

© 2011 Marizel S. Davila Figueroa

USING LEISURE AS A COPING TOOL: A FEMINIST STUDY OF THE
RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF INCARCERATED WOMEN IN A PUERTO
RICAN PRISON

BY

MARIZEL S. DAVILA FIGUEROA

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Recreation, Sport, and Tourism
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Kimberly J. Shinew, Chair
Professor Monika Stodolska
Professor Gale Summerfield
Professor Anna-Maria Marshall

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation project was to study whether leisure activities and programs serve as coping tools to manage the stress of incarceration in the lives of incarcerated women in a women's prison in Puerto Rico. The study took place in the Escuela Industrial de Mujeres at Vega Alta, Puerto Rico. The methods of this qualitative study consisted of individual interviews and focus groups to gather the opinions of a group of 45 incarcerated women about their experiences of life in prison and the methods used to cope with incarceration. The capability approach was employed as a diagnostic tool to assess the recreational opportunities at EIMVA towards enabling inmates to positively cope with imprisonment.

Actual manifestations of the concept of social justice within society are evidenced through numerous processes. One such process is the way in which society deals with transgressors of the social order. Incarceration is one of the consequences of deviant behavior within much of the Western world. Usually, prisons have been regarded as institutions of criminal containment and not centers focused on human needs (Cushing & Williams, 1995). As a result, prisons are places of stress and tensions which can negatively affect a person's well-being. As a society we must take into account that a great number of inmates will rejoin society. Thus, it is important to provide inmates with opportunities to achieve physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Recreation and leisure participation can help serve this purpose.

The findings showed that once the inmates have accepted the realities of dealing with the constraints and deprivations of prison, they encountered causes of stress which were specific to the context of incarceration. The incarcerated women experienced lack of

freedom, and stress stemming from the difficult conditions of prison life including the loss of control over their environment as well as from interpersonal relationships with family members and other prisoners. In particular, the incarcerated women became preoccupied with the welfare of family members, particularly children. Additionally the need to reconcile the need for personal relationships while dealing with distrust or shame increased the internal tensions experienced by the female inmates. However, insofar as they acquired a perception of free will, they were better suited to employ the coping strategies available to them in prison.

The women were able to engage in activities which helped them to mediate the negative feelings related to incarceration. Specifically, activities such as jobs or education which may be considered social commitments outside of prison became activities sought as opportunities for mental, physical and emotional refreshment, thus becoming recreational activities. Additionally, the women partook in religious activities and leisure activities in order to feel good. As a result of engaging in activities which the women feel have recreational value, they are able to engage in self- reflection and gain an increase sense of self- esteem, agency and empowerment, which provides them with a vision of the future that seems more positive than when they first entered the prison.

Consequently, the incarcerated women's perception of free will increased and they were better able to use the coping strategies available to them. This became a cycle of potential improvement for the female inmates.

This study provided evidence of the utility of the capabilities approach in understanding the prison environment. It suggests that perceptions of freedom can be just as important as actual experiences of freedom when living as an incarcerated person.

Additionally, this study suggests that the women who reside at EIMVA are able to fulfill many basic capabilities. Moreover, the study suggests that when opportunities for social connectivity and personal capacity are available to inmates, they are able to increase their capabilities and cope better with incarceration. The degree of coping reached by an individual was contingent upon the opportunities available to them. The more opportunities available to a woman, the better they were able to cope.

To Daniel and Melba

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the help and support of many people. Thanks to the women of Escuela Industrial de Mujeres at Vega Alta who were instrumental in this study. Thanks to my advisor Dr. Kimberly J. Shinew, who's invaluable help allow me to complete this project. Thanks to my committee members, Dr. Monika Stodolska, Dr. Gale Summerfield and Dr. Anna- Maria Marshall who supported me from the beginning. Thanks to the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Programs, who awarded me the Barbara A. Yates International Research Award, for providing me with financial support to complete this project. Thanks to Ave M. Alvarado, Director of Educational Equity Programs at the Graduate College for her support since I began graduate school. Thanks to my friends LaWanda and Teresa for the endless dinner conversations to vent our frustrations. Thanks to my family for their love and support. Thanks to Melba for being my best friend for 25 years and for her love, support and belief in me even when I did not believe in myself. Finally thanks to Daniel, my loving husband and life partner for 20 years for enduring this long journey with me, for making me laugh along the way and always keeping his faith in me. Without you I would have never done this.

TABLE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION-----	1
Incarceration and Women-----	2
Recreation Participation and Coping-----	4
Capabilities Approach-----	5
Purpose of the Study-----	6
Site of the Study-----	6
Research Questions-----	6
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW-----	9
Women in Prison-----	9
Prison System in Puerto Rico-----	15
Leisure and Coping-----	18
CHAPTER 3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK-----	32
Feminism and Leisure-----	32
Capabilities Approach-----	38
CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY-----	55
Purpose of the Study-----	55
Research Questions-----	55
Research Design-----	56
Feminist Grounded Theory Approach-----	56
Site Selection-----	62
Sampling-----	65
Data Collection Procedures-----	67
Data Analysis-----	75
CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS-----	87
Participants-----	89
Core Categories of the Study-----	92
Outcomes of Coping Process-----	126
Summary of the Results-----	130
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION-----	133
Leisure and Coping-----	136
Capabilities in Prison-----	139
Research Questions-----	146
Limitations of the Study-----	151
Suggestions for Future Research and Practical Applications-----	152
Summary-----	153
REFERENCES-----	156

APPENDIX A-----	167
APPENDIX B-----	171
APPENDIX C-----	172

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Actual manifestations of the concept of social justice within society are evidenced through numerous processes. One such process is the way in which society deals with transgressors of the social order. Incarceration is one of the consequences of deviant behavior within much of the Western world. While arguably the main goal of incarceration is the punishment of social offenders, rehabilitation or the restoration of behaviors that are useful to society is frequently cited as a desirable outcome to be achieved within penal institutions. However, from the perspective of many people, including inmates, it is common to hear that prisons are not conducive to rehabilitation and, moreover, can serve as places where criminal behaviors are learned. Usually, prisons have been regarded as institutions of criminal containment and not centers focused on human needs (Cushing & Williams, 1995). As a result, prisons are places of stress and tensions which can negatively affect a person's well-being. Tending to the well-being of incarcerated person is a social justice issue. Inmates have rights, and as a society we must take into account that a great number of inmates will rejoin society. Thus, it is important to provide inmates with opportunities to achieve physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Recreation and leisure participation can help serve this purpose.

This dissertation will discuss recreation participation as a coping strategy used by incarcerated women. Recreation participation can be beneficial for well-being by helping a person cope with the stress of daily life. However, although the benefits of leisure and recreation participation have been well researched as demonstrated by the works of Iwasaki (2003), Iwasaki and Mannell (2000a, 2000b), Iwasaki and Smale (1998), Kleiber,

Hutchinson and Williams (2002), Klitzing (2004), Parry (2003), and Schneider and Iwasaki (2003) among others, the impact of leisure in correctional settings has been largely ignored, particularly as it relates to female inmates. Through this research project, I hoped to contribute to the understanding of this underresearched population by exploring a topic that could impact policy implementation and program creation.

This investigative project contributes to the field of recreation and leisure studies by providing insight into the potentially positive impact recreation and leisure participation may have in helping incarcerated women cope with the stress inherent of their environment. Based on the population being studied, this work is also relevant to feminist scholars. This study was generated from the perspectives of the women themselves and it offers insights on ways of coping with stress which may be unique to women. Further it acknowledges that incarceration as a model of behavior control is still a male centered alternative. Additionally, this work contributes to the feminist leisure literature by exploring a potential source of personal agency and self-expression for women by enabling them to “challenge or resist a falsified sense of self and the demands of their lives, as well as to regain or create a valued sense of self (Iwasaki, 1998, p.44). In this study, I sought to explore the experiences of women in prison as a reflection of women’s place in society in hopes that equitable gender centered alternatives can be offered in the future.

Incarceration and Women

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics the general prison population in the United States has increased from 319,598 people in 1980 to 1,524,513 people in 2009 (Glaze, Minton and West, 2010). Although the prison population in general has increases

exponentially in the last decades, the prison female population has increased at a higher rate than the male prison population. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (West, 2010) in the last 10 years the female population in the corrections system has increased from 59 sentenced women per 100,000 residents in the U.S. in 2001 to 68 per 100,000 residents in 2009. In other words, whereas the male prison population has increased by 1.8% in the last decade the female prison population has increased by 2.6% during that time. Chesney-Lind (1997) stated that gender equality, referring to the equal treatment of men and women, is partly to blame for the increases in female incarceration.

There are differences between women's and men's prisons in the U.S.. Among the most notable are 1) the size of women's prisons tends to be smaller than the men's, and 2) the number of prison facilities for women are fewer (Pollock, 2002). Pollock has noted that while there are differences in the ways in which men's and women's prisons are operated in the last decade the trend has been to run them more similarly. However, differences that remain between male and female prisons tend to disadvantage women (Belknap (2001). Women's facilities tend to have fewer services including inferior quality health care as well as less educational opportunities than do men's facilities. According to Belknap, an explanation which has been used as a justification for the lack of adequate services and programs in female penal institutions is the lower number of incarcerated women.

Poor health conditions and inadequacy of services contribute to the emotional stress that is inevitable in such circumstances. Physical and mental health problems can become aggravated in the prison environment. Mellor (2003) explained that due to this stress, women who may otherwise not need hospital care may end up needing this

service. The mental health problems of incarcerated women are vast and the study of recreation participation offers an opportunity to investigate them deeper.

Recreation Participation and Coping

Research has focused on the benefits of leisure for well-being by aiding in the management of stress and everyday tensions. Recreation participation can help a person cope, alleviate, or offset the negative effects of stress by providing outlets for self-determination, self-expression and self-control (Iwasaki, 2003). Thus, recreation participation has the potential to instill empowerment by providing participants with opportunities for social support, perceptions of freedom, motivation and relief from boredom (Coleman, 1993; Iwasaki, 2003; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a, 2000b; Iwasaki & Smale, 1998). Iwasaki (1998) explained that leisure empowerment not only helps maintain mental and physical health but also helps to reduce the impact of stress by serving as a buffer and enhancing well-being. Empowerment through leisure participation may be achieved for incarcerated women by providing them with opportunities for self-evaluation, social interaction and personal growth. Furthermore, empowerment as an important element of coping enables people to develop an optimistic outlook, to want to overcome challenges and to be resourceful and constructive (Iwasaki, 1998).

The benefits of recreation as a coping tool have been studied within many contexts (Iwasaki, 2003; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a, 2000b; Iwasaki & Smale, 1998; Kleiber, Hutchinson & Williams, 2002; Klitzing, 2004; Parry, 2003; Schneider & Iwasaki, 2003). However, the benefits of leisure in correctional settings have been largely ignored, and the research that has been conducted in this area has focused on youth (Little, 1995). More specifically, whether participation in recreation helps inmates,

particularly women, cope with the stress of incarceration has received little attention. According to Aguilar and Asmussen (1989), two of the major roles of recreation in correctional facilities are as an adjustment tool and/or a means to rehabilitation. Carter and Russell (2005) agreed with Aguilar and Asmussen and explained that recreation is considered by many professional recreators as “a tool to aid in the management of stresses associated with institutional life and as the avenue for inmates to return to society better able to manage life’s demands” (p. 80).

Employing both a feminist epistemological approach and a capabilities approach framework to appreciate the particularities of the lives of incarcerated women, my goal was to gain insight into the ways in which recreation and leisure pursuits may provide women with potential outlets to cope with the stress of incarceration and consequently aid in the enhancement of their lives in meaningful ways. Thus, to better understand the issues regarding women’s adjustment and coping with life while incarcerated, consideration was given to two areas: 1) free will or lack thereof in the selection of recreation or leisure activities; and 2) participation in recreation activities as potential coping strategies.

Capabilities Approach

The capabilities approach framework was helpful in evaluating the experiences of incarcerated women because it takes into account aspects of well-being such as physical, mental, spiritual, social, and economic dimensions of life. Capabilities refer to the freedoms that people have to “lead the kind of lives they want to lead, do what they want to do and be the person they want to be” (Robeyns, 2003). The capabilities approach allows for the evaluation of policies according to how these impact a person’s freedoms

(Sen, 1987). Although at first it may seem contradictory to investigate freedoms in prison, it is important to realize that freedoms in this context refer to what people can achieve. For example, in terms of well-being, the capability approach questions whether a person is healthy and if they have the resources necessary to be healthy. Further it focuses on whether a person has access to opportunities to cope with the stresses of daily life such as freedom of thought, access to social norms and traditions (Robeyns, 2003). The capabilities approach takes into account all aspects of human well-being (Robeyns, 2003). In the case of incarcerated women I employed it as a paradigm to evaluate constraints and opportunities to well-being within this restrictive environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation project was to study whether leisure activities and programs serve as coping tools to manage the stress of incarceration in the lives of incarcerated women in a women's prison in Puerto Rico.

Site of the Study

The study took place in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States. This site was chosen because being Puerto Rican gave me a commonality with the participants which allowed me to build the fundamental rapport needed to engage participants from the beginning (Shaffir, 1991).

Research Questions

Research questions help the researcher to identify the phenomena that is to be studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Cresswell (1998) suggested that a study should be reduced to a single overarching question, which encompasses sub questions. The following research questions were developed to explore the perceptions of recreation

among incarcerated women and determine recreation's impact on their coping abilities. These questions provided the framework used to develop the in-depth interview and focus group guide. These research questions focused on positive aspects of coping in order to avoid potential problems for the participants and in order to avoid conflicts with the administration. That is to say, I was asked to report any activity that could be deemed illegal or inappropriate to the prison administration. Additionally, for safety reasons guards were required to be close by during my conversations with the women. Although the discussions were kept private, I did not want to engage the participants in any conversation that could potentially point to their engagement in any kind of activity which could be deemed illegal or inappropriate because of the risk of exposure by the guards and because I did not want to have to report them. This was explained to the participants prior to the beginning of the conversations, and as a result the focus was placed on the positives aspects of their coping process.

Primary. The central question of this study was: How do recreational experiences impact the coping abilities of incarcerated women to manage the stress of incarceration, in a way that enables them to negotiate through the constraints of incarceration?

Secondary. The following were sub-questions that informed the central question. These focused on the areas of free will and coping strategies.

Free will

- 1- Do inmates have the freedom to choose how they spend their time?
- 2- Do inmates have the freedom to choose how they spend their recreation time?

Coping strategies

- 1- What stressors do inmates encounter and what strategies do inmates use to cope with these stressors?
- 2- Is recreation participation a strategy used by the women to cope with stress?
- 3- How do inmates perceive their strategies in decreasing stress? Do inmates perceive these strategies as worthwhile?
- 4- Does participation (or lack thereof) in recreational activities facilitate or hinder whether the women view themselves as empowered?
- 5- Does recreation participation during incarceration influence the women's capability?

The findings of this study can be employed to improve the lives of incarcerated women by providing insight into the roles of recreation and leisure participation as a coping tool. The creation of programs that emphasize leisure participation in penal institutions may prove helpful in addressing the physical and psychological health needs of this frequently overlooked population. Mental health professionals can employ recreation and leisure as intervention tools and programs that focus on opportunities for self-improvement and expose incarcerated women to positive outlets for behavior modification.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter examines research that is relevant to this study. First, I focused on research regarding women in prison. This line of literature highlights issues of incarceration for women. Then I discussed the prison system in Puerto Rico and its policies, which was important given that the study took place in Puerto Rico. Later, I included a summary of the literature in the area of leisure and coping that highlights the potential benefits of leisure participation. Finally, I discussed the roles of leisure in prison in order to show that leisure can benefit incarcerated individuals.

Women in Prison

Silberman (2007) stated that “the prison system remains one of the most gendered institutions in contemporary America” (p. 285). However, few researchers have explored the unique experiences and circumstances of incarcerated women (Leffler Oppenheim, 2010). Leffler Oppenheim argues that this lack of research on the experiences of incarcerated women is perhaps due to the fact that “women used to represent only a tiny fraction of the prison population” (p.75). However, some studies have examined the lives of women in prison (Fogel, 1993; Giallombardo, 1966; Gartner and Kruschnitt, 2004; Hefferman, 1972; Leffler Oppenheim, 2010; Silberman, 2007; Owen, 1998; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). In *Hard Time: The Stressful Nature of Incarceration for Women*, Fogel (1993) explored the impact that incarceration has on health, particularly the mental health of the inmates. She found that the stress associated with incarceration can increase incidences of depression. Additionally, Fogel found that the sources of stress for incarcerated women included worries about children, family and lack of autonomy and

self-control.

In *Society of Women*, Giallombardo (1966) focused on the sex roles that female prisoners adopted and in the structural social order within the prison. Giallombardo, found that female prisoners created families within the prison in which female and male roles were replicated. Most women, according to Giallombardo, preferred the female roles but some adopted traditional male roles. Additionally, she found that the family structure formed the foundation for group membership within the prison and that these groups satisfied the need for bonds, trust and solidarity among the inmates.

Gartner and Kruschmitt (2004) explored gender stereotypes and their consequences in a study about incarcerated women at the California Institution for Women. More specifically, these researchers focused on the institutional procedures that claimed to emphasize fairness by treating incarcerated women the same way as men. They found that “while discourses, practices, and people come and go, important realities of imprisonment persist, as do certain gendered assumptions about the nature and needs of criminal women” (p. 299). Thus, Gartner and Kruschmitt argued, little has been done to change the discourse surrounding incarcerated women.

In *Making It in Prison: The Square, the Cool, and the Life*, Hefferman (1972) investigated the relationship between behavior and sex roles. She examined ways in which incarcerated women dealt with the difficulties of incarceration. Hefferman found that the theoretical models of prison culture used to describe the female inmate experience were based on the male experience of incarceration. She concluded that these models did not adequately to explain the female inmate experience.

Leffler Oppenheim (2010) explored the educational settings in a women’s

correctional facility. Specifically, she explored the perceptions and representations about and by incarcerated women and how the women accepted or rejected these perceptions. Using a series of interviews and observations, Leffler Oppenheim explored “the interplay of power, control, and coercion and investigated how gender specifically shaped the experiences of female inmates” (p. 4). She found that the inmates adopted several strategies, both physical and psychological in order to maintain their self- perceptions as “decent, agentic, and legitimate beings within a repressive environment and in spite of a phletora of images that painted them as reprehensible” (p.5). Leffler Oppenheim concluded that the focus should be not on changing individuals but on recognizing the inmates various subjectivities as “ever-changing, multiple and malleable” (p.5).

