

US-Playgrounds: a Prevention for Juvenile Delinquency?

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ABSTRACT / RESUMEN

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century the US-American playground movement was advertised as a useful educational means to reduce criminal behaviour among youth in the dwelling areas of the cities. The aim of the paper is to describe firstly the structure of a playground and to stress that playgrounds were public sport facilities mostly located in the poorer parts of the cities. Secondly it is analysed why it was expected from politicians, physical educators and `play leaders` that sport on the city playgrounds could prevent boys and girls from violent behaviour such as stealing, vandalism, fights, and from becoming gang members. Thirdly it is examined whether it could be realized that sport on playgrounds could really lead to a descent in the rate of juvenile delinquency. As first and foremost archive material of the Playground Association of America is used. In addition the paper refers to articles and books written by leading playground advocates like L.H. Gulick, H.S. Curtis, J. Lee and J. Addams.