 1975, the issue of disproportionate minority incarceration has grown substantially – a reality, which is no longer a valve for racial tensions. Yet, in its wake it has energized a social up-raising. The primary objective of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is to demand justice when police abuse their power; however, activists have also objected to the systematic and disproportionate incarceration of young black men due to the punitive policies collectively known as the War on Drugs (Alexander, 2012). While recent policy changes aim to reduce the issue of mass incarceration, little has been done to address the injustices of disproportionate minority incarceration (Massey & Denton, 1993). Once again, the inability of the

general public to see this reality due to it being hidden behind the prison walls keeps this issue from being part of mainstream social and political discourse.

### *Birth control*

The final latent function of prisons discussed by Reasons and Kaplan is birth control. Reasons and Kaplan contextualize their argument within the social reality that an overwhelming majority of those who are incarcerated come from communities and neighborhoods characterized by low socioeconomic status and elevated birth rates. From their perspective, prisons which separate men and women serve as a form of passive eugenics to reduce the birth rates of the socially, economically, and culturally marginalized.

While single sex institutions can prevent pregnancy, and thus lower the birth rate for the specific individuals who are currently incarcerated, overall birthrates have declined in the United States in the past few decades (Hamilton, Martin, Osterman, Driscoll, Rossen, 2018). The observed birth rate decline can be attributed to improved access to reproductive health care including resources like contraceptives. However, lower socioeconomic communities, like those from which large portions of our incarcerated population come (Wilson, 1987), continue to experience higher birthrates. Essentially, the communities that have been subjected to disproportionate rates of incarceration are simultaneously experiencing higher rates of unplanned pregnancies (Clear, 2007).

Todd Clear's (2007) discussion on family/marriage/reproduction provides an alternative or contradiction to Reasons & Kaplan's argument. For Clear, the growing presence of mass incarceration in specific cities/neighborhood creates a social reality that disrupts traditional family dynamics including reproduction – increasing incidences of teenage/unplanned pregnancies. While Clear does acknowledge that a large proportion of reproductive-aged males are being incarcerated, he argues that this doesn't decrease birth rates – rather it enables males to be less monogamous and less likely to practice safe sex. Essentially, Clear's argument is that the males who remain in these communities are able to be sexually promiscuous because fewer males are available.

### **Discussion**

Considering the discussion presented above, we return to Reasons and Kaplan's original question: Tear down the wall? Given the literature detailing the detrimental impacts of incarceration (see Johnson, et al., 2017), it may seem advantageous to address criminality outside prison, perhaps in the over-burdened community corrections context (See Lutze, 2014). While some scholars have recognized the potential of decarceration (see Stohr & Walsh, 2019), the argument remains that prisons do, in fact, maintain some degree of useful function – manifest or latent. Given what we have learned through contemporary research, an argument to abolish prisons is likely shortsighted. Yet, substantial reform and transformation of the prison apparatus is necessary (Johnson, et al., 2017; Polizzi, 2014, Toch, 1997).

Such transformation must begin by addressing the social demise indicative to correctional discourse that is exacerbated by the tomb-like barriers known as prison walls (Polizzi, Draper, & Anderson, 2014). In this context, the prison wall represents both a physical and mental blockade that not only isolates the individual but also diminishes his or her social viability. If correctional discourse is to fully embrace a rehabilitative philosophy, then considerations for social viability as a means towards successful reintegration must be prioritized (Rotman, 1990). The absence of any meaningful reform towards this reality suggests that our correctional system in general, and our prison system in particular, seeks only to maintain those manifest functions that are aligned with control, casting serious doubt on the sustainability of the pro-rehabilitative, evidence-based movement.

The reexamination of Reasons & Kaplan's latent functions of prison further suggests a need for correctional reform that emphasizes the humanity and the social existence of those who are incarcerated. The stigma emanating from the label of "convicted felon" continues to serve as a means by which the stigmatized are pushed further to the margin of society (Polizzi, 2016). While

Petersilia and Cullen (2015) present a hopeful perspective on the waning use of prisoners as political fodder, the recent political rhetoric regarding crime suggests that such issues might be reemerging in the broader political context. Furthermore, the seemingly universal adoption of cognitive behavioral therapy as a means of prosocial self-enhancement has created a correctional rehabilitative logos that is inherently discursive (Schlosser, 2015). The economic functions of prisons continue to empower the prison industrial complex while keeping the unemployable out of labor markets (Christie, 1993). Despite progress in some areas (e.g. educational and vocational programming), prison remains an outlet for authoritarianism, especially in recent context surrounding immigration (Beckett & Evans, 2015). Furthermore, although the use of work or labor is now understood as a constructive intervention, there remains room for criticism from progressives who see the potential for exploitation. This potential for exploitation is not reserved for the prisons; efforts to augment social or political status can invite exploitation on the part of citizens in the name of do-gooderism. Finally, despite the many advancements and insights gained through ethical scientific inquiry, the detrimental impacts of incarceration continue to harm communities, disrupt family dynamics, and highlight the continued racial injustices in our society (Alexander, 2012; Clear, 1994; Clear 2007; Massy & Denton; 1993). Substantive reformation, which could address the injustices associated with these latent functions, must challenge the out-of-sight-out-of-mind perspective on corrections and incarceration.