Silverman (2007) study focused on the only maximum security prison for women in Pennsylvania. His study centered on the role of gender in the lives of the incarcerated women at the Pennsylvania institution. More specifically, he focused on treatment programs for the mentally ill. He found that there are gender-specific assumptions that impact the lives of the incarcerated women. He explained that “women are more likely than men to be defined and treated as mentally ill, more likely to be subject to therapy, and more likely to receive psychotropic medication (p. 286). According to Silberman, treatments offered to women at the prison facility shifted during the middle of the 20th century from “restoring moral virtue of fallen women to providing therapy for the mentally ill” (p. 271). Silverman argued that as consequence of this shift, the women were more likely to be perceived as victims of patriarchal institutions than as morally depraved people.

In the book *In the Mix: Struggle and Survival in a Women's Prison*, Owen (1998)

examined the prison culture in a large California prison. Owen relied on the women themselves in order to describe the experiences of incarceration. This study took place over a period of three years. Owen used on observations as well as interviews from the incarcerated women. She explained that the structure of free society and the roles of women within it directly impact prison culture. Owen argued that the way incarcerated women lived prior to incarceration shaped the lives of the women while incarcerated. She explained that the core of prison culture among women is framed by their pre- prison identities and commitments such as personal relationships and connections to family and loved ones in the free community as well as relationships with other prisoners. Several issues affected the population in Owens's study including abusive family and personal relationships, concerns about the welfare of their children (most specifically who would care for their children while the women was incarcerated) drug abuse, lack of education, lack of legitimate employment, economic marginality and subsequently the effects of poverty and involvement in criminal activity. Owen concluded that the environment experienced by the women prior to incarceration led to poor coping skills and to eventual incarceration. Incarcerated women adapted to prison environment similarly to how they adapted to free society, through reliance on personal relationships.

Ward and Kassebaum (1965) sought to understand whether women prisoners replicated the role types present in male prison populations, roles such as the merchant or the tough guy. They found little evidence of the existence of such roles within the female prison population. Additionally, they found that in male prison populations there was an emphasis on prisoner solidarity whereas in women's prisons the inmates relied more on smaller groups to satisfy their emotional needs.

These studies focused on the particularities that underlie the lives on female inmates. Among the common findings within these studies was the stressful nature of the prison experience for women. Stress and deprivation are fundamental parts of the prison life experience (Fogel, 1993, Giallombardo, 1966; Jones, 1976; Tamay, 1972). The stressors that a person encounters in prison have detrimental impacts on both physical and psychological health (Reed, 1981). Giallombardo (1966) explained that among the deprivations felt by inmates, the loss of liberty and autonomy was the most consistently reported. The restrictions of personal freedom as well as restrictions in the communications with friends and family were particularly painful. The prison experience is stressful for all inmates. However, Whitney-Gildea (2001) suggested that for women the prison experience is considerably more stressful than it is for men. Among the many stressors that women encounter in prison, research has shown that the inability to handle peer relationships, inconsistency in how the rules were applied, disrespect from the staff, separation from their loved ones, particularly from their children, and concern for their welfare are the most notable (Fox, 1982; Houck & Loper, 2002; Whitney-Gildea, 2001.). Fox explained that due to the lower number of prison institutions for women per state, female inmates often encounter living in facilities that are farther away from their families. This separation becomes a source of stress which maybe more significant for women than for men (Whitney-Gildea, 2001).

In a study based on interviews of 55 incarcerated women, Fogel (1993) reported that initially many of the women were frightened by what they would encounter within prison. More specifically, many of the women explained that they were concerned about the potential violence and being sexually molested. Additionally, many of the women,

who had been in jail before going to the prison, reported that the stories that they heard about prison added to their fears. Fogel also explained that “worries about family and about children in particular predominated the first week of incarceration” (p.372).

According to Fogel, the reason for the worry was because most of the women were mothers of very young children who were still in need of regular adult supervision and care. Additionally, many of the women were the main caretakers of their children at the time of their arrests and imprisonment. The women expressed tremendous concerns for the well-being of their children in their absence. Research has suggested that for women, being separated from their children is one of the most stressful conditions of being imprisoned, particularly the negative impact that the incarceration will have on their relationship with their children (Baunach, 1985; Hairston, 1991; Henriques, 1982). Houck and Loper (2002) explained that incarcerated women may experience stress associated with the limited contact with their children, being visited by their children while incarcerated, and fear about their competence as a parent. These stressors contributed to higher levels of anxiety and depression which impacted their level of psychological and behavioral adjustment. Additionally, the loss of control of their own lives is also a noteworthy stressor of life in prison (Fogel, 1993).

Giallombardo (1966) explained that the inability to control the events that occur in the outside world such as whether or not the children were taken care of, whether or not the husband remained faithful or events such as the death of a loved one, are frustrating for female inmates. Giallombardo found that the restrictions imposed on the prisoners regarding ownership of material goods were also significant for the inmates. She explained that,

“Although standards of material living are relatively high in the United States, it is reasonable to suppose that the deprivation of goods and services is meaningful to the prisoner depending upon the circumstances of her private life in civil society. Whatever the situation may have been, however, denying the inmate ownership of personal goods in prison removes the last resource the inmate possess to express individuality; therefore the abrupt removal of personal effects tends to destroy her self-image. The denial of personal goods is considered deeply depriving by the majority of prisoners” (p.95).

While incarcerated women encounter many challenges and stresses associated with their environment, it is important that they adjust. Many researchers have examined whether and how women adjusted to the prison life. In the next section, I explored the Puerto Rican Prison system.

Prison System in Puerto Rico

In the United States, crime rates and public safety are a frequent topic in the news. The concern about crimes rates has led to a general state of alarm across the country. As a result, the government has adopted a “tough on crime” approach that focuses on punishment for transgressors of the law. Arguably the remedies that have been implemented to remedy the crime problem have resulted in new quandaries. Statutes such as the three strikes law have resulted in higher numbers of convictions and consequently a higher number of incarcerations. The United States has become the nation with the highest number of incarcerated people in the world, even though it only accounts for five percent of the world’s population (Hartney, 2006; Liptak, 2008). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the prison population has grown over 650% in the last three

decades, accounting for over 2.3 million incarcerated people (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BSJ], 2008).

As a territory of the United States, the preoccupation with crime and public safety is also pervasive in Puerto Rico. Because of the advantageous geographic location as well as the political connection to the United States, the island has been targeted by people involved in many criminal activities such as drug trafficking, illegal immigration and fleeing to other countries in order to avoid criminal charges. Just as in the United States, in Puerto Rico the government has taken a tough on crime approach in order to alleviate general concerns regarding public safety. In 1969, the “Commission for the Fight against Crime” was created to incorporate Puerto Rico with the United States in their efforts to address and reduce delinquency and crime as a national problem (ELA, 1996).

This topic about the fight against crime has consistently been at the center of the political platforms of candidates for the position of Governor of Puerto Rico. The strategies of castigo seguro al delincuente (PPD, 2004), a political platform that promised firm and certain punishment for delinquents, and mano dura contra el crimen (PNP, 2004), a policy that promised an iron fist approach to the criminality problem, account for many of the adopted approaches to curb criminality on the island. These approaches include increasing in the number of police officers, regular raids in public housing complexes, increase of police presence in poor urban zones and the acquisition of technologies that facilitate the capture of delinquents (Torres Vidal, 2007).

The policies that regulate the correctional system in Puerto Rico span over a period of more than a century beginning in the early 1900s with the Penal code of 1902, which addressed the guidelines pertinent to the position of Director of Prisons (E.L.A.,

1996). In the report *Apuntes Generales sobre la Administración de Corrección (E.L.A)*, the Office of Planning and Development provided an overview of the historical, political and legal events that have contributed to the formation of the administration of corrections. Several of the most notable highlights are presented in this section.

In 1917, the Jones Act granted Puerto Rican citizens American citizenship while at the same time gave the United States the authority to appoint such influential positions as the Governor and General Attorney. In the same year the newly appointed General Attorney, Howard L. Kern, attached the Office of Prisons to the Division of Property, Accounts and Statistics.

In 1946 after a study of the corrections system on the island, several laws were passed that addressed some of the issues and problems within the penal system such as parole and administration of penal officers. In 1951 the Secretary of Justice of Puerto Rico was given the authority to determine rules and procedures in penal institutions after obtaining approval of the Governor. In 1952, Puerto Rico became *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* (which literally means *Associated Free State of Puerto Rico*) or *Commonwealth of Puerto Rico* in order to allow the self-government in the island. That same year a policy which addressed rehabilitation efforts for delinquents was passed. *La Escuela Industrial de Mujeres en Vega Alta (EIMVA)* was built in 1954.

Currently there are two main institutions that house incarcerated women on the island, one is *Institución de Mujeres in Las Cucharas Penitentiary*, also known as “the green monster” located on the southern city of Ponce and *EIMVA*, located on the northern town of Vega Alta. *EIMVA* is where the study for this dissertation took place. In 1957, Statute 40 established a mutual agreement in which Puerto Rico would collaborate

with the United States and its territories in relation to the apprehension of offenders. In 1969 a commission was created to integrate Puerto Rico to the national efforts of the United States to deal with crime. Through this commission, the United States Justice Department proposed several strategies to improve the penal system, such as training for officers and improvement of rehabilitation programs for prisoners. In 1974, the Administration of Corrections was created in order to unify all aspects related to the administration of the corrections system. Additionally, in 1974, a law was passed that focused on training and employment for incarcerated persons as part of the rehabilitation efforts. A particularly notable case on the correctional system in Puerto Rico was the Morales Feliciano case in 1979 which sought to improve the living conditions within prisons by addressing issues such as security, overcrowding, rehabilitation, educational, medical and legal services. In the following section, I discussed relevant literature about the relationship between the coping process and leisure participation.

Leisure and Coping

The relationships between leisure, coping and stress have been well documented throughout the years (e.g. Coleman, 1993; Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993; Iso-Ahola & Park, 1996; Iwasaki & Mannel, 2000a, 2000b; Iwasaki & Smale, 1998). Leisure has long been recognized as a state of being which is characterized by an individual's perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation and feelings of pleasure and this leisure state is usually achieved through participation in recreational activities (Iso -Ahola, 1999). Iso-Ahola argued that in order for leisure to take place a perceived sense of freedom and intrinsic motivation must exist. Perceived freedom and autonomy are at the core of leisure (Jackson & Burton, 1999).

The stress-buffering hypothesis (Coleman, 1993; Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993) serves as the foundation for much of the research on the relationship between leisure and coping. The stress-buffering hypothesis is consistent with the argument that leisure can help people cope with stressors in life (Kleiber, Hitchinson and Williams 2002). Leisure has the potential to provide people with feelings of social support and decreased sense of loneliness and isolation (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). Also, research on the nature of coping (e.g., Folkman, 1997; Lazarus, 1999) has suggested that leisure experiences can aid in coping with induced stress in ways that are self-protective, self-restorative, and, ultimately, personally transformative. In other words, when a crisis becomes an occasion for persons to reevaluate their self, life, values and goals, this reevaluation often leads them to a greater openness to and appreciation of life, including relationships with other people and leisure experiences.

Folkman (1997), Folkman and Lazarus (1985) and Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) documented the importance of positive events (e.g. laughter, enjoyment) for precipitating positive reappraisal and thus sustaining coping efforts in the encounter of high levels of ongoing stress. While such experiences may not be regarded as leisure at the time, they are significant in demonstrating the importance of positive affect in the coping process and in suggesting one of the ways leisure experiences may serve as an important coping resource (Kleiber et al, 2002). In addition, Kleiber et al explained that the research on the relationship between leisure and stress has, by and large, placed leisure as a shield between the stressful elements in a person's environment and their propensity to submit to that stress and develop symptoms of illness, both physically and psychologically.

Benefits of leisure participation. Leisure can benefit health through the reduction of stress, the enhancement of self-esteem, the development and maintenance of social relationships and, in the case of physical activities, the development and maintenance of physical fitness and motor ability (Iso-Ahola, 1999). According to Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993), leisure can positively contribute to health by providing persons with “perceptions of freedom, control, competence and intrinsic motivation.” According to the theory of self-determination, conditions of motivation, self-regulation and autonomy appear to be influential for optimal functioning and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Iwasaki (1998) explained that “the self-determination disposition is closely linked to a sense of freedom, a sense of control, and intrinsic motivation which have been demonstrated to be major properties of leisure pursuits” (p. 43). Coleman (1993) developed the Perceived Leisure Freedom Index (PLFI) that measures “a disposition towards freedom of choice in leisure and the extent to which people tend to participate in freely chosen leisure pursuits” (Coleman, 1993, p. 354). Using the PLFI, Coleman concluded “that the perceived leisure freedom disposition buffered against stress to maintain people’s health” (as cited in Iwasaki, 1998, p.43).

Another benefit of leisure is the opportunity for social support. Participating in leisure activities with other people can help a person deal with stress by providing the benefits of social support such as companionship, comfort, friendship and encouragement. Research has shown that the role that social support plays in the leisure stress-coping relationship helps to overcome the negative effects of stress. Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) conceptualized support as a person's perception that they are cared for and supported by their loved ones or significant others. This perception relies on the

belief that the person will receive adequate support if the need arises. Leisure has a social component, yet within this social component, an individual has to have a sense of control, a perception of freedom and self-determination which are crucial in the leisure experience (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a). Iwasaki and Mannell defined self-determination disposition as the perception that one's actions and beliefs are mainly freely chosen. Social support and self-determination are only two of several elements of the leisure coping process.

Expanding on Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993), Iso-Ahola and Park (1996) distinguished between companionship and friendship in regards to leisure. They explained that leisure companionship refers to the shared experiences within leisure whereas leisure friendship refers to the close relationships that are developed through participation in leisure activities.

Another important development in the research on leisure and coping is the work of Iwasaki and Mannell (Iwasaki, 2001; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a, 2000b). These investigators found that people who generally saw the value of leisure for empowerment and friendship were less affected by the daily hassles that negatively affected their mental health than those who did not value leisure as a source of empowerment. Iwasaki and Mannell found that people who use leisure experiences more regularly, for escape or to create positive moods, felt better because the feelings that reduce psychological well-being were increased. They also found that people that do not use leisure experiences to create positive moods, use it to compensate for feelings of lower self-esteem which damage their mental health (Kleiber, 2002).

Iwasaki (1998) developed the Leisure Stress-Coping Scales which aid in the evaluation of leisure-stress coping dimensions. Additionally, he “identified a number of

processes by which leisure influences the relationship between stress and well-being” (p.82). He explained that “leisure empowerment, friendship and palliative coping acted as a buffer against the negative impact of stress” (p.82). Iwasaki concluded that leisure empowerment and leisure friendship decrease mental illness and enhance psychological health and well-being.

Iwasaki (1998) explained that coping beliefs and coping strategies are fundamental dimensions of leisure stress-coping. Iwasaki and Mannell (2003) concluded that leisure coping beliefs precede leisure coping strategies. In others words, "it may be essential for people to believe leisure can help them cope before they will actually use leisure to cope with stress" (Klitzing, 2004, p. 485). Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) explained that the way a person responds and evaluates their environment plays an important role in the person's ability to cope and in a person's longevity and health. In order to cope with negative situations a person must adapt to the demands of that situation. Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) described leisure generated dispositions as buffers or moderators that act against the negative impact of stress to maintain good health. “In the hierarchical dimensions of leisure stress-coping leisure friendship is a sub-dimension of leisure coping beliefs, whereas leisure companionship is a sub-division of leisure coping strategies”(Iwasaki, p. 43).

Dimensions of leisure stress-coping. In Hierarchical Dimensions of Leisure Stress Coping, Iwasaki and Mannell (2000a) proposed a conceptualization of the dimensions of leisure stress coping which helps explain how people cope with stress. Iwasaki and Mannell grouped aspects of leisure coping into two main dimensions, namely, leisure coping beliefs (dispositions) and leisure coping strategies (situation-

specific).

Leisure coping beliefs are defined as “people’s generalized beliefs that their leisure helps them with stress” (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a, p.165). Iwasaki and Mannell explained that these beliefs, which are acquired over time through the socialization process, act as a cushion against the negative aspects of stress and help maintain health. However, these beliefs are thought to provide benefits only when stress levels are high (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a). Iwasaki and Mannell (2000a) proposed two aspects of leisure coping beliefs. The first aspect is leisure autonomy, which includes self-determination dispositions and empowerment. The second aspect is leisure friendship which includes emotional support, esteem support, tangible aid and informational support. Leisure coping beliefs are developed over time and arguably help people to cope only when stress levels are high by acting as buffers against the negative aspects of stress.

Iwasaki and Mannell (2000a) defined leisure coping strategies as actual behaviors that are present in a stress-coping situation, which are available through leisure. For example, people may choose certain leisure activities for the stress-coping benefits. Iwasaki and Mannell (2000a) explained that:

“The distinction between dispositional coping styles and situation-specific coping strategies reflects the differences in the focus of inquiry in the coping research, that is, the focus on dispositional personality styles in coping with stress across situations versus the focus on dynamic coping process influenced by fluid and changing transactions between persons and specific contexts over time” (p.167).

Iwasaki and Mannell (2000a) proposed three leisure coping strategies. The first

strategy was "leisure companionship," which suggests engaging in leisure activities that involve others. The second strategy was "leisure palliative coping," which means that by engaging in enjoyable leisure activities, people experience a release of their tensions and thus are better equipped to deal with stressful situations. The third strategy was "leisure mood enhancement," which implies that leisure helps people to have a better disposition, elevating their feelings of well-being and decreasing their negative feelings. Iwasaki and Mannell explained that these strategies are helpful in the coping process whether the leisure activity was chosen in the pursuit of stress management or not, because eventually the leisure involvement will reduce stress.

The differentiation between leisure beliefs and leisure strategies is important in order to predict and explain how people manage stress (Iwasaki and Mannell, 2000a). Iwasaki and Mannell explained that people are more likely to manage stress in manner consistent with their personalities (dispositions or beliefs) if a situation influence is weaker. For instance, doing karaoke for a person who loves to sing is an example of how when people engage in unstructured activities without external influence they are more consistent with their personalities. Conversely, people will rely more on coping actions (strategies) if situational influences are strong. For instance, when a person in danger approaches strangers even though he or she is timid is an example of how someone may exhibit coping actions which are driven by the situation and not by their personalities.

Leisure coping contributes to short-term stress coping effects, such as perceived coping effectiveness, satisfaction, and reduction of stress, and long-term stress coping outcomes such as physical, mental and psychological health (Iwasaki ,2003). Iwasaki argued that leisure coping beliefs (leisure-generated dispositional coping resources) can

predict levels of mental, physical and psychological health and well-being, beyond the effects of general coping. He also concluded that leisure coping strategies (situation-specific stress coping strategies through leisure) were associated with a higher perceived efficiency of coping and stress-reduction efforts, particularly when the general coping effects were considered.

In this study, the roles of participating in recreation and leisure pursuits on the perceptions of freedom, autonomy, competence, motivation and empowerment of incarcerated women was explored. Consideration was also given to the roles of interpersonal relationships in the coping process. As previously mentioned, Iwasaki (2001) and Iwasaki and Mannell (2000a, 2000b) found that people who see the value of leisure for empowerment and friendship are potentially less affected by the daily hassles that negatively affect their mental health. In this study, the interpersonal relationships formed during their recreation and leisure time and whether the women considered them as friendships was explored. Further, this study examined whether those relationships provided the women with feelings of social support and a decreased sense of loneliness and isolation, thus aiding in the management of the stresses of daily life.

Leisure in prison. Leisure has many potential benefits for people in prison. Leisure can provide inmates with opportunities for empowerment, resistance and general improvement in their lives (Fortune, Thompson, Pedlar & Yuen ,2010; Yuen & Pedlar ,2009). Additionally, recreation and leisure can provide inmates with opportunities to get away from their realities, albeit momentarily, by engaging them in activities that occupy their minds (Santos, 2004). However, since perceived freedom and autonomy in the selection of recreation pursuits are central to the leisure experience, it becomes almost

contradictory to consider the benefits of recreation for incarcerated people. In other words, one cannot help but ask; is it possible for someone, who is not free and does not have autonomy over their choices in life, to engage in an activity that requires perceptions of freedom and self-rule? Moreover, is it possible for such a person to obtain benefits from participation? And if so how is that possible? Yet, research has shown that inmates can benefit from leisure pursuits even within the confines of their daily lives (Robertson, 2000; Calloway, 1981; Little, 1995; Catalano, 1989; Slater, Groves & Lengfelder, 1992).

Although the study of leisure in prison has been scarce, it is not new. The role of recreation in prison settings has been a source of debate since the nineteenth century (Robertson, 2000). Robertson explained that despite the fact that some consider recreation a perk, and does not have a role in a place of punishment such as a prison, others feel that recreation can aid in the management of undesirable behaviors and increase productivity. Because of the nature of the prison environment, inmates encounter many stresses and situations that could drive or motivate them to engage in objectionable and even criminal behaviors. Robertson explained that recreation has been considered essential in curtailing such behaviors by occupying their minds and “thus crowding out the evil thoughts that motivated criminal activity” (p.27).

Calloway (1981) proposed several reasons why the study of recreation in correctional settings has received so little attention. Among these are 1) the preoccupation and allocation of time and resources on the part of recreation professionals to obtain accreditation and thus legitimization, 2) the belief that all people in correctional settings are violent and dangerous and problems can arise from this type of behavior and lastly, 3)

the disparities in terms of the racial distribution in the prison system. Namely, while a great percentage of the prison population is of minority background, administrators and staff tends to be white. Therefore, recreation has received little attention because many recreation professionals are not willing to invest the time and resources needed to work with this population. Further working with incarcerated individuals is considered unsafe because prisoners are considered treacherous. Additionally administrators do not give as much importance to the needs of prisoners who are in their majority part of a minority group. Consequently it may not be deemed worthwhile to invest the resources necessary to study this population.

According to Little (1995), much of the studies that have looked at the leisure of incarcerated individuals have focused on youth. Although the leisure and recreational pursuits for incarcerated women has largely been ignored, the findings regarding youth have been beneficial in shedding light on the impact that leisure and recreation may have on adult inmates. For example, Catalano (1989) examined the relation between drug use and the provision of several types of services, including leisure services, as it pertained to juveniles in correctional institutions. The study showed there was a reduction in drug use which could be credited to the juveniles' involvement in productive activities and active leisure. Conversely, the study showed that reversion to drug use was attributed to a lack of involvement in those activities. These conclusions have also been reached in studies of adult inmates. Slater, Groves and Lengfelder (1992) explained that "leisure activities are a potential area to help inmates develop a positive self-image in an activity in which they can feel satisfaction and accomplishment" (p.27). Additionally, they concluded that recreation has the potential to serve "as a way to enable prisoners to become law abiding

citizens” (p.27).

However, the primary use of recreation in correctional facilities in most adult correctional facilities has been as pastimes or distractions rather than as tools for adjustment and rehabilitation (Little, 1995). By providing recreational activities as diversions, the process of adjustment is left up to the inmate rather than the prison administration. Still, by providing meaningful leisure activities that actively empower the inmate to adjust to the new environment, administrators may aid in the rehabilitation process. In other words, rather than just drawing the attention away from their principal concern of being incarcerated, recreational pursuits can provide inmates with tools and experiences that will enable them to accept, adjust and cope with their situation.

Recreation within the context of prison can help alleviate the trauma of incarceration and may provide inmates with opportunities to learn how to deal with the stresses of daily life through positive means once they leave the institution (Carter & Russell, 2005). For instance, Slater et al (1992) found that activities such as reading, library use and competitive weightlifting (for male inmates) were positively correlated with self-esteem for inmates. Carter and Russell further explained that “correctional recreation is an instrument that facilitates the acquisition of acceptable behaviors and skills that make life more satisfying, increases leisure options and promote self-worth. These assets contribute to the healthy use of leisure both inside and outside correctional facilities” (p.80).

More recently, researchers have started to address the use of recreation in correctional facilities as tools for adjustment and rehabilitation. One such study was conducted by Fortune, Thompson, Pedlar and Yuen (2010) who focused on a recreation and leisure initiative that helps incarcerated women while in prison as well as upon their

release. In their study about incarcerated women in a Canadian prison, these researchers explored the impact of a program called “Stride Circles” in providing incarcerated women opportunities for self-empowerment while building support networks that could potentially be beneficial to them upon their release. Stride Circles’s goal is that of relationship building between the inmates and members of the free community.) In their study, Fortune et al (2010) concurred with Pedlar, Yuen and Fortune (2008) who argued that bringing together incarcerated women and non- incarcerated people from the community in leisure settings is beneficial to inmates by increasing a sense of respect and growth among the group. The rationale of the program is that “people spend a leisurely evening together in recreation so that relationships can form and potentially continue after a woman leaves prison” (p.25). Fortune et al (2010) found that “through their involvement in Circles, women identified gaining a sense of self- respect and feeling positive about the opportunities available to them upon release” (p.31).

Although research has shown that participation in recreational activities can have positive outcomes for inmates regardless of their gender, some studies do suggest differences that are based on gender. Kratcoski and Babb (1990) found that there were differences in terms of participation in recreational activities and adjustment to prison life based on gender. They found that females did not engage as much in sports and other physical activities as did males. Other studies have found that the provision of recreational services can positively impact incarcerated mothers. Stumbo and Little (1991) studied the impact of overnight camping and parenting programs on incarcerated women and their children. They found that participation positively impacted the relationship between the mothers and their children by raising the mother’s self-esteem

and enabling better communication with their children, thus improving the parent-child relationships.

While research has shown that participation in recreational activities can have positive outcomes for inmates, and consequently for free society, leisure in prison settings is considered by many as a privilege that should not be granted. Carter and Russell (2005) explained that “the public perceives that giving inmates anything extra such as recreation is a privilege they do not deserve. Many feel that offenders lose their rights once they have been convicted of a crime. The provision of recreation is seen as an expensive perk” (p.80). For many people, recreation services have no role to play within the walls of prisons (Robertson, 2000). Some research has suggested that those who work in corrections share the belief that recreation has no benefit as a therapeutic tool for inmates (Slater, Groves & Lengfelder (1992). Slater et al. (1992) explained that “prison guards simply see recreation as a way to relieve boredom, and a privilege that can be removed as punishment, nothing more” (p.28). Nonetheless, many positive effects can result from the use of recreation and leisure as a coping mechanism for inmates. Drawing from Robertson (2000), the most notable benefits can be summarized into two categories. The first category concerns the management of stress, and includes such benefits such as developing acceptable outlets for stress, negotiating constraints, developing awareness of personal needs and appropriate avenues to satisfy them, and developing decision-making and problem solving skills. The second category of benefits is about addressing issues of self-improvement such as identifying activities that serve as alternatives to addictions, fostering interpersonal skills such as trust, cooperation and teamwork, enhancing self-esteem through realizing success with a given pursuit, increasing access to new social

environments and, fostering and developing new interests which could evolve into a career.

The patriarchal philosophy that pervades society has contributed to the placement of women and women's issues to the margin. As a consequence, many of the challenges that women encounter in life, such as gender specific violence and abuse, single parenthood, and economic disadvantage, may lead to transgressions to the rules of society and consequently to incarceration. However, prison life does not mitigate the stresses that women encounter. On the contrary, women confront many new challenges in prison in addition to the pressures that occupied them in the outside world. Consequently, stress is one of the most taxing parts of the prison experience. It has been argued that women experience the stresses of prison differently than men. Women tend to rely on familial structures, much like those found in society, in order to manage stress and satisfy their need for emotional support.

Leisure has long been recognized as beneficial in the management of stress. Thus, it can be concluded that recreation participation may help incarcerated women handle stress. Still, the role of leisure within prison has been disputed for a long time. While some see it as having no place within prison, others see it as a beneficial way to control objectionable behaviors. This study investigated whether leisure pursuits presented incarcerated women with ways to manage stress effectively and also enabled them to improve their lives in and out on the prison. In the following chapter, the theoretical approaches that contributed to this study are discussed.

CHAPTER 3

Conceptual Framework

This chapter discusses the theoretical backgrounds that influenced the approach taken on this study of incarcerated women in Puerto Rico. Feminist epistemology and the capabilities approach formed the theoretical underpinnings of this study. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is a discussion of feminist ideology and its contribution to the understanding of women's leisure. Feminist epistemology was fundamental in understanding the experiences of incarcerated women. The second section of this chapter is a discussion of the capabilities approach. The capabilities approach was useful for comprehending women's leisure experiences in prison because it provided a framework focused on the rights and needs of the women as human beings and not as criminals.

Feminism and Leisure

Women's leisure has been an area of fertile research for more than 30 years. Several works have been devoted to women's leisure as it relates to issues of quality of life, power structures, gender roles and ethic of care, among other areas (Bella, 1989; Parry, 2005; Shaw, 1994; Wearing, 1990). In the past, women's leisure was considered to be just like men's leisure (Henderson 1990b). However, more recent research on women and their leisure pursuits has evolved from this perspective. Henderson (1994) argued that the "feminist approach of acknowledging the experience of women allows researchers to examine gender relations issues rather than focus on gender differences" (Henderson, 1991, p.373). Further, Fox (1992) argued that feminist epistemology is concerned with determining connections "between all forms of oppression and hence provide a structure

to hear the voices of “others” or those on the “margins” (p.338).

Feminist theory has contributed to the study of women’s leisure practices in many ways. The following four contributions of feminist thought have informed the research inquiry addressed in this study. First, feminism has aided in the recognition of oppression and the empowerment of women “for individual and social change” (Henderson, 1996). Henderson explained that as an inclusive theory, feminism “not only helps understand women’s lives but broadens our understanding of leisure for all people” (p.143). Second, feminist theoretical thought has contributed to the study of women’s leisure experiences by providing a framework that not only sheds light on the lives of women, but also provides a questioning structure for the analysis of women’s inclusion within the social world (Henderson, 1991; Henderson, 1996). Henderson (1991) explained that “feminism is a philosophy and a practice that embodies equality, empowerment, and social change for women and men and that seeks to eliminate the invisibility of women” (p. 364). Third, feminist epistemology has contributed to the recognition of women’s subordination relative to issues of power and inadequacy within social structures (Henderson 1994b; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1992). Among the many frameworks used by feminist thinkers for the study of women are the progression of women’s history describing the lack of women’s presence in traditional history, the inclusion and contributions of women to traditional history, and the examination of “women’s culture and social history”(Henderson, 1994b).

Finally, one of most important contributions of feminist standpoint is that it has provided a framework with which to challenge the imposition of male viewpoints that negate female perspectives (Dustin, 1992; Henderson, 1996). As a category, women have

“always been marked as a gender and is always particularizing; whereas men/masculinity is almost anything, not an identity, not a particularizing quality, because it is everything. Therefore, men/masculinity is no gender because it is all genders” (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003). Consequently this pattern of thought remained an unexamined assumption to scientific thought and resulted in women, as a group, being relegated to second class citizenship. Accordingly, women’s leisure practices were studied under the same assumptions as men’s leisure (Dustin, 1992). Although the fundamental beliefs about leisure practices deemed that what was true for men, was true for women as well, the positioning of women as second class citizens regarded male-identified beliefs as more important than female-identified beliefs (Dustin, 1992). Within this context, dualisms are a limited but important tool of analysis (Fox, 1992).

Dualisms attempt to simplify the ways of analyzing research by providing only two options for analysis (Fox, 1992). This does not necessarily mean that dualisms are bad or lacking, and there are some stimulating discussions that can stem from dualistic or dichotomous concepts such as “reason/ emotion or work/ leisure” (Fox). However, it can be argued that nothing can be considered a full dichotomy and that there are gray areas that fall neither on one side of a dichotomy or the other but rather between the two. Additionally, in some respects a focus on dichotomies can be somewhat negative. For example, in considering a masculine/feminine dichotomy it is possible to reinforce notions of what types of behaviors are considered appropriately male or female. Although male/female dichotomy may not inherently be hierarchical, this kind of perspective has the potential to reinforce existing inequities within the structures of society.

Fox (1992) argued that this notion of dualism is flawed because it “implies that one can evaluate and understand the halves independently of the context” (p.335). Thus, in analyzing women’s leisure a patriarchal conceptual framework seems to provide an erroneous view because women’s leisure practices are anything but two dimensional and simple, but rather are multi-dimensional and complex (Henderson, 1990). Furthermore, when the dualism perspective is value laden it can pose more problems in the analysis of women’s leisure because as a result, there will be a superior dimension and an inferior dimension. This is known as a spatial “up-down” metaphor (Fox, 1992). In this perspective more value is given to the “up” perspective or the more superior one. In contrast, the other perspective, the “down” perspective is considered inferior. In addition, when this metaphor is coupled with a rationalization for the superior/inferior dichotomy, it becomes a “logic of domination” (Fox, 1992, p.335). In other words, it becomes commonsensical to think that there is something superior and something inferior and so, male concepts become symbols of superiority while female concepts become symbols of inferiority.

However, leisure research has moved away from this perspective as it has become more apparent that an androcentric or paternalistic approach to the understanding of women’s leisure experiences is at best “incomplete” or “limited” (Sky, 1994). Arguably, the area of women’s leisure research has undergone changes in order to resist what might be considered erroneous ways as it relates to women’s experiences since looking at those experiences from a male perspective does not expose their significance. Bella (1989) explained that “such androcentric concept cannot reveal meaning in the lives of women, or for those parts of men’s lives having to do with relationship and responsibility”

(p.151). Further, she concluded that this type of research leads to sexist conclusions and suggested a shift to “an approach to understanding human experience that returns the right to label an experience to those to whom the experience belongs” (p.151).

Researchers have taken into account that gender differences do exist and that those differences can only be addressed by expanding our understanding of women’s leisure experiences from the perspectives of the women themselves. Consequently, more and more research examine women’s leisure experiences from their own viewpoints and not from a male perspective. Feminist perspectives have helped researchers to examine not only that patriarchal thought has relegated women to second class citizens, but also how this happens. Henderson (1990a) argued that previous notions which stated that “women and men do not differ in behavior but only in physical attributes” were naïve given the expectations for gender roles in society and affirmed that a more useful approach to studying women’s leisure is to address “gender differences as they relate to behavior” (p.151). Similarly, Dustin (1992) indicated that patriarchal thought does not adequately explain the world. Further, he argued that feminist ideology should be used in order to better understand and dispute conventional ideology laden with patriarchal values; particularly, because traditional patriarchal ideology is characterized with domination and subjugations and thus, is oppressive and ineffective in explaining the social world.

For all the reasons mentioned, feminist standpoint provides a meaningful way of studying leisure among women (Aitchison, 2001; Dustin, 1992; Fox 1992; Henderson, 1990; Henderson 1990, Henderson, 1991; Veal, 1998). It is an appropriate lens through which to study women’s leisure practices because it disputes traditional discourses in the humanities, social and physical sciences. Sky (1994) argued that “through feminist

challenges to knowledge it is possible to progress to more representative theoretical frameworks which reflect female principles omitted from the inherited theories of malestream” (p.88). As a framework for analyzing research in women’s leisure practices, feminism has tried to make women and their experiences visible, thus eradicating their absence within leisure research by providing “a philosophical framework and practice that embodies equality, empowerment, and social change for women and men and that seeks to eliminate the invisibility of women” (Henderson, 1990, p.233).

In this study, particular importance was given to the propositions of liberal feminist thought as it advocates that leisure is the right of all individuals and is “concerned with equality and with documenting the problems and barriers encountered by women that prevent equality” (Henderson, 1990a, p. 230). A feminist perspective, and more specifically a liberal feminist perspective, poses an “explanation for women’s positioning society in terms of unequal rights or ‘artificial’ barriers to women’s participation in the world” (Beasley, 1999, p.51). Liberal feminism was the most appropriate framework for this study because it allowed me to focus on understanding and providing explanations regarding oppression and constraints to leisure participation rather than eradicating oppression or trying to develop a “new world order’ where distinctions between males and females are unimportant” (Henderson, 1991; p. 364). I recognize that other feminist perspectives such as leftist, radical, cultural, post-structural and autonomist orientation feminisms are important in understanding the meanings of women’s leisure experiences. However, although these orientations remain part of my research agenda, they are beyond the scope of this study.

Capabilities Approach

The capabilities approach has its origins in the field of economics where it has been applied as a framework to study poverty and inequality (Nussbaum, 2000). However, it is helpful in the analysis of the experiences of incarcerated women because it provides a delineation of the minimum of entitlements or core areas of human functioning in order to live in a dignified way (Nussbaum). This evaluative approach was instrumental in understanding of the needs of the incarcerated women in this study because it is an inclusive rather than a separatist framework. In other words, this framework allowed for the evaluation of social arrangements by taking into account a wide variety of aspects of a person's well being, quality of life while eliminating barriers which could hinder a person's freedom to live the kind of life that they want to lead. Additionally, it provided a compassionate lens with which to examine the experiences of incarcerated women because it allowed me to see past their transgressions, and focus of their whole experience as human beings. The next section discusses the contributions of the capabilities approach to this study. First, a brief background on the origins and development of the capabilities approach, focusing on the work of its most influential proponents, is presented. Secondly, the influence of feminist epistemological thought on the capabilities approach is explained. Finally, I discuss how the capabilities approach can be applied to the understanding of the prison experience.