Challenging the collective desire to ignore contemporary prison realities does not begin with tearing down the prison walls, but rather by opening those walls to allow for constructive discourse. The transparency and increased social discourse resulting from open prison walls will help address the ambiguity surrounding which of the four manifest functions should influence correctional philosophy and praxis. A correctional philosophy aligned with the manifest function of rehabilitation will fully embrace an emphasis on reintegration (Braithwaite, 1990; Rotman, 1990). Fully embracing a reintegration modality opens the prison walls by fostering continued bonds between the incarcerated and their social support networks (see Cullen, 1994), empowering the incarcerated to maintain their civil engagement, and allowing offenders to transform their social identity responsive to an ever-changing social context (Petersilia, 2003). In essence, open walls empower both the prison and the incarcerated to engage in a rehabilitative process that is oriented toward long-term social viability and desistance by promoting a correctional dynamic void of social isolation and exclusion. Continuing to reinforce the contemporary prison wall mentality demonstrates a commitment to those manifest functions that are rooted in the philosophy of control.

By embracing a truly rehabilitative orientation, open walls can serve as a starting point for correctional reform, which aims to address the injustices linked to the current realities of the latent functions discussed above. The social discourse allowed by open prison walls can transform the gaze, which casts the stigmatized beneath the collective shadow (Jung, 1968) by emphasizing the humanity of the incarcerated. A renewed humanistic emphasis centered on the individual as a social being creates a dynamic through which the incarcerated individual seeks to redefine him or herself outside of the rigid confines of the correctional setting. Consequently, open walls generate outlets for the process of self-enhancement to be removed from the destructive forces associated with incarceration (see Johnson et al., 2017). The open walls perspective would enhance this reality by fostering continued dialogue and cohesiveness between the modern labor market and a largely unutilized work force. By allowing both citizens and potential employers to understand the rehabilitative nature of constructive work/labor, open walls should expose the potentials for exploitation within the prison industrial complex, which in turn can promote dignity, autonomy, and self-efficacy. Again, by moving society away from the out-of-sight-out-of-mind mentality, the transparency of the open walls empowers all citizens, especially those in communities disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration (see Clear, 2007). The open walls perspective also serves to hold the correctional system accountable by actively identifying exploitations and injustices – both internal and external. When society takes up the role of holding the correctional

and prison systems accountable, open walls can begin to correct the imbalance between the social and political forces, which influence correctional discourse.

## Conclusion

A comparison between the manifest and latent functions of prisons in 1975 to the present shows that while some functions have changed, many challenges remain. Today, the prison remains at the center of system-wide racial disparities (Alexander, 2012; Massy & Denton, 1993), promulgating ineffective supervision modalities which ensures that the perpetual motion of the revolving door continues (Schaefer, Cullen, Eck, 2016), and contentious debate surrounding work/labor and incarceration persists. Despite these challenges, progress has been made in some areas: expansions in prisoners' rights have empowered inmates to address injustices (Belbot & Hemmens, 2010); ethical and legal guidelines for research have guarded inmates from exploitation (The Belmont Report, 1978); and the professionalization of corrections has made correctional work less attractive to those simply seeking an outlet to express authoritarian desires (see Lutze, 2016). Unfortunately, any substantial efforts towards progress have been hindered by the lack of a philosophical foundation from which to build a pragmatic strategy for prison reform.

Prison reform efforts based on the open walls perspective must begin with a reconciliation between the offender control philosophies of deterrence, retribution, and incapacitation, and the rehabilitative approach. Subsequent rehabilitative practices must embody a holistic approach towards both long-term desistance and social reintegration. Such practices must include an extensive reshaping of the dynamics between prisons and communities. Examples of such practices include developing and maintaining strong partnerships between community employers and vocational programming administrators, encouraging community-based organizations to engage and interact with inmates, expanding programs like "inside-out", increasing opportunities for inmates to remain connected with their social support systems, or by providing opportunities for them to build new prosocial relationships through community involvement. By opening the prisons walls, the correctional system invites employers to witness the strengths of vocational programming, promotes a long-term reintegrative mentality, recognizes the importance of social support, and empowers the community to actively participate in addressing social problems.

As a truly rehabilitative approach, the open walls prison challenges the dichotomous definition of success by showing that a lack of recidivism is only part of a larger social process. Measures of correctional success must include sustainable social inclusion, a sense of self and collective efficacy, a renewed emphasis on a pro-social lifestyle or "making good" (see Maruna, 2001), and progress towards long-term self-reformation. Continuing to measure success as the lack of recidivism limits innovation, and essentially demands that any modality aimed at that outcome is a control, not a rehabilitative modality.

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