Background. The capabilities approach was first developed by Amartya Sen in economics and later extended by Martha Nussbaum in philosophy (Robeyns, 2003). Although both emphasized gender inequality and share an opposition to theories such as utilitarianism, there are some differences in their construction of the capabilities approach

(Robeyns).

Sen's capabilities approach. Sen's approach centers on "what is of intrinsic value in life, rather than on goods that provide instrumental value or utility" (Pressman & Summerfield, 2000, p. 97). Sen argues that a positive correlation may exist between people's freedom, choice and welfare. That is to say that people's welfare may increase when they have more freedom and choice (Pressman & Summerfield). According to Nussbaum (2006) "Sen's use of the approach focuses on the comparative measurement of quality of life, although he is also interested in issues of social justice" (p. 70). Sen's development of the capabilities approach was, in part, inspired by his observations and conclusions about famines and poverty (Sen, 1999). Sen explained that "famines can occur even without any decline in food production or availability" (p.165). Famines occur, according to Sen, because there are inequalities in the way that food is distributed, thus benefiting some more than others. Poverty, which is a state arguably present during famines, can be understood as a deprivation of a person's capabilities. Sen's capabilities approach centers on the idea of positive freedom, the actual ability that a person has to be or do something. In other words, a person has positive freedom when she can act in such a way as to take control of her life and realize her primary purposes. In contrast, negative freedom refers to a lack of obstacles or constraints. In other words, a person has negative freedom insofar as there are no constraints to the opportunities that are available to her. Sen argued that is it only when there are no constraints that a person can act based on their own choice. The focus of Sen's standpoint regarding capabilities has been "the role of capabilities in demarcating the space within which quality of life assessments are made" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 70). Sen (1993, 1999) asserted that capabilities to function

are important when making normative evaluations about well-being.

Nussbaum's capabilities approach. Nussbaum, in contrast to Sen, “has used the approach to provide the philosophical underpinning for an account of core human entitlements that should be respected and implemented by governments of all nations, as a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires”(Nussbaum, 2006. p. 70) . Whereas Sen's capabilities approach focuses on whether people have the *ability* to be or do something in regards to presence or absence of constraints, Nussbaum's capabilities approach focuses on a person being able to be or do something. This difference is slight but it refers to whether the ability or capability to be or do something is afforded to an individual from their environment (Sen's comparative measure of quality of life) or from within (Nussbaum's account of core human entitlements). Nussbaum's capabilities approach emphasizes capabilities as “a foundation for basic political principles that should underwrite constitutional guarantees (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 70).

Nussbaum (2006) expanded on John Rawls' idea of justice and the social contract. The term social contract is used to describe philosophical theories that focus on the agreements used to form societies and maintain social order (Craig, 2005). This idea began with Plato's Republic and has been applied in several ways throughout time (Craig, 2005). Among the most famous philosophers that have approached the subject are Plato, Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and more recently John Rawls. Although I recognize the important contributions of all of these philosophers' works, I will focus only on the work of Rawls.

The social contract is central to Rawls' conceptualization of justice. It is an agreement by which the state functions and by which all citizens within a society abide.

Rawls (1999) argued that free, rational persons place themselves in ‘the original position’ behind a veil of ignorance and agree on what the appropriate principles of justice should be. In order to agree on the correct principles of justice within society, persons must disregard or, as he put it, “not know,” their place in society. In other words, they must not be aware of their class, race, sex, abilities, or their conception of the good. Using a veil of ignorance, society creates a constitution to help everyone be on a leveled ground.

According to Rawls, this way all free and rational persons can agree on what is fair and just for everyone, thus regulating the division of benefits and burdens in society. Rawls (1999) explained that “the primary subject of the principles of social justice is the basic structure of society, the arrangement of major social institutions into one scheme of cooperation” (p. 47). Rawls also explained that all persons have basic liberties. These are "freedom of thought and liberty of conscience; the political liberties and freedom of association, as well as the freedoms specified by the liberty and integrity of the person; and finally, the rights and liberties covered by the rule of law" (p. 291). Additionally, he proposed a conception of justice as fairness which states the two following principles:

1) “each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all and, 2) social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions. First, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society” (p. 291).

However, Nussbaum argued that the Rawls contractarian approach does not provide an explanation of justice when no one is in the original position, when there are no free, equal and independent persons in such position. It is not the case in society that all

persons are on a leveled plain where no person has too much or too little but rather the same as everyone else. Nussbaum reasoned that the perspective of the contractarian approach alone cannot provide an acceptable theory of justice. However, Nussbaum did admit that “the capabilities approach is not intended to provide a complete account of social justice. It is an account of minimum core social entitlements” (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 75).

Nussbaum (2000) provided a list of what she proposes as the ten minimum core social entitlements for every person. She referred to these as the central human functioning capabilities. The ten central human functioning capabilities listed by Nussbaum are somewhat derived from the basic liberties that, according to Rawls, all people possess. These capabilities are the right of every person in order to live a dignified fully human life. Nussbaum’s ten capabilities or “central elements of truly human functioning” are life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, play, affiliation, other species, control over one’s environment (Nussbaum (2000, p.78). These can be grouped into five general categories, namely, physical, mental, social, care and autonomy capabilities.

Physical capabilities. The life capability refers to “being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living” (p.78). The bodily health capability refers to “being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter” (p.78). The bodily integrity capability refers to “being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of

reproduction” (p.78). In the case of women in prison this refers to their ability to live free of violence while incarcerated, to have good medical care, to have access to nutritious food and to have access to clean, appropriate living quarters.

Mental capabilities. The *senses, imagination, and thought* capability refers to “being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason-- and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. This capability also refers to being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth, and being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise” (p.79).

This capability also refers to “being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain” (p.79). In the case of incarcerated women this capability refers to their ability to have access to educational opportunities which allows them to develop their intellect. According to this capability, incarcerated women should have the opportunity to reason, think and employ their senses in ways that will allow them to cultivate their humanity. While incarcerated a person need not have the same opportunities as a person in the free community but she should be able to maintain her human dignity.

The *emotions* capability refers to “being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified

anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety" (p.79). Nussbaum (2000) explained that this capability refers to upholding personal relationships that are crucial for one's development. The sixth capability is *practical reason* which refers to "being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life" (p.79). Nussbaum explained that this capability encompasses protecting a person's freedom of conscience and religious observance. In the case of incarcerated women these capabilities refer to the women's ability to partake in religious practices, engage in friendships with other inmates as well as people outside the penal institution, to not live in fear for their lives and to be given opportunities for self- reflection and self-evaluation while learning about the values that the free society holds dear. This is particularly important because values and moral judgments change among people and these changes are what contributed to the incarceration in many instances. In other words, what are important values and moral judgments for some people may not be the same for other people. This variance in values and moral judgments can lead to transgressions of societal norms, criminal behaviors and consequently incarceration. Incarcerated persons should have opportunities to learn or re-learn societal norms of conduct. Also incarcerated women should have access to their families and loved ones, particularly their children insofar that the relationships are not harmful. Through personal relationships, inmates can learn values such as patience, valuing different points of view, conflict resolution and others that enable them to perhaps join society again. The *play* capability refers to "being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities" (p.80). In the case of incarcerated women, this capability would refer to their ability to have opportunities for mental and physical refreshment.

Social capability. The social capability refers to what Nussbaum calls affiliation capability and includes two tenets. The first tenet refers to “being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another” (p. 79). Nussbaum explained that, “protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech” (p. 79). The second tenet of the affiliation capability refers to:

“Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers” (p.79).

In the case on incarcerated women this capability is similar to the *emotions* capability previously mentioned. Incarcerated women should have the opportunity to relate to others and form constructive relationships with others. A particularly important type of relationship for incarcerated women is the maternal-filial bond since often times the women were the main caretakers of their children and the ability to maintain interaction with their children may contribute to the women’s emotional well-being. Additionally, this capability means that incarcerated women should be treated as any other inmate and not be discriminated against on the basis of their race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

Care capability. The care capability presented by Nussbaum (2000) refers to *other species*. According to Nussbaum, this means “being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature” (p. 80). In the case of incarcerated

women, they should be able to go outside of their cells and experience the environment. This can be achieved by allowing the women access to green spaces where they can exercise, relax, see the sky and perhaps plants. Additionally this capability is readily seen at facilities that include programs for the inmates that include gardening and taking care of animals such as dogs.

Autonomy capability. The autonomy capability refers to the control over one's environment. This capability includes two tenets. The first tenet refers to political aspects of life. More specifically, “being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association” (p. 80). The second tenet of the capability of control over one's environment deals with material aspects of life. This means “being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), not just formally but in terms of real opportunity; and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure” (p. 80). In the case of female inmates in Puerto Rico this capability refers to their ability to vote in general elections, thus having an input on the leadership of the country. Additionally this capability addresses the ability of the women to hold and keep personal property while incarcerated.

Influence of Feminist Epistemology on the Capabilities Approach. Amartya Sen's capabilities have contributed to the analysis in gender in economics (Agarwal, Humphries & Robeyns, 2003; Shin, 2005). Beginning with social choice theory, Sen developed the capabilities approach focusing on people's agency while taking into consideration the specific circumstances that affect an individual's welfare since

“people’s overt preferences may have adapted to adverse circumstances” (Agarwal, et al, 2003, p.5). However, the capabilities approach applications go beyond the field of economics. The approach can be helpful to expand the understanding of marginalized populations in other areas such as leisure and recreation. For example, the application of Sen’s concepts of positive and negative freedom can provide explanations about the process of marginalization and about the role of self-control and constraints in the understanding of leisure and recreation as the use of time for rejuvenation or diversion.

As I explained in the previous section, my goal is to apply the capabilities approach to my understanding of the experiences of incarcerated women in Puerto Rico through interviews with the women and also through the examination of programs that afford them the opportunity to live a dignified human life while in prison. In this section, I will discuss some of the feminist work that has contributed to the capabilities approach. I focus mainly on the pioneering work of Amartya Sen as his ideas of the capabilities approach have served as a foundation and propelled the work of many other scholars.

Feminism has been developed in order to conceptualize reality based on the experiences and perspectives of women. Sen “has shared and sympathized with feminist’s fundamental questions” (Shin, 2005, p.53). Thus, Sen’s conceptualization of the capabilities approach has been partly influenced by his observations about gender inequalities. For instance, the capabilities approach has helped to understand systemic inequalities, particularly within the home (Shin, 2005). Sen’s interest in gender began when he was a student and he was struck by how “female students seemed as convinced as the boys that there was no real issue of gender inequality” (Sen, 2003, p.320). He noticed that females were given different treatment than males. The treatment that girls

received was not only different, but lower than the treatment of males. For instance, he noticed that girls had to be more ill than boys in order to receive healthcare. Additionally, he realized that one way in which gender inequalities can thrive is by the assumption that the issues and circumstances that make females receive a lower status are of their own choosing and not imposed on them. Sen recognized, during his youth, that it was commonly believed that women themselves chose the conditions that relegated them to second class status and that those conditions were not imposed on them by some outside force. He concluded that this notion was not correct. Sen reasoned that there are outward forces that impose the conditions that perpetuate the status of women as second class citizens. He arrived at this conclusion through his observation of female classmates in his younger days. Sen explained that:

“In comparison with the firm aspirations of the boys in my class, the girls, even the very talented ones, seemed far less ambitious, with much less expectation. But this had the outward appearance of a difference in their respective preference. I was really struck by the fact that female students seemed as convinced as the boys that there was no real issue of gender inequality, at least in their lives” (Sen, Agarwal, Humphries & Robeyns, 2003, p. 319).

Sen shared this observation with liberal feminist thought which challenges the notion of consent by acknowledging the internalization and acceptance of conditions that make a group of people “weaker.” Sen’s capabilities approach shares ideologies with liberal feminist perspectives as it emphasizes the importance of women’s rights and independence. More specifically, Sen’s ideas have been influenced by the work of feminist thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir (Sen, Agarwal, Humphries & Robeyns, 2003). In the book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Wollstonecraft argued that women appear inferior to men not because of the natural order

of the world but rather due to women's lack of education. Wollstonecraft advocated for the idea that women, just as men, should be treated as rational beings. Additionally, she thought that reason, as a condition that transcends nature, depends on the social environment and is not naturally given. In other words, reason is learned and not inherited. Sen (2003) recognized Wollstonecraft's contribution in his key note address at the 13th annual conference of the International Association for Feminist Economists when he referred to Wollstonecraft as "someone who has strong claims to be the founder of feminist thinking" (p.2). Wollstonecraft's work has contributed to the capabilities approach framework in many ways. One such contribution is her appreciation and understanding of human rights. Sen (2003) explained that contrary to other scholars of the time, Wollstonecraft argued that human rights were not dependent on any law but rather on moral reason "to which we would be led by unprejudiced scrutiny, freed from unreflected preconceptions and from the pull of vested interests or parochial gut reactions" (p.3). Wollstonecraft's approach to human rights was utilitarian in nature and linked human rights with human freedoms, taking the ideas about human rights farther than just legalities and invoking "political and moral engagement" (Sen, p.4).

In her work, *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir posed the idea that women were seen as deviation of the male sex which was considered the "normal" sex. Simone de Beauvoir famously stated that "one is not born a woman but rather becomes one" confronting the category of woman and disputing the collective identity of what it means to be a woman. The influence of de Beauvoir's work on Sen's can be appreciated in the guarded and almost doubtful approach that Sen has shown toward identity politics. Sen (2003) has said that Simone de Beauvoir's work "gave me some ideas that proved

useful in my being able to understand how it comes about that many deprived women readily accept the fog of pro-inequality apologia as true description of reality” (p.322). By understanding gender inequalities Sen acknowledged that one can understand other disparities as well.

Capabilities within Prison. In this study, I used Sen’s idea of positive and negative freedom and Nussbaum’s idea of central capabilities in order to understand the prison experience. Sen’s ideas of freedom were very helpful in developing an understanding of incarceration because at first glance the notion of freedom in prison may appear to be a contradiction. Arguably, freedom can be perceived rather than real. The reality of incarceration does not necessarily negate the perception of freedom. Through interviews, I explored whether the women had perceptions of freedom in spite of incarceration.

Nussbaum’s ten central capabilities were helpful because they provided an outline of very specific concepts to understand the quality of life in prison. The capabilities discussed earlier are basic human rights and all citizens need these in order to thrive and live a fully human existence with dignity (Nussbaum, 2000). No hierarchy exists in terms of these capabilities, but rather all of these capabilities are needed equally. The state protects these capabilities, thus protecting the citizens’ rights to a dignified human life. However, in order for the citizens to fully benefit from the protection of these capabilities, citizens must abide by the laws and the social contract. The social contract guarantees the protections (laws) of central human functioning capabilities, and when a person infringes upon the capabilities of another, they have broken the law. When people break the law, they have transgressed the laws of the state and the social contract and can

become incarcerated. When people are incarcerated and become prisoners, they are not considered full citizens of society and therefore some of their capabilities will be restricted. However, upon incarceration, not all capabilities will be restricted. Lee (1996) explained that “losing one’s freedom through incarceration in a jail or prison does not mean totally losing one’s rights as a citizen” (p.167). Indeed, while some of the central capabilities are still afforded to people in prison; the extent to which these are allowed to prisoners depends arguably on the extent of their infraction to society. Depending on the severity of the crime committed, society has determined the degree of real opportunities that prisoners have to lead dignified lives. The central capabilities or central functions afforded to prisoners are thus limited.

Looking closely at Nussbaum’s list of capabilities, it seems that infractions to the laws of society are necessarily infractions to the central human capabilities and that once a person commits an infraction against another person’s capabilities, their own central capabilities will be limited, sometimes even completely negated as is the case of the death penalty. Nussbaum (2000) explained “we will often be justified in restricting the scope of choice for adults who do not have full mental and moral powers, promoting actual functioning (for example, in areas of health, shelter, body integrity) rather than simply capability” (p. 90). Society considers that incarcerated persons do not have full moral powers and thus functioning takes precedence over capability.

All central capabilities are not meant to be afforded to prisoners, and as a result, some of these capabilities do seem to be more important than others. For example, while some capabilities (i.e. body health, and affiliation) seem to be somewhat protected in a prison environment, others capabilities (i.e. body integrity, senses, imagination and

thought, and practical reason, other species and control over one's environment) are only partially granted. More specifically, in jail or prison a person's capability to live life fully is protected unless the person is sentenced to death and even then, the ways in which a person will die (a transgression of the persons' capabilities to live life fully) are restricted to those sanctioned by the state. Even if a person is sentenced to death, only an appointed person can carry out the sentence. To do otherwise would constitute an illegal case of murder. Similarly, a person's ability "to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason" (Nussbaum 2000, p.80) is somewhat protected through the implementation of educational, religious and other programs that allow for self-expression and choice. Conversely, an incarcerated person's capability to have their body boundaries treated as sovereign is not fully granted; the ability to be secure against assault and violence is still protected while in prison but prisoners can be exposed to body cavity searches without their consent and society does not consider this to be a violation of their central capabilities. Additionally, most people in prison are not able to live with concern and care for and in relation to other species, namely, animals, plants and the world of nature. Moreover, prisoners do not have complete control over their environment. In some instances prisoners, as is the case in Puerto Rico, can still engage in political participation (through voting), but their ability to hold property and the freedom to have unwarranted search and seizure is not completely granted.

Also among the central capabilities that prisoners are not afforded completely are legal opportunities for sexual satisfaction and choice in matters of reproduction. Yet, some central capabilities are somewhat protected in prison through the implementation of educational, therapeutical, vocational and similar types of programs. In fact, for many

persons who are about to rejoin society, education is vital (Johnson, Cullen & Latessa, 2006). The capability of affiliation, which states that one needs to be able to show concern for other human beings and be able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason” (Nussbaum, 2000, p.80) is a capability in which many rehabilitation efforts and programs are focused.

Many persons in prison will rejoin free society one day and at some point gain all of society’s protection of their central capabilities. In 2001, for example, it was estimated that about 650,000 incarcerated persons were released from prison (Travis, Solomon & Wahl, 2001). Even though prison is not intended to be similar or representative of the conditions of free society, arguably, prison is not a place where society discards the ones that are disrupting the social order and forgets about them indefinitely. Programs are put in place to enable people who have committed infractions of the social contract to rejoin society and become productive citizens worthy of living a dignified fully human existence.

Efforts to help with successful reentry have focused on recognizing the importance of family support as well as “community collaboration” (Johnson, Cullen & Latessa, 2006). When one considers the importance of the symbiotic relationship that must occur throughout the rehabilitation process, it is easier to understand the application of the capabilities approach as it seems to require a reciprocal relationship between individuals and their environments. One in which the individual is able to be or do something (capability) in order to live a fully human existence with dignity, and society honors that capability. According to Sampson and Laub (1993) the ability to secure lawful employment can help released prisoners avoid criminal activity. Johnson, Cullen

and Latessa (2006) explained that employment is at center of many reentry programs because it provides offenders with opportunities to become a productive member of society. This focus on becoming a productive member of society is important because once an incarcerated person is released from prison and allowed to rejoin society they will be granted full citizenship and their central functioning capabilities will be protected. Additionally, emotions or being able to have attachments is a central capability which seems to be of special consideration in prison programs focused on re-entry to society. Moreover, “research has suggested that offenders who discontinue crime are often bonded to family, maintaining contact while within the institution” (Johnson, Cullen & Latessa, 2006).

The capabilities approach formulated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum was employed in analyzing the case of incarcerated women at EIMVA. The approach was helpful in understanding how they managed the severe constraints in opportunities, inherent of the prison environment. It was used to examine the programs that afforded the incarcerated women, as individuals, the opportunity to live a dignified human life while in prison. At the same time, the capabilities approach framework allowed me to recognize that not all capabilities are to be afforded as part of the punitive experience. The next chapter details the methodological approach used for this study.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation project was to study whether leisure activities and programs serve as coping tools in the lives of incarcerated women in a women's prison in Puerto Rico. I was drawn to this study because I am interested in understanding the experiences of marginalized populations. Additionally, because leisure and recreation is such a central part of the human experience, I am also interested in understanding its impact on constrained environments.

Research Questions

The central question of this study was: How do recreational experiences impact the coping abilities of incarcerated women at EIMVA in a way that enables them to negotiate through the constraints of incarceration?

The following were the sub-questions that informed the central question. These focused on the areas of free will and coping.

Free will.

- 1- Do inmates have the freedom to choose how to spend their time?
- 2- Do inmates have the freedom to choose how to spend their recreation time?

Coping.

- 1- What stressors do inmates encounter and what strategies do inmates use to cope with these stressors?
- 2- Is recreation participation a strategy used by the women to cope with stress?
- 3- How do inmates perceive their strategies in decreasing stress?

- 4- Does participation (or lack thereof) in recreational activities facilitate or hinder whether the women view themselves as empowered?
- 5- Does recreation participation during incarceration influence the women's capability?

Research Design

The following chapter describes the data collection methods including the design of the study, the research questions, the setting, the sample and the methods of analysis.

Feminist Grounded Theory Approach

Qualitative methods of inquiry were chosen for this study because they allowed me to focus on preserving the individuality of the participants. Using a feminist approach, the purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of the extent to which recreation opportunities impact coping abilities. In order to capture and understand the experiences of the women, in-depth interviews and focus groups were employed to collect data. Additionally, the capability approach (Nusbaum, 2000) was used to analyze the collective experiences of the women and consequently identified whether recreation opportunities served as a tool to empower female inmates to recognize capabilities that would allow them to positively cope with the incarceration experience.

An interpretive approach that was informed by feminist grounded theory was utilized. Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (Charmaz, 2005). Leisure researchers (Henderson, 1996; Dustin, 1992; Fox, 1992) have looked at feminist perspectives in order to address the limitations that a traditional patriarchal conceptual framework imposes on the research process. These researchers concluded that traditional patriarchal approaches to research are not inclusive because they do not take into account

the voices of the researched populations but rather generalize to the male perspective. Additionally, within a patriarchal conceptual framework, importance is given to a pragmatic tradition in which the researcher and the research are separated as are the findings of research and the responsibilities of the researcher (Dustin, 1992). In other words, patriarchal conceptual frameworks do not acknowledge any responsibility on the part of the researcher or any connection between the researcher and the subjects of the research or the findings of the research. “A grounded theory approach encourages researchers to remain close to their studied worlds and to develop an integrated set of theoretical concepts from their empirical materials that not only synthesize and interpret them but also show processual relationships”(Charmaz, 2005, p.508). This means that, in doing grounded theory, researchers must not merely describe their observations but must analyze it while data collection is taking place, thus generating theory about the phenomena being studied. The grounded theory approach was instrumental to this study because it allowed for the consideration of the data inductively rather than deductively. That is to say, conclusions were reached based on the particularities of the researched population rather than by generalizing from commonly-held assertions. Grounded theory is “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.12). By systematically gathering and analyzing the data researchers can validate their inquiry. Through this examination process the researcher can determine “whether a study investigates the phenomena intended to be investigated” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, p.308). Denzin and Lincoln explained that “an investigative concept of validation is inherent in the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss” (p.309). A grounded theory approach was critical to

validate this research study.

The approach to the grounded theory methodological framework undertaken in this study was not without reservations. Feminist grounded theory poses an opportunity to bring forth the voices of the disempowered women. However, this is not without constant concern about the “truth” of the data. Traditionally, this “truth” was shaped by “expert” versions of experiences, perspectives and realities which have informed and influenced research literature. These “expert” versions have been derived from privileged male-dominated standpoints (Barber & Allen, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). These standpoints have been accepted as truths, reflected on history, theories and values in society. However, an important consideration in employing a feminist grounded theory approach to research is making “the voices of the women heard without exploiting or distorting” them (Olesen, 2003, p.358). Historically the voices of women and other marginalized groups have been ignored. Moreover, many researchers used to generalize men’s realities to women. In other words, conclusions reached through the study of a male population were considered to be true to a female population as well. In this study, it was very important to present the incarceration experience from the women themselves. Therefore, great care was taken so as to not distort “voices” or the perspectives of the participants.

However, “for many researchers, grounded theory methodology provided a template for qualitative research stamped with a positivist approval” (Charmaz, p. 509). Charmaz explained that although grounded theory could provide a way to be objective, by removing the researcher’s own biases from their research, it has the potential for subjectivity. To overcome this potential problem, Charmaz (2005) proposed a

constructivist approach with the formulation of grounded theory. More specifically, she suggested that rather than excluding their own biases, researchers recognize them. She contended that;

“Constructivists grounded theorists take a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life. That means giving close attention to empirical realities and our collected renderings of them- and locating oneself in these realities. It does not assume that data simply await discovery in an external world or that methodological procedures will correct limited views of the studied world” (p.509).

In this way, researchers using grounded theory do acknowledge their personal biases, their personal histories and interests, their experiences as persons and researchers, and their ways of generating empirical research data. Charmaz explained that “we share in constructing what we define as data” (p. 509). By taking this position, researchers take a critical stance and “openly bring their shoulds and oughts into the discourse of inquiry” (p.510). This study was challenging in various ways regarding awareness of my own biases and history. The study required care in the communicative ways of engagement with the women. In other words, consideration was taken so as to not sound or seem too formal in order to engage the participants in the conversations.

Arguably, feminist thought stems from the critical perspective. “The essence of the critical theory lies in its interest in the ways people think and act and how social circumstances influence those thoughts and actions” (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p.57). As such, feminist methodologies present researchers with an approach that challenges

traditional ways of gaining understanding. One of the main proposals of feminist perspectives is that analysis should be critical, corrective and transformative (Henderson, 1990a; Henderson, 1990b; Sky, 1994). Feminist research should be “critical of existent social structures, serve as a corrective mechanism by providing an alternative viewpoint and lay the groundwork for a transformation of both social science and society” (Henderson, 1990; p.233). Conversely, traditional research methodologies that claim scientific objectivity and define society in terms of male values may perpetuate gender inequalities (Miller & Brewer). Feminist theories argue that “claims of scientific objectivity in the social sciences were in fact based on socially constructed assumptions about the nature of the category ‘woman’, and that the imposition of external criteria inevitably led to the generalization, marginalization, distortion or exclusion of actual female experience” (Miller & Brewer, p.118). By placing the focus on the voices of research participants, researchers have access to different views of reality. This is particularly important for research about women. Knowledge gained through “feminist consciousness” offers an opportunity to understand what it is like to be a woman, and how women not only view the social world but also how they construct and negotiate it (Stanley & Wise, 1993). By positioning the focal point of this study on the voices of research participants it was possible to have access to their different views of reality.

This research study sought to accomplish an important objective of feminist research, which is to fill a void within social science research by bringing forth women’s perspectives (Stanley, 1990). Feminist perspectives “ought to lead to social change” (Henderson, 1990). A consideration of this study was that its findings could contribute to social change. The idea of social change deals with the notion of transformation and

alteration of the social structure. Veal (1998) argued that feminism offers an opportunity to take a socially democratic stance. He explained that this socially democratic stance is what Henderson (1996) described as social feminists,

“as focusing on people as social beings who exist as part of larger social institutions, not just as people with abstract rights. Therefore they look at what is good for people as part of a community...they stress the greater struggle of women of color, ethnic groups and economic classes in gaining equal opportunity and they do not assume that a classless society will eliminate male privilege or women’s oppression” (p. 262).

Feminist perspective and grounded theory methodology provide a platform for understanding women’s leisure experiences while in prison. By approaching grounded theory from a feminist perspective, my research inquiry was enhanced through critical reflection. Critical reflection allowed me to understand the many constraints that women in prison encounter, particularly those that refer to issues of oppression and agency. Incarcerated women encounter many of the limitations of a gendered society (Owen, 1998). Single gender environments are not necessarily free of the constraints of traditional gender expectations. The application of a feminist framework to a grounded theory approach allowed me to develop a better understanding of the leisure of incarcerated women by learning from the women themselves. Moreover, it allowed me to recognize sources of oppression and agency for the incarcerated women as well as helped me understand how resistance to or reproduction of traditional gender roles takes place in an environment that is seemingly removed from traditional society.

Understanding the leisure experiences of women in prison required not only that I

considered their gendered existences, but also that I considered my own personal biases prior to, while and after conducting research in that setting. For instance, I took into account my education, which placed me at a different social level than most people and also my own ideas of what a Puerto Rican woman should be or do, which were influenced by gendered beliefs and practices within my family. As I mentioned previously, research about leisure experiences in prison is limited. Moreover, research about women's leisure experiences while in prison has been virtually ignored. This worthy area of inquiry provided insights about women's agency within an arguably constrained environment in ways that discourses about "free" women cannot.

Site Selection

The study took place at the Escuela de Mujeres de Vega Alta (EIMVA) in Puerto Rico. The study took place in Puerto Rico because by being a Puerto Rican myself, I felt that I would be able to build rapport with the participants much more easily than if the study took place in the mainland US. Moreover, this site was ideal for my research because it is the only women's penal institution in the Department of Corrections on the island. The gendered makeup of the prison allowed me to research the cultural component regarding access to family and children. The prison is home to about 316 women and is organized by levels of custody; indicted, minimum, medium and maximum.

EIMVA offers several rehabilitation programs to the women including academic and vocational preparation, as well as programs geared towards the physical, emotional, mental and dental health benefits of the women. Among these are workshops about anger management and therapeutic outlets. The educational programs include instruction at the

elementary school level progressing to the high school level. The inmates can pursue high school equivalency certification while incarcerated. The institution also provides several vocational workshops including sewing, ceramics, flower arrangement, and cosmetology.

Accessing the Participants. This section details the process and strategies that I used to gain permission and entry to EIMVA in order to undertake the study and to gain acceptance from the women who participated. Gaining access to the key people to ask for approval was very challenging. After obtaining approval from the Internal Review Board at the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign, I went through a very long process to obtain permission from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation of the Commonwealth (DCR) through the office of Miguel Pereira Castillo, Secretary of the DCR at the time and from the administration at EIMVA, which throughout the study consisted of two wardens and two lieutenants. As with many governmental departments, the office of the Secretary of the DCR operates in a bureaucratic matter. The most challenging part of the process was obtaining permission from each warden during each of the visits, particularly because the permissions took longer to be sent from the DCR to EIMVA and because of the change of personnel that was taking place due to the 2008 election. Additionally, the first warden was retiring. Since the study was completed during two visits to Puerto Rico most of the process of obtaining permission had to be repeated twice due to the administrative change, although the second time around the process was more straight forward. The first visit took place in July, 2008 for a period of four weeks. I submitted letters outlining my research agenda for the study and after multiple phone calls, faxes and visits between many offices within the DCR, I was able to obtain approval. Once the permission for the visit was approved by Mr. Román, the

warden at EIMVA, I was allowed to proceed. The second visit took place in December 2008 through January 2009 for a period of four weeks.

Upon arrival at EIMVA, I was surprised to find that the institution is nestled in a residential area of the town of Vega Alta. The location of the prison contradicted my points of reference which had always been the maximum security prisons in the United States, which tend to be somewhat secluded from suburban housing areas. I was greeted by a guard at the entrance gate. He asked me to provide identification, and I then explained the purpose of my visit. He called the warden's office to confirm the authorization. Afterwards, I was escorted to the warden's office, Mr. Pablo Román. There I had to explain the purpose of the visit to him and to Lieutenant Cintrón, who was second in command at the institution. They oriented me on the process of entering the institution. At that time we discussed a tentative schedule for my visits. They also introduced me to key people within the facility who functioned as gatekeepers, literally and figuratively. I met the warden's secretary, the social worker, and several officers who worked at the gates and with the inmates. Mr. Román also informed me that the permissions from the DCR had not been sent to his office and I had to complete the forms again prior to beginning the study. Additionally, the permission to use an audio recorder had not been sent to him and I had to arrange for this and all other permits to be sent to his office. This was a small setback but I was able to navigate my way through the process efficiently.

For inmates, admission to EIMVA begins when a woman is indicted for a crime and she cannot post bail or if bail was not imposed by a judge due to the nature of her crime and whether or not she poses a flight risk. Indicted women who have not been

sentence are described as not belonging to DCR but rather belonging to the state. The inmates at EIMVA are divided mainly by security level. There are four levels of security for the inmates at EIMA, indicted, minimum, medium and maximum security levels. Housing units for each security level is further divided into common quarters or rooms which are numbered one through five. There is also an additional housing unit called Anexo or Annex, which houses women in minimum and medium security levels. The women whose security level has been identified as minimum or medium live in the general population area or *pueblo* (town) as it is commonly called. The women whose security level has been determined to be maximum custody live in a separate facility within the institutional grounds. The women in the general population cannot go the maximum security area and vice versa. However, according to the participants as well as members of the administration, with the exception of the indicted women, all others have knowledge of the women in other sections and in particular those who have been convicted of serious crimes. For this study I interviewed women from all security levels.

Sampling

Participants were recruited using convenience sampling. Because of the nature of the prison, I asked for help from the office of the warden in the recruitment of participants. The criteria for participation included 1) that participants were between the ages of 18-64, 2) participants were willing to participate in the study, and 3) participants were able to keep the confidentiality of the focus groups discussions. The participants were approached by the security personnel of EIMVA and asked of their willingness to participate in the study. A total of 45 women participated in the study. Of those, 40 women participated in a focus group, 32 in both a focus group and individual interview,

and 5 in individual interviews only. Thus, a total of seven focus groups and 37 individual interviews were conducted.

Based on the experiences of Barbara Owen (1998) who has conducted research in women's prisons, I anticipated potential issues that could affect data collection in a negative way. In her book, *In the Mix: Struggle and Survival in a Women's Prison*, Owen lists three problems that she has encountered as a researcher and as an outsider, namely, "1) obtaining administrative access, 2) gaining cooperation from the prison staff, and 3) penetrating the world of the women's themselves" (p.24). Owen explained that "administrative staff members were instrumental to my gaining entrée to the physical world of the prison" (p.24). Issues of entree were significant when conducting research because trust on the part of the participants was going to impact the data. In other words, the more participants trusted me as the researcher the more they would be willing to share their experiences. I prepared to overcome these obstacles by visiting the facility and getting to know as many staff and inmates as possible. By the time the interviews and focus groups took place, I was seen as a familiar presence.

During the study, the most frequent limitation was having access to the participant themselves. This was mainly due to a lack of officers to recruit and escort the women to the discussion sites. Obtaining administrative access was somewhat of a limitation because of the time the study was taking place. Even though I obtained permission to visit the institution from the Department of Corrections, access was not immediate. I encountered difficulties in obtaining permission to access the women from the local prison administration. The study took place during an election year and officials were busy with many obligations which frequently took them out of the institution. It was

difficult at times to find a person who was aware of the study. However, this only took place at the beginning of the two data collection periods. Daily visits to the institution enabled me to establish a continuous presence at EIMVA and become familiar to the administration as well as the women. I anticipated that once I gained entree through the local administration of the prison, the administrators would shed some light on how I can enter the world of the women. This was certainly the case. Not only was I able to gain the cooperation of the staff at EIMVA, through continuous presence I was also able to gain the inmates' trust to enter into their world.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through focus groups and individual interviews which lasted from 45 minutes to 3 hours. Upon meeting the participants, prior to the focus groups or individual interviews, the study was explained to the participants and the consent form was discussed (See appendix A). Participants were asked to provide two written forms of consent, one for the institution and the other for this study. Participants were also asked to provide permission to have the discussions audio taped. No participants disagreed and consequently all focus groups discussions and individual interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Recordings and transcriptions were kept in a locked file.

There were a total of two focus groups held per level of custody, except only one focus group was held with the indicted women. Originally two groups were to be invited to participate. However, upon completing the first focus group with the indicted women, I decided not to include another group because the women were not integrated into the general population. Also they were reluctant to share their experiences because of their legal status and for fear that their words and even their peers could incriminate them.

They were also somewhat suspicious of the whole study and many decided to leave the room when the study was explained and their consent was solicited.

Building rapport. Building rapport with the participants was very important in order to obtain their truthful responses. In anticipation to the conversations, I wondered whether the participants would regard me as an outsider since I was not involved with the Department of Corrections. I wondered whether they would be apprehensive about sharing their experiences with me, thinking perhaps that I might have difficulty understating their situations. However, the fact that I am from Puerto Rico enabled me to establish a connection with them. The conversations were held in Spanish and being able to understand slang and cultural references allowed me to engage the participants from the beginning. Still, the participants always treated me with the same deference as they did members of the administration. For example, they always referred to me as Mrs. instead of using my first name. At the beginning of the conversations, when I introduced myself, I told them that they could call me by my first name. However, they did not. Still, the participants were not hesitant in openly sharing their experiences with me and responding to my questions.

Saturation. Data were collected until the point of data saturation was reached. In other words, when the discussions were not yielding new information or new concepts, data collection stopped. Creswell (1998, 2007) suggested that interviewing between 20 to 30 participants results in reaching saturation in a grounded theory study. More specifically, Creswell's recommendation consists in interviewing about 28 participants to reach data saturation. In this study, 32 women were individually interviewed and data saturation was consequently reached.

Data collection guide. The individual interviews and the focus groups were semi-structured. A set of questions was used to initiate conversation. The initial questions for the interviews and the focus groups were the same and are included below. However, as expected, other questions came up during the process based on the information provided by the participants. Additional questions were included later to elicit more precise information. The following table shows the questions that were included in the interview guide in relation to the research questions of the study.

Areas of inquiry	Research questions	Interview questions
Free will	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Do inmates have the freedom to choose how they spend their time? 2- Do inmates have the freedom to choose how they spend their recreation time? 	<p><i>Daily Life</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Please describe a typical day for you. <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What is your favorite part of your day? -What is your least favorite part? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2- Tell me about your feelings. <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What makes you feel good? - What makes you feel bad? - Do you feel like you are in control of your life?
Coping strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- What stressors do inmates encounter and what strategies to inmates use to cope with these stressors? 2- Is recreation participation a strategy used by the women to cope with stress? 3- How do inmates perceive their strategies in decreasing stress? 4- Does participation (or lack thereof) in recreational activities facilitate or hinder whether the women view themselves as empowered? 5- Does recreation participation during incarceration influence the women's capability? 	<p><i>Relationships</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3- Tell me about your family. <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you see your family often? -Do you have any family here? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4- How would you describe the women here? <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you have friends here? - Do you feel that your relationships here help you feel good? <p><i>Recreation</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5- Would say that you have leisure time? <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How would you describe leisure? 6- Do you participate in any activities or programs? <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What activities make you feel positive? - Are there any benefits in participating in those activities?

Focus groups. A focus group has been defined as a group of individuals brought together by a researcher to converse about their experiences in light of a common topic (Powell, Single & Lloyd, 1996). One of the key aspects in a focus group is the interaction among the subjects regarding the topic presented by the research. Interaction is fundamental as it provides insights that may not have been brought up using other methods of inquiry. In this particular study, focus groups enabled me to draw on the perceptions, experiences, beliefs, and emotions of the incarcerated women. By providing the participants with a non-threatening environment in which to have a planned, mediated discussion the participants were open to sharing their opinions and reacting to the opinions made by other participants, thus providing me with yet another layer of understanding of their experiences.

It was expected that the participants would be more willing to share personal information through the in-depth individual interviews. However, it was very surprising that most of the participants were very candid during the focus groups despite the presence of their peers and were willing to share very personal perceptions and experiences about their life in prison. Focus groups have many advantages. Namely, the richness of the data obtained through the exchanges among the participants may provide broader perspectives (Morgan, 1997). Also, the peer validation in a focus group can serve as a means for the participants to share their perspectives and experiences (Kreuger, 1988). This was indeed the case in this study. The focus groups provided a forum for the participants to feel heard and validated. The rapport amongst the participants was very congenial and as a result, they were willing to openly discuss their experiences and opinions. The focus groups were held prior to the individual interviews in order to draw

more specific themes. The individual interviews served to corroborate and expand on the topics discussed during the focus groups.

Individual interviews. Interviews are conversations or exchanges that attempt “to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale, 1996, p.1). In this study, in-depth semi-structured interviews were employed. The purpose of semi-structured interviews was “to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, p.6). Interviews were fundamental in this study as they enabled me to further understand the experiences of the individual women from their own perspectives and their words aside from those of their peers.

Using interviews as a method of data collection has long been used in feminist research. Reinharz (1992) explained that “the use of semi-structured interviews has become the principal means by which feminists have sought to achieve the active involvement of their respondent in the construction of data about their lives” (p.18). Compared to other methods of inquiry, the interview research method has many advantages, including the interpersonal contact between participant and researcher and the researcher’s ability to collect more detailed data. By using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions the participant were more actively engaged in the research process. The interview method of inquiry also lends itself to the use of grounded theory methodology (Reinharz, 1992). Semi-structured interviews allows for more freedom and flexibility (Cohen & Manion, 1997). Interviews allow the researcher to make comparisons within a specific segment of a population (such as incarcerated

women in Puerto Rico), that resemble the general population (such as free women in Puerto Rico). Although the study focused on the experiences of the women while incarcerated, the participants drew on comparisons between life inside the prison and life in the free community. Reinharz explained that, “open-ended interview research produces nonstandardized information that allows researchers to make full use of differences among people” (p.18). In this study, participants discussed many topics which had been previously discussed in the focus groups and I was able to relate experiences and draw comparisons among their own experiences involving other inmates. Additionally, open-ended questions allowed the participants to answer in their own words, thus owning the portrayal of their experiences. This was certainly very helpful in the analysis process in order to make full use of the data.

Protection of human subjects. Most of the participants’ real names were not used in this study. There is one exception as Ms. Maria Santiago specifically asked that her real name and materials be included in the study. The administration of the institution as well as the correction offices enlisted to recruit the participants and escort them to the focus groups and interviews sites were aware of the identity of the participants. However, the discussions were kept private between the researcher and the participants.

Risks. Some of the risks of the study included providing information related to the commission of activities that were not sanctioned by the institution, the potential to offend other people, and the potential to share private feelings and thoughts. In order to avoid some of these risks, participants were asked to share only those experiences regarding leisure and recreational activities that were sanctioned by the institution. The participants were advised during the consent period that illegal activity may have to be

reported. Additionally, during the focus groups the participants were asked to share feelings regarding their own experiences and not any specific instances that may name another person. The participants were asked to focus on positive ways of coping and on those activities that enhance well-being. Additionally, it was explained to the participants that although no identifiable personal information was to be obtained, total confidentiality could not be guaranteed.

Benefits. It was explained to the participants that the benefits of participation were recognizing the potential that leisure and recreational programs and activities have in order to provide them with ways to positively cope with the restrictions in their lives. In a study similar in scope to the current study, Carter and Russell (2005) concluded that “leisure education curtails involvement in negative leisure activities by teaching people about leisure time and how to use it productively, suggesting that prevention programs are far more cost effective than responding after the fact to violence” (p. __) The participants in this study were presented with information that may help them cope in positive ways while using their recreational and leisure time while incarcerated as well as when out in the free community.

Transcription. Each interview and focus group discussion was audio taped to ensure accuracy. All of the conversations, including the focus groups and the individual interviews, were held completely in Spanish because that was the participants’ language. I transcribed the tapes in Spanish, and compared the transcriptions with the handwritten notes taken during the data collection sessions to ensure good quality of the data and to ensure that my notes about non-verbal cues were also considered. After the data collection phase had ended, I translated the conversations from Spanish to English taking

care to be as accurate as possible in order to maintain the responses of the participants as close to the original as a possible. In the next section I discuss in-depth how the data were analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was accomplished through the grounded theory approach which consists of constant comparisons, codings, and sortings. After each focus group and interview the audio recordings were transcribed. Each transcription was analyzed before the next interview took place. As outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) the analysis of the data followed the standard grounded theory procedures. These consisted of memoing, constant comparison, and analytic coding. Comparison and coding processes took place for the focus groups as well as for the individual interviews. Since the individual interviews took place after the focus groups, data generated during the focus groups aided in the development of subsequent questions for the individual interviews.

Grounded theory coding brings the researcher closer to data by compelling a very meticulous scrutiny of the information resulted in an inquiry. The intimacy with which coding should be approached requires that the researcher studies the data in such a way so as to condense large sections of the data into concept, themes and theories that are not only coherent but accountable of the findings. These concepts, themes and theories enable the researcher to approach the data in a more efficient way. At the very least this process requires two phases: initial and focus coding (Charmaz, 2006). Initial or open coding requires that the data be broken down into small units of analysis while focused coding requires synthesis of those initial units of analysis. Axial and theoretical coding

are also focused types of coding. In other words, these types of coding require the researcher to further analyze the data and uncover relationships and conceptualize phenomena with precision and clarity.

Memos. Throughout the study, memos were kept. Memos are the written reflections and interpretations used during the theory development phase. Memos can provide a record of the logic of the theory, in other words, of the analytical path taken to develop the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The memos were instrumental during the process of analysis because it allowed me to record my notes and thoughts about the sample, subsequent focus group and interview questions, possible concepts, categories, agreements, contradiction, inconsistencies, hypotheses, and diagrams of the developing theory.

Constant Comparison. Constant comparison aids in generating and identifying fluctuations within the codes, categories and concepts in order to generate hypotheses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, the purpose of constant comparison is to identify similarities, differences as well as patterns or variations within the data in order to confirm, deny and rethink emerging hypotheses. After a close reading of each transcription, concepts were identified. New concepts were continually compared to existing concepts in order to identify similarities and differences within the data. This was helpful in order to determine areas which required further exploration and clarification. Determination of these areas gave way to the development of subsequent interview questions.

Analytic Coding. Analytic coding entailed the systematic examination of the data by words, sentences and paragraphs. Additionally, four phases of analytic coding are

required, namely, initial or open coding, focused coding, axial coding and selective or theoretical coding. Initial or open coding refers to the formation of concepts within the data. Focused coding refers to the use of the most significant or frequent earlier concepts in order to sort through the data more accurately. Axial coding refers to the identification of relationships within the categories. Selective or theoretical coding refers to the integration of the categories and the relationships to develop a theoretical framework.

I used the following questions suggested by Glaser (1978, p.57) and Charmaz (2006, p.47) to reflect on the data.

- “What is the data a study of?”
- “What category does this incident indicate?”
- “What does the data suggest? Pronounce?”
- “What is actually happening in the data?”
- “What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate?”

These questions enabled me to develop further units of analysis. Additionally, throughout the data analysis process I kept asking myself, how does the data connect to the capabilities approach? I continuously went back to a human rights approach to help make sense of the data.

Open Coding. This was the first step in analyzing the data. It involved the analysis of the data at a micro level or minimum level of scrutiny. In other words, the responses of the participants to each question were first examined and reduced to words, sentences and/or paragraphs. Upon careful review, codes or concepts were identified. I employed a combination of color markers as well as making marginal notes in order to

differentiate segments of data from one another. These methods were very useful for the initial and focused coding.

The transcriptions of this study were analyzed by identifying concepts that arose from the responses to each question. Each conversation was closely examined and marginal notes were taken about the main ideas revealed by the participants.

Additionally, color coding was employed. The following example illustrates the open coding process in this study. The underlined portions were color coded. It is important to note that initial coding was done originally in the Spanish version of the transcriptions as these reflect the voices of the participants most precisely.

Question: Describeme como es un día común y corriente para ti ¿Como es un día típico para ti?

Describe a common day for you. How is a typical day for you?

Participant 23: Pues mi día comienza cuando me levanto en la mañana. Siempre me levanto y es como si no estuviera aquí. Por un ratito pienso que estoy en casa pero después me doy cuenta y pues... Entonces me levanto y voy y me baño y desayuno y me voy a trabajar.

Well my day begins when I get up in the morning. Always when I wake up is like I am not here. For a little while I think that I am at home but then I realize it and well... Then I get up and I shower and eat breakfast and then I go to work.

Codes: forgets prison, goes to work

Researcher: En donde trabajas?

Where do you work?

Participant 23: Yo tengo talleres todo el día. Tengo taller de costura, de joyería, trabajo en la cocina, tapicería y cojo cuanto taller ofrecen. Ya cuando tengo que volver se paso el día. Los días de van mas rápido si uno esta haciendo, si esta ocupao. Si algún día no tengo mucho taller pues me voy a mi cama y escribo cartas o leo o me pongo a oír música.

I have workshops all day long. I have a workshop about sewing, jewelry making, I work in the kitchen, tapiceria and I take every single workshop that I can. By the time I have to get back, the day is gone. The days pass much more quickly if you keep doing things, if you keep busy. If there is a day that I do not have workshops then I go to my bed and write letters or read or I just listen to music.

Codes: Workshops: sewing, jewelry making, works in kitchen. Keeps busy.

Researcher: A quien le escribes?

To whom do you write?

Participant 23: Pues a mi mama le escribo mucho. A mi me gustas escribir (cartas) porque es como si tuvieras una conversación y cuando recibes las carta y lees pues es como si estuvieras hablando con la persona.

Well, I write to my mom a lot. I like to write (letters) because is like you are having a conversation and when you receive a letter and you read it is like you are talking to them.

Codes: writes letters: to mother, letters are like talking directly to the person, help to pass the time.

After all the transcriptions had been analyzed and open coded, I revised my notes and included any relevant ones as margin notes. The tapes were revisited to look for fluctuations in their voices that may indicate non-verbal feelings. Afterwards, I moved on to the focused coding phase of analysis.

Focused Coding. This was the second step of the data analysis. In focus coding the codes or concepts found during the initial coding “are more directed, selective, and conceptual” (Charmaz, 2006). I developed themes during this step of the analysis in order to combine and explain larger sections of data. In order to accomplish this I focused on the frequency of the initial codes or concepts and general themes that emerged.

Concepts were coded according to their significance regarding limitations or constraints encountered while incarcerated, free will to choose participation in activities, benefits of recreation participation and coping efforts and strategies. The data was divided into three major categories: causes of stress, coping mechanisms and types of benefits obtained from coping mechanisms. Among the concepts identified during initial coding were:

loneliness	motherhood	food	religion
self- esteem	spouses	clothing	writing
family	romantic relationships	medical care	programs
choices	partners	boredom	feelings
limitations	sexuality	anxiety	reactions
activities	administration	cutting	opinions
leadership	sanitation	recreation	pain

These codes emerged from quotes and phrases from the transcriptions as well as

notes and memos that I made gathering the data. My initial goal during open coding was to segment the data as much as possible and to generate concepts. After coding the initial raw data, my goal was to identify and synthesize concepts in a more focused way.

The similarities within the interactions of concepts helped me to identify themes. In other words, codes were classified by using the most significant or frequent ones which emerged during the previous phase of coding. These were then compared and general themes were uncovered. The following themes arose from this stage of data analysis.

Theme	refers to the inmates':
Loss of freedom	feelings about incarceration
Loss of control of one's life	perceptions about their inability to make decisions about their own lives.
Self-reflection	analysis of their thoughts, feelings and attitudes.
Self- esteem issues	feelings about herself
Activities for self-improvement- education, spirituality, release	the activities in which the inmates participated in order to feel better about themselves.
Relationships	interpersonal relationships inside and outside of the prison.
Family	views about their relationships with family members.
Romantic relationships	views about their romantic relationships

Prison programming	imposed vs. freely chosen
Support Systems	the formal and informal structures used by the inmates to ease in their adjustment to incarceration.
Participation outcome	to the resulting effect of the inmates' participation in prison activities.
Agency	ability to self-empower
Empowerment	the ways and feelings in which the inmates were encouraged in positive ways.
Outlook	to how the inmates perceived their future to be whether in prison or upon release.
Direction	opinions about leadership roles amongst other inmates.

The participants frequently spoke about feeling bad about being away from their children and other family members, about not being able to do as they pleased, about not being able to live in a way they liked and consequently I employed the theme of loss of freedom to encompass these feelings. The theme of self-reflection emerged from comments related to how the participants view themselves before, during and after incarceration. The theme about outlook included the women's views about their future. After I combined the initial concepts and synthesize them into themes, I shifted on to the axial coding phase in order to look for subcategories and categories.

Axial Coding. This was the third step in analyzing the data. It involved the examination of the concepts and themes which emerged during the open and focused coding and identifying subcategories and categories. Subcategories identified and described relationships between categories. This step was important because it required that the data were examined carefully in order to go beyond causal relationships. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that axial coding is important to understand how context and conditions create various issues and situation and how persons respond. Following the recommendation of Strauss and Corbin I considered: “1) conditions, the circumstances or situations that form the structure of the studied phenomena; 2) actions/interactions, participants’ routine or strategic responses to issues, events, or problems; and 3) consequences, outcomes of actions/interactions” (Charmaz, 2006). By answering questions such as who, what, why, how, how come and with what consequences, axial coding enables the researcher to provide a richer description of the situation or experience studied (Charmaz, 2006). In this case, conditions were used to answer why and when questions. Actions/ interactions were used to answer how questions and consequences were used to answer what questions.

I employed the themes that emerged in the previous phase of coding as the sub-categories because they explained conditions, actions, interactions, responses to issues and consequences and addressed the what, why, how questions. After carefully reviewing these sub-categories, the core categories were determined: 1) causes of stress 2) coping mechanisms 3) benefits obtained from coping mechanisms. These categories encompass the codes, concepts, themes and sub-categories which emerged in previous phases of coding.

Selective or Theoretical Coding. This was the last step of the data analysis. It consisted of studying the relationships between categories and integrating them into a theory. I used a list of theoretical coding families to assist me during this portion of the analysis. Charmaz (2006) explained that

“Glaser (1978) presents a series of 18 theoretical coding families that include analytic categories such as his ‘Six C’s: Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Consequences, Covariances, and Conditions (p.74), ‘degree’, ‘dimension’, ‘interactive’, ‘theoretical’, and ‘type’ coding families as well as ones that derive from major concepts such as ‘identity-self’, ‘means-goals’, ‘cultural’, and ‘consensus’ families” (p.63). This coding families helped me to be more precise in my analysis.

The categories that emerged in the axial coding gave way to the theoretical coding phase of research. During this phase, I found the major categories and analyzed them further. The core categories included causes of stress, coping strategies and outcomes of coping strategies.

Criteria for study evaluation. Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) developed particular criteria to evaluate the value of a grounded theory study. In order to enhance the thoroughness within a grounded theory study, it is important to establish trustworthiness (Creswell, 1998).

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness refers to the process of ensuring that the findings presented are the actual findings of a study. The term trustworthiness is the qualitative equivalent of validity in quantitative research. Creswell and Miller (2000) held that techniques such as triangulation, searching for disconfirming evidence, member

checks, using thick description and leaving an audit trail are valuable to evaluate the quality of a grounded theory research study. These techniques were employed in this study.

Triangulation. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), in grounded theory triangulation is achieved when concepts are repeated by multiple participants. This means that one mention or omission of a concept is not sufficient to confirm or disconfirm a theoretical hypothesis. Accordingly, in this study if a concept was not consistently present throughout the study it was deemed superfluous and removed.

Searching for disconfirming evidence is an important step in a grounded theory research study. Creswell and Miller (2000) explained that this step entails scrutinizing the data to search for evidence that supports the substantive theory as well as evidence that contradicts it. In this study this was accomplished by constantly comparing new data with old data and using the comparisons to confirm or disconfirm emerging theories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that this process yields a more precise substantive theory.

Member check. Another valuable technique to establish trustworthiness is consulting with the participants as concepts, assumptions, hypotheses and substantive theories are identified and developed (Creswell & Miller, 2000, Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This step is referred to as a member check. In this study, member checks were limited in scope due to the inability to reach all participants at a later time. However, by taking the concepts, assumptions, and emerging hypotheses back to the participants, I was able to make use of member checks. At the end of each interview, I took a few minutes to make review the notes that I had taken during the interview. I shared my notes which included

concepts, assumptions and some suppositions about the information that emerged during the interviews with the participants. By sharing my notes with the women who participated in the study, it was possible to confirm or disconfirm (albeit in a limited fashion) whether the experiences of the women were truthfully and accurately captured. Ultimately, member checks helped to determine whether the emerging ideas were logical and accurate summaries of the women's experiences.

Thick rich description. According to Creswell and Miller (2000) thick, rich description refers to the detailed depiction of the participants, phenomena, concepts, categories, relationships and emerging theory. Creswell and Miller also explained that using detailed descriptions allows readers to evaluate the credibility of a research study. In this study, descriptions included verbatim quotes (and their translations) by the women who participated in the study.

Audit trail. Documentation of the analytic and theoretical processes of the research assure conformability in grounded theory study. Documentation takes place through memos which would enable another researcher to understand how the data were interpreted and how the theory was developed (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

This chapter outlined the methodological design and process of this research study. The purpose of choosing grounded theory methodology was to generate a theoretical explanation of the experiences of incarcerated women at EIMA which allowed the voices of the participants to be presented as accurately and truthfully as possible. Attention to detail ensured that the experiences of the women defined the theoretical model of the study. The next chapter (5) discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5

Findings

The data were collected through focus groups and in-depth individual interviews. As the data were collected, the discussions were transcribed, analyzed for content and categorized. Careful consideration was given to how the voices of the women were to be presented. It is important to note that all of the interviews were conducted in Spanish since this is the first language in Puerto Rico. Yet the data needed to be presented in English. Thus, the quotes used in the findings section of this project will be presented in English. However, the correspondent Spanish translations can be found in Appendix C. I tried to be very careful when translating so as to not misrepresent the voices of the participants, although I must acknowledge that at times this was very difficult due to the nuances of language.

The purpose of this study is to understand whether leisure and recreation activities serve as coping tools for women incarcerated at Escuela de Mujeres de Vega Alta, Puerto Rico. This study was guided by the following research question: Do recreational experiences impact the coping abilities of incarcerated women at EIMVA in a way that enables them to negotiate through the constraints of incarceration? Additionally and as previously mentioned, the sub-questions that informed the central question of this study were developed by focusing on the areas of free will and coping strategies.

This chapter presents the results of the coding and analysis process. It begins with a description about the participants. Subsequently, the main categories of the study are presented in three sections. The first section begins with a description of the causes of stress found by the participants which were a) the lack of freedom, b) the loss of control

over their environment, and c) the interpersonal relationships of the inmates with persons in and out of the penal institution.

The second section discusses the role that free will played in the coping process of the women and the coping strategies used by the participants in order to deal with the causes of stress, which were a) interpersonal relationships and b) recreation participation in activities that provided opportunities for physical and mental refreshment. An interesting finding was that interpersonal relationships were mentioned by the women as a source of stress as well as a coping strategy. Thus, interpersonal relationships are discussed in both sections.

The recreational activities used as coping strategies included writing, participating in prison programs such as workshops, religious programs and leisure time activities. It is important to note that because many of the activities in which the women participated provided them with opportunities for enjoyment and oftentimes were considered fun ways to pass the time, I determined these to be recreational activities. Thus, these activities in which the women participated while incarcerated were considered recreation even if that was not the original intended purpose of the activity insofar as they provided the women with occasions for healthy refreshing of mind, body and spirit. Still, the women did participate in activities in which the original intended purpose was recreation, such as playing cards, dominos, or sports. However, in order to diminish confusion, I termed these leisure time activities. Arguably, except for eating and sleeping, most of the time in an incarcerated person's life can be considered free or discretionary. Upon careful analysis, I concluded that aside from the time devoted to fulfill physiological needs, the women did not have many social commitments and thus most of their time was used to

engage in activities of recreational value even if the activity's original purpose was to fulfill a social commitment such as a job. Consequently, within the context of incarceration, even a job was recreation if it was enjoyable.

The first two sections of this chapter present the coping process itself, in other words, the causes of stress and how the women coped. The third section further delineates the outcomes of the coping process, which the women experienced as an increase to their self- reflection, self- esteem, and personal agency, which led to feelings of empowerment and a more positive outlook or vision for the future. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Participants

Because of the setting of this study, I was initially concerned about the number of women who would agree to participate. However, I recognized that the richness of the data is more important than the number of participants (Creswell, 2006). In the end a total of 45 women participated in the study, which was far more than initially expected. Their ages ranged from the mid 20's to late 50's. The crimes for which the participants had been sentenced included illegal appropriation, illegal entry, robbery and conspiracy for robbery, conspiracy to murder, accessory to murder, aggravated murder, aggravated murder with special circumstances, carjacking, sale and distribution of drugs, car robbery, manslaughter, weapons charges, possession and distribution of controlled substances, and kidnapping. Although the focus of this investigation was not the crime committed by each of the women, I asked them for this information in order to create rapport with them. Most of the women were eager to relate the events that led to their imprisonment and to discuss their lives prior to and during incarceration.

In the prison, I had the opportunity to hear the stories of many women. Some of the women were facing very short sentences and looked forward to being free within a period of weeks or months. I also met with women who were facing very lengthy sentences including life sentences. The personal stories of the women were very impactful to me. Some of the women were convicted for allegedly killing or being involved in the murder of family members, including their children, spouses and parents. As I previously mentioned, the types of crimes for which the women were convicted were varied. However, the number of women convicted for drug- related offenses surpassed any other type of crime. One participant in particular spoke about her success in the drug trade and how she was hurting because her children seemed to be involved in it as well and she desperately wanted to lead them in another direction, but she felt powerless because she was incarcerated. Another participant related to me the longing that she had for her children who she had not seen in a long time, one of them since birth because the father had taken the child immediately after birth and the woman did not even know the child's name or whereabouts. Of particular interest was the story of Maria Santiago, a woman in her 40's who was serving a life sentence for various crimes. I was told by a member of the administration that I should talk to her. I approached Maria to invite her to participate in the study and when I explained to her that her responses were going to be confidential, she was very emphatic that she wanted to participate but that she did not want her responses to be confidential. She wanted me to identify her participation in this study. Her story is that of person who engaged in criminal activities since a very young age leading to her incarceration at a young age. She arrived at the prison angry and explained to me that she rebelled against everything and everyone. She met a guard at the

prison who invited her to engage in self-discovery to understand why she was so angry. Then she began getting involved in the prison activities. She participated in as many workshops, sports and job opportunities available in the prison as she could. She said that her participation had been instrumental in understanding herself and what she was capable of achieving. She also said that she had been able to adjust and accept her life circumstances in a way that allowed her to not be angry anymore. The story of Maria Santiago was very interesting to me and reflected the many diverse experiences of the prisoners.

However, their demographical information did not reflect such diversity. All but one of the women identified themselves as native Puerto Ricans. One woman identified herself as Nuyorican. The term is a combination of New York and Puerto Rican, used to identify people of Puerto Rican descent residing in the continental United States and to differentiate them from people who are born and raised on the island. Additionally, this term is used as a description of the Spanish spoken by non-native Puerto Ricans in the United States. In terms of levels of education, most of the participants had completed high school. At least two of the participants reported having a college degree.

The women who participated in the study were selected using a non-probability convenience sample. Consequently, this sample is not representative of the general female prison population at EIMVA. Thus, generalizations cannot be made. However, the women in this study were similar to the general prison population at EIMVA in that most had children and the majority of the participants reported being married or in a relationship. Additionally, some of the women reported having grandchildren. This was an interesting finding particularly because the age of these grandmothers ranged from age

34 to 42. Many of the women had lost custody of their children while others had left their children under the care of a relative. Additionally many of the women reported being victims of violence in many forms.

Core Categories of the Study

Several core categories emerged from the interviews with the women, specifically 1) causes of stress, which include issues related to the lack of freedom, lack of control and interpersonal relationships, 2) coping strategies, which include engaging in interpersonal relationships and in recreation activities. Together the causes of stress and the coping strategies constitute the coping process. Free will emerged as a mediating factor in the coping process. Another category that emerged in the study refers to the outcomes of the coping process. As previously mentioned interpersonal relationships are both a source of stress and a coping strategy, consequently these will be discussed in both areas, first as a cause of stress and later as a source of support.

Causes of stress. The following section discusses the causes of stress reported by the women. Incarcerated women experience considerable stress from many sources. The stress of incarceration itself is a significant cause of worry for the women, although, some of its sources are perceived to be more uncontrollable than the experience itself. The causes of stress presented in this section were found to be significant contributions to the women's difficulty adjusting to prison life. The factors that contributed to a more challenging experience included lack of freedom, the lack of control over their environment, and issues related to interpersonal relationships.

The lack of freedom inherent of the prison experience contributed to feelings of loneliness, isolation and belonging in the women. As such these were cited as major

sources of anxiety. These feelings were mentioned as important reasons when deciding to engage in interpersonal relationships, particularly romantic ones.

The loss of control over their environment was also frequently cited as a source of stress. The lack of power to be in command of most of their daily lives was particularly challenging for many of the participants, particularly those who prior to incarceration held jobs, ran households, took care of family and in general felt that they were in control of their lives. The living conditions were particularly poignant for many of the women due to the precarious conditions in the prison. For many the living conditions in prison were remarkably different than those at their homes, although some classified the differences as negative whereas other classified them as positive.

Interpersonal relationships were frequently reported as a source of stress, particularly feeling abandoned by loved ones. The interpersonal relationships discussed by the participants in this study consisted of two major groups, those outside prison, (particularly with family) and those inside prison (particularly with other prisoners). In terms of the issues surrounding the women's relationships with family, the women cited the inability to see and communicate with family members, the inability to help family members in need as well as the inability to fulfill their role as mothers as particularly difficult for them. Regarding interpersonal relationships among inmates, many participants explained that dealing with friendships as well as romantic relationships was a considerable source of constant worry while incarcerated. Romantic relationships were particularly stressful for many inmates because oftentimes these required temporal shifts in their sexual identity which were contrary to their cultural and religious values.

Lack of freedom. The inherent aspects of imprisonment were frequently reported

as a hindrance to adjustment to incarceration. The most common source of stress for this group of incarcerated women was, as could be reasonably expected, the lack of freedom and particularly the lack of control over their environment. In this context lack of freedom refers to the physical aspects of incarceration, such as not being able to wear whatever they wanted or not being able to go where they pleased. While some of the women eased more readily into prison life, others encountered more difficulties having to accept the limitations of incarceration. These difficulties contributed to a general sense of powerlessness which negatively impacted the ability of the women to adjust to their new environments and seek ways to positively cope. The difficult living conditions (e.g. cleanliness, lack of personal space) experienced during incarceration were particularly stressful for some women. They frequently reported feeling deprived of liberty, resources, and basic needs. According to the participants this loss was experienced immediately upon arrest and later these feelings were cemented once the women arrived at EIMVA. The following is a sample of the comments provided by the participants regarding this issue.

Participant # 2 - When one arrives here for the first time and goes through those gates...and they close is like... (She touches her hair, opens her eyes very big and nods with her head.) It's like as if one is an animal. One becomes desperate.

Participant # 4 - I felt like the world was over, like I could not deal with it because... It's like you want to leave and you can't. I was thinking, wow and now what?

Participant # 7- - The most difficult thing when one arrives here for the first time

is feeling fear for what is about to happen and feeling that you cannot do anything that you want... That you have to do what someone else wants you to do.

Participant # 13 - Walking...one would like to walk and what they give you is a very small area in the yard that in reality...I end up just sitting down because I can't (deal with it).

Participant # 15- There are some many things that one would like to do but can't.

Loss of control over their environment. According to the participants one of the most poignant aspects of incarceration was the loss of control over their lives. Many of the women reported feeling trapped and unable to make decisions in their own lives as a source of stress. I asked the women whether they felt in control prior to incarceration, thinking that perhaps they felt in control of their lives at that point in their lives. However, what I found was that the women did not always feel in control of their own lives even before they were incarcerated. Many of the women reported feeling trapped in relationships or circumstances which led them into a path which concluded with their incarceration. The following quotes reflect this.

Participant # 3 - I did not feel that I had control of my life. I was into drugs and I lived for it. I did not have the willpower to leave that.

Participant # 5 - I trusted too much and I think that I did not have control of my life. I did not have any malice and that is why I am here. The murder was committed by someone else, not me but when one is too trusting that kind of thing will happen. You have to have

malice and more so when one comes to these places... You learn.

Participant # 22 - I did not have control. But I shut up and do my time. I had my job but I liked partying, breaking in, burglary, stealing too much. I liked to have too much fun. I liked doing my thing and that is why I came here.

Participant # 27 - When one is on drugs one does not have control over one's life and if that gets mixed with other things like people, you let yourself go and end up mixed up in a lot of stupid stuff.

Participant # 40 - What happens is that there is a lot of chaos (lack of control). One lets oneself go by enjoyment, enjoyment of drugs, enjoyment of prostitution, enjoyment of partying and one leaves one's life (behind).

The feelings of lack of control continued after the women got incarcerated, particularly when they started life at EIMVA. Many of the women reported that a sense of fear and vulnerability was prevalent prior to being committed to EIMVA. The following are examples of the comments made by the women regarding this.

Participant # 10 - People say that you are going to get killed and that this is the worst place in the World.

Participant # 17 - One hears that someone is going to kill you. This is not an adequate place for anybody. People told me "fattie when you go there, they're gonna make a party out of you. (They're gonna say) new meat, new life.

Participant # 1 - I was afraid because one hears that in prison the women
are wild and waiting to get you and do something to you.

Living conditions. The living conditions experienced in prison were frequently cited as a significant contributor to the women's perception of loss of control. Some of the women reported that their living arrangements were frequent causes of stress particularly due to the overcrowding and unhygienic conditions. Some women discussed this issue during the individual interviews instead of the focus groups.

Participant # 36 - There are so many people and I am a little bit...

Interviewer - Delicate?

Participant # 36 - Yes, but, one cannot say anything or act on it because then there
is a problem.

Participant # 38 - There are a lot of filthy people. You care that your bed sheets
are clean and then you look to the side (bed) and (her bed
sheets) look like she walked all over the room trailing her bed
sheets...very nasty...is gross.

Additionally, the women reported that it was difficult to live without privacy to the extent that they preferred to be in maximum security in order to hold on to their privacy instead of joining the medium or minimum security levels where they had to share living quarters with dozens of other inmates.

Participant # 5 - In Ponce (in maximum) there was privacy because one was
alone (in the cell).

Participant # 12 - The most beautiful thing for a woman is to have privacy but
there is no privacy here.

Participant # 20 - (Here) one cannot be in pajamas (because there are a lot of male guards). In Ponce there are more women (guards) working with women (prisoners).

Participant # 23 - It is so very hot here, but if you take your shirt off you get a complaint. Wearing undershirts alone is not allowed.

Participant # 28 - There is no privacy. If your underwear is stained (because of menses), people are quick to make fun of you. It is humiliating. One becomes embarrassed.

Participant # 26 - We have to speak clearly. Sometimes, like everybody you have to pass gas and from over there, someone shouts “oh my, you are filthy” and everybody makes fun of you.

The women explained that the living conditions at EIMVA were not common to all prisons where women are housed. Many of the women reported having lived at the federal maximum penitentiary facility located in Ponce, the second largest city on the island. This facility is commonly known as Las Cucharas because of its location, a neighborhood which bears the same name. The female population at Las Cucharas is limited to maximum security. The women explained that the institution provides the inmates with better living conditions. According to the participants the improved living conditions in Las Cucharas are not the sole result of administrative decision-making, but that the prisoners themselves advocate for their own needs. The women explained that the male inmates in Ponce are organized and in a position to ask for adequate living conditions. They said that the male inmates have “leadership in place.” Through this leadership the inmates are able to obtain many benefits and consequently the women that

are incarcerated there also benefit, even though they are not formally organized, as one inmate put it; “the women just follow the men”. However at EIMVA this is not possible. They are not able to organize themselves as the men do in Ponce because they are not allowed, not just by the administration but by the female inmates themselves.

According to the participants, living conditions will continue to be a source of stress as long as there is no opportunity for them to become organized. They explained that a spokesperson may be useful. The spokesperson was described as an inmate who can give them a sense of leadership. The women reported that there is no advocate at EIMVA that works on their behalf. When the women spoke about advocates they referred specifically to other inmates. In other words, a leader was defined as an inmate who acted as a spokesperson to the administration and not people in administrative positions even if these were in positions that allow them to advocate for the women. The reason behind this was that inmates are suspicious of the administration looking out for them, whereas another inmate can relate to their living experiences and can share their needs. The following are some of the comments made by the women regarding leadership and living conditions.

Participant # 6 - In Ponce there is no leadership (for the women) but they let the males lead them.

Participant # 7 - (In Ponce) everything is controlled. There is respect. There is an association (of the guys) and the women benefit from that.

Participant # 21 - Over there (in Ponce), there are the (gang name has been omitted). They know how to run things over there.

Participant # 24 - The women are not associated with any group but they do

benefit.

Participant # 25 - But they get treated worse (than the men). Their voice has less weight than the men's.

Participant # 26 - We have (the office of) complaints but what happens is that the guards' voices have more weight than ours.

The women explained that the lack of a leader is due to the internal competition among the inmates. According to the participants many of the incarcerated women turn against other inmates in order to be at an advantageous position with the administration. These were some of the comments offered by the women regarding this issue.

Participant # 3 - (Here) each watches their own backs. The associations are problematic... because this is no one's land.

Participant # 16 - In Ponce if the men say "this is white" it is white even if the administration says that it is blue.

Participant # 17 - (In Ponce) they (the men) have lawyers; they have an association...the Civil Association Pro- Inmate Rights that helps them.

Participant # 18 - What happens is that in Ponce, the men unite and they go on strike all together. Here the women do not do things well.

Participant # 8 - The (female) inmates themselves do not allow for a leader to emerge because here, if someone comes and says "let's get organized and let's do this", someone quickly tells the guards. Chaos ensues and negative things (follow).

Participant # 14 - People don't watch who they talk to. One has to be aware

because you don't know who is who.

The women also explained that at times they were not treated with respect and dignity by the officers. Consequently, adjustment to prison life was difficult for some of the women because they felt as if their worth as human beings was suddenly diminished. According to the participants, this feeling was not due to an innate belief, but as a result of the treatment received from some officials, particularly male officials. Several of the women also reported feeling powerless when facing unfair or disrespectful treatment.

Participant # 2 - (In the cafeteria) One cannot get served twice; they rather throw out the leftovers instead.

Participant # 7- The inmates get humiliated a lot in here.

Participant #12 - There is a lot of discrimination against women (here).

Participant # 29 - In Ponce, there is mutual respect and the administration reprimands the guards that are disrespectful towards the inmates but in Vega Alta if a guard is disrespectful towards you there is nothing that you can do.

Participant # 30 - There is one (guard) that is always calling women "ridiculous" and saying "go away".

Participant # 31- If one complains to the administration, one loses because they always say that the guards are right.

Participant # 42 - In Vega Alta (EIMVA), the male officers take the dignity away from the female inmates.

Many of the women felt that they lacked adequate food, shelter, clothing and hygienic supplies and medical care. For many this was a particularly difficult element of

life at EIMVA because they considered that the living conditions were significantly inferior to what they were accustomed. The following highlight some of the comments made by the women.

Participant # 2 - The food is bad... there is no compassion. I even started having stomach problems.

Participant # 33- Do you remember the soup with mold?

Participant # 32 - And what about the beans with worms? The officer did not believe it even though we (the ones that work in the kitchen) told him. But when he scooped some of the soup and lifted it from the pot it full of worms... (Her face is contorted with disgust.)

Participant # 35 - Once they served rice with Vienna sausages all week and the majority (of the women) were tired (of eating the same) but then one went down to eat and the rest has to go hungry.

Participant # 45 - If the food is cold they just say “there is a microwave in the session (room)”.

Shelter was frequently mentioned as a source of stress. The women reported that their living quarters were less that desirable at EIMVA. This was frequently reported by the women who lived in medium and minimum security levels, who live in rooms with multiple women. The following quotes reflect this.

Participant # 9 - This is an intake center but they decided to make it a permanent jail but still it is not ready to house so many women.

Participant # 11 - There were supposed to be air conditioning units in each of the rooms. They made them (the rooms) so that there would be air

conditioners but there none. What they give us is little fans and sometimes it is so...hot...

Participant # 26 - I never imagined that I had to live with 48 or 49 women in the same place.

Medical care was also reported as less than desirable and as a contributing factor to stress and preoccupation. The women reported that they did not have access to adequate care and that even the medical area treated them poorly. These are their comments on this issue.

Participant # 5 - Here what we get is Safeguard soap and some of us cannot use it.

I have a condition called urticaria in my skin that makes it very dry and that soap is horrible because it leaves my skin so very dry and it itches a lot but one tells them that and they do nothing.

Participant # 7 - Many of us have allergies and here they give us nothing (to treat that).

Participant # 34 - To go to the medical area takes a lot of time. They take forever in taking you there.

Participant # 36 - And what sometimes the women do is cut themselves. If they tell the officer "look, I need to go to the medical area" and the officer does not want to take them there and they (the officers) tell them (the women) no well...cutting here we go.

Participant # 34 - Because if they cut themselves they are taken much more quickly to the medical area because they cannot be left like that.

Participant # 37 - Yes, they are taken (to medical area) but they get a complaint. If

they cut themselves they get placed in isolated for two days and then they are taken to the psychiatrist.

Participant # 36 - Cutting (oneself) is the relief of every convict. We saw blood and the rage goes away and we are in control.

Participant # 44 - I have problems with my thyroid and the doctors (here) told me that they do not deal with hypothyroidism.

Clothing and hygienic supplies were also described as frequent source of problems because these were limited by the administration, specifically a male warden who did not understand the needs of women. The women reported that a source of stress for them was the lack of adequate hygiene supplies such as sanitary pads. The following comments by the participants reflect this.

Participant # 9 - Cloths are a problem because nothing fits you.

Participant # 10 - You ask for a medium sized shirt and they give you extra- large. (She stands up to show me why her uniform is so ill-fitting on her.)

Participant # 6 - And the panties... They give you those panties that do not fit and they get all stretched and they give you 4 panties every four months.

Participant # 8 - An with sanitary napkins, they give you 3 packages every 3 months but sometimes that is not enough.

Interviewer- And if you used them all, do they give you more?

Participant # 8- No they give you nothing.

Participant # 7 - Some women make tampons but if the sanitary napkin gets

damaged making the tampon then that is one less that they have.

An interesting finding was that some women did not find the conditions of prison to be depriving, but rather as fulfilling of their basic needs. The majority of the women who felt this way had been drug users. They reported that incarceration was a way for them to kick the drugs. These are some of the comments made by the participants.

Participant # 28 - This is not an adequate place but here I get food, I shower, I have friends and on the street I did not eat well, I slept anywhere and sometimes I did not even shower.

Participant # 35 - I take a shower 3 and 4 times a day.

Participant # 39 - We have control of our lives but not of our freedom. But here we can shower whenever we want, we eat breakfast, lunch, dinner we have the commissary.

Participant # 2 – Here they give us the three hammers.

Interviewer - And what are the 3 hammers?

Participant # 2 - Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Participant # 35 - I see this as a retreat. A retreat from everything to think, to evaluate, to learn to value my family.

This section presented the participants feelings about loosing their freedom, not feeling in control of their lives and in particular the negative impact that the living conditions have on inmate morale. The next section address another aspect that contributes to the stressful environment experienced during incarceration, namely interpersonal relations. Personal relationships in general were reported as a source of stress particularly when feeling abandoned by loved ones, dealing with friendships as

well as romantic relationships, which for many inmates required temporal shifts on sexual identity contrary to their cultural and religious values.

Interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships were also a common theme throughout my conversations with the women. The women frequently spoke about how their relationship with others impacted their lives while incarcerated. More specifically the women spoke about relationships with family as well as relationships with other incarcerated women. In this section, the experiences of the women regarding interpersonal relationships outside as well as inside of prison are presented. The focus of this section is on how interpersonal relationships are a cause of stress of the women. Interpersonal relationships were grouped into two major sections, relationships with family members and relationships among the inmates.

Family. Being away from family was considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of incarceration. Among the issues that exacerbated the negative aspects of the prison experience, the most frequently mentioned were feeling abandoned by loved ones, the inability to see and communicate with family members, the inability to help family members in need, and their perceived inability to fulfill their role as mothers.

The women explained that often times they felt as if they had been forgotten by their loved ones. This was partially due to the women's inability to keep in touch on a regular basis with their loved ones and to offer help when a loved one was in need. Additionally, other reasons mentioned by the women which negatively impacted their relationships with family members included distance and financial limitations. The following comments exemplify this.

Participant # 29 - I have not seen my family for months.

Interviewer - Why?

Participant # 29 - Because they live far and cannot come to see me very often.

Interviewer - How far away do they live?

Participant # 29 – En Hormigueros. (Interviewer’s note: This town is about 2 hours away from EIVA).

Participant # 41 - My mom lives in Lajas and she does not drive so she cannot come very often. She comes when she is able to find someone that would drive her here but that is not always the case.

Participant # 43 – It’s just that one cannot see the family much. I have not seen my family since they brought me here 5 months ago. When I was in Ponce they could go to see me more frequently but now they are too far.

Participant # 16 – I lost all my family in a massacre and it has been a while since I’ve seen my children.

Interviewer - What about the father of the children?

Participant # 16- He is in prison also.

Participant #41- My sister does not come to see me and that is what hurts me the most because when she was here I came to see her frequently. But she told my mom that she did not come to see me because she did not want to remember this right here and that there is nothing for her in here.

Motherhood was a significant cultural value for the group of women who participated in this study. Most of the women in the study were mothers and some were

even grandmothers at the age of 36. The women saw motherhood as their fulfillment of their femininity. When asked about the best way to describe one area that defined them as Puerto Rican women, without hesitation, motherhood was the response given. Many of them did not understand why a woman would choose not to have children. Further the women explained that their inability to fulfill their roles as mothers and take care of their children was a source of shame, guilt and stress. Some of the women made a conscious choice not to expose their children to their realities of incarceration. They explained that it was better for their children to think that they were traveling because that would not stigmatize them in their schools or in their communities. The following are the comments of the participants in this regard.

Participant # 26- I prefer that they don't come here, that they don't see me here because it is very sad, very sad.

Participant # 30 - I prefer that they (my children) do not see me here. Is difficult to explain why one is here.

Participant # 21- I tell my girls "mommy is in a school and she has to finish her homework. When mommy finishes her homework then she can go." And every time that they come they ask me "mommy did you finish your homework?" and when I tell them no they say to me "mommy finish your homework so that you can come with us". and that breaks my soul... I always cry after I see my children. It is very hard, very difficult.

Participant # 43 – One does not know to explain. The children do not understand and they keep asking questions and one does not know what to

do. Is better that they don't know too much. But the bad thing is when someone says something that they should not and they (the children) learn about it.

Many of the women were concerned about the welfare of their children. One of the inmates had experienced the death of one her children while incarcerated. I met with her on the day following the death. When the topic of children and family surfaced she cried and expressed feeling very helpless and unable to provide consolation to her other children, particularly the son in whose arms the other one had died. Other inmates expressed feeling fearful for their children because they were not present to make sure that they would not be harmed. They frequently reported feelings of concern about how their incarceration would negatively affect their children's possibility to succeed in the future. These are the comments made by the participants regarding these issues.

Participant #37- My children are with my mom. I know that they are ok but I cannot do anything for them if something happens...

Participant #42- I try to check on them when I talk to them and try to give them advice when I can.

Participant # 1- I tell them that I am in a special school for people that behave badly and that I have to stay because I behave badly. I do not know how they will understand. I do not what else to tell them.

Participant #9 - I do not know where my children are. I know about relatives (of the fathers) that know about the children, but I know nothing about the baby. I know that the dad took the baby to the United States but I do not know the name (of the baby)... It has been 4 years since I have seen my children.

But my mom always seeks me out. She was the one who always looked for me at the point (Interviewer's note: The point is the place to get drugs).

Participant #24- I try to talk to my children several times per week so that I can give them advice and check on them but it is difficult when you are not with them. I am fearful that something might happen to them, that someone might...do something to them. The street is not good. They are with my mom and she looks after them but it is not the same as if I were there. I do not understand how there are women that do not care for their children or can harm them. I would die if something were to happen to them.

Interpersonal relationships in prison. The women described two types of significant personal relationships experienced during imprisonment, namely friendships and romantic relationships. The need for belonging was a strong factor in the development of such relationships. Also the women explained that they formed intense friendship relationships with other women based on commonalities, community of origin, room assignment and levels of mutual respect and trust. Friendships and romantic relationships allowed the women to vent their emotions and feelings.

However these relationships were also a source of stress for the women, particularly because they had to decide when to be trusting of other inmates. Although they felt comfortable expressing some emotions such as sadness and grief, they said that sometimes expressing emotions can be difficult and can result on taunting by other inmates. More specifically, they feared being ridiculed, being taken advantage, being perceived as weak, and being perceived as if they feel that they are better than the other

inmates as potential negative consequences of expressing their true feelings.

Additionally, emotions related to frustration and anger or despair were not particularly welcomed as they could be perceived as manipulation. However, they stated that most of the inmates were understanding and comforted one another. Some of the women disclosed that they were apprehensive of expressing their emotions because they could be sent to the suicide watch unit, which was described as very inadequate.

Friendships in prison. The women reported that they were very careful when developing new friendships particularly because of the potential of being used and controlled. Many women explained that the ability to buy provisions at the commissary made them potential targets for manipulation by other inmates who could not get the economic resources to provide themselves with items such as soda, snacks, personal items and cigarettes. Most of the women explained that it was best to have someone they could trust because that made them feel safe. The pervasive feeling was in order to engage in a close interpersonal relationship with another inmate the women needed to be careful because they could be manipulated. Some of the participants also reported that forming relationships, friendships or romantic, was not worthwhile because of their temporary nature.

Participant #1 - When you talk (to someone) you know and you deal (with someone) and you see until you realize that that inmate is a person in whom you can trust.

Participant #10 - You have to be careful because some women are nice to you so that you do favors for them, give them commissary, cigarettes and if you don't have something to give them they move on to the next.

Participant #18 - I have acquaintances but some times there are so many things that

happen that the best thing is to not be close to anyone.

Participant #27- I did not come here to make friends. I am not here to make friends.

Participant #32 - It is not the same as on the street. On the street you have more opportunities to know the person but here you never know...

The women also explained that there were some clicks among the inmates, such as the “buchos” or butch women, who fulfilled the male role within the population. Another click was composed by the ultra feminine women, who enjoy emphasizing their femininity through regular use of makeup, and another was the religious crowd, who consistently participated in religious activities regardless of their denomination. The women also described groups that were formed throughout the prison among women who did not fall within a specific category. A few of the women identified themselves as loners emphasizing that although they got along with other inmates, they spent most of their free time on their own in order to avoid problems with other inmates as well as with the staff.

Romantic relationships. One of the questions included in the study was whether the women were involved in romantic relationships while in prison. The women were not surprised or offended by the inclusion of questions about their romantic relationships. Nonetheless, during the conversations most of the women were apprehensive at first to discuss the subject due to shame. Generally, the women that were not uncomfortable with the subject were the ones who identified themselves as “true” lesbians. Some of the women explained that they would continue their romantic relationship outside the institution. However, most frequently the women explained that their homosexual relationships in the prison were merely a consequence of their environment and not a

reflection of the true identity.

One of the women explained that her relationship with another inmate was particularly stressful because she wanted the relationship to end but her partner did not. Additionally, some of the women explained that their romantic engagement with other women was sinful and contrary to their religious beliefs. The inability to disengage themselves from the relationship was very difficult for some of the women. Some of them explained that they were in love with their partner but they knew that to continue their relationship would mean being stigmatized by their families and condemned by God. Some explained that the religious leaders that visited the institution emphasize this during their services.

Participant # 26- I am with someone but it is not right. (Why?) Because that is a sin. God made man and woman but...

Participant #23 - It is difficult because the guilt and the desire of being with someone are problematic.

Participant # 1- There are inmates that have one (a partner) here and a husband on the street. They know that it is not right. God punishes that but the situation is there and well...

Participant # 20- I have someone in here but I know this is not right. She wants to continue (the relationship) when we get out but I do not. It is wrong.

Interviewer- Why?

Participant #20- Because homosexuality is a sin.

Interviewer- Do you consider yourself lesbian?

Participant #20- No (she emphasizes). What happens is that... well you fall into it

because you are lonely and when you realize it you are already in a relationship.

Participant # 26- I tried (a homosexual relationship) with someone but it did not work out.

Some of the women explained that although heterosexual, they engaged in romantic relationships with other women. For some of the women it was difficult to admit that they had engaged in a homosexual relationship out of loneliness.

Participant # 17- I have my husband but you feel lonely y you need someone. When I leave this place I will go back to my husband.

Participant # 6- There are some (women) that arrive (directly) from the street (and say) “no, I do not do that (get involved in lesbian relationships)”, this and that and then later are very much in it. (*Translation of saying was difficult.*)

Participant # 23- I have my partner but she knows that it is because we are here. She says that she also wants to be with me once we are on the street but... I do not think so.

Coping strategies. The following section discusses the coping strategies employed by the participants in this study. Three main themes emerged regarding coping strategies: free will as a mediating factor, interpersonal relationships and recreation participation. The interpersonal relationships theme includes discussions about the roles of family, friendships and romantic relationships and their impact on the coping process of the incarcerated women. The recreation participation theme includes discussions about writing and participation in prison programs and workshops, and leisure activities. But first it is important to highlight the impact of free will on the women’s ability to choose

coping strategies.

Free will. The concept of free will is important in this study as it is intimately related to how the incarcerated women choose their coping strategies. In other words, free will is a mediating factor in coping, particularly in terms of coping strategies. In this study, the concept of free will is parallel to the concept of freedom and refers simply to choice or at least the perception of choice. It refers to the ability and self-determination of the participants in the selection of the activities in which they participate. However it is important to understand that the way the meanings of the concepts of free will, freedom and choice are employed to evaluate an environment so highly constricted such as prison is not necessarily the same as if it were employed to evaluate the living environments of non-incarcerated persons. In other words, free will, freedom and choice may not mean the same things for incarcerated persons as it does for people in the open society. Given the constraints encountered by the women through incarceration, the idea of freedom or free will was related to the ability of the incarcerated women to adapt to their environment and circumstances.

The idea of freedom used in this study comes from the capabilities approach and Sen's conceptualization of freedom as positive or negative (Sen, 1999). Positive freedom refers to whether a person has control over her actions, whereas negative freedom refers to the ability a person has to act free of barriers imposed by other people. In this study I used both positive and negative freedom. In other words, I considered whether the women had control over their coping choices and whether they were able to choose coping strategies free of external imposition. Accordingly, the concepts of freedom and free will were used interchangeably. That is to say, freedom to choose coping strategies

meant that the women could exercise their own discretion or free will in selecting activities that were helpful for them. Insofar as the women were able to choose without coercion from the opportunities available to them within the confines of prison, I considered them to have free will.

In general, the women at EIMVA were able to choose which activities they participated. However, some opportunities for participation varied depending on the level of security under which the women lived. Women in maximum security were not given the same choices as women in medium or minimum security. For example, some women enrolled in a jewelry making class. This class was not available for women in maximum security. Additionally, women who were enrolled in the jewelry making class and who lived in minimum security were taken outside of the prison to participate in artisanal fairs in which they could sell their jewelry and make a profit. Although not all the women had access to the same activities, they still exercised free will in choosing how to cope and which activities to use to cope. For example, all women had access to support systems regardless of their security level. The interpersonal relationships in which the women engaged were instrumental in their ability to cope.

Interpersonal relationships as support systems. Supports systems serve an important role in terms of the ability of incarcerated women to positively cope. While there were women in this study that argued that they did not seek or needed friends or did not have family that supported them, most of the participants relied on interpersonal relationship in order to cope with their incarceration. In this section I will discuss the experiences of the women with family, friends and romantic relationships.

Family. Frequently several the women spoke about their families as positive

influences in their lives. This was not the case for all the participants since many had no family in which they could rely. Several of the participants were incarcerated as a result of crimes committed against their families.

The most frequently mentioned family figures were children and mothers. This was not particularly surprising because Puerto Rican society places a lot of value on mother-child relationships. Participants who maintained contact with family members frequently spoke about the positive implications of keeping their loved ones in their lives. The following quotes are examples of the comments made by the participants in this regard:

Participant # 4 –My children encourage me. I do not see them a lot but when I do it is a mixture of happiness and shame. When I get out I want to give them a good example so that they do not come here. I try to look after them and called them a lot. I knew that I was coming (to prison) and before I came I gathered my family and I decided everyone's responsibilities. I explain to them what was happening. Even after coming here (to prison) when I talk to them. They tell me what is going on with them and they seek my advice. Sharing day to day with my children is what gives me the strength to do this (incarceration) because it is not easy but I know that I will be stronger for my children.

Participant # 2 - I know that I will be able to be with my children (when I get out) and now I have a grandbaby and I focus on leaving this place and on having a job so that I am able to help them when I get out.

Participant # 17 –As soon as I get out of here I will look for my children. They are my

priority. It does not matter where they are I will look for them and if I have to get into the ghettos I will go in and I will look for them because now I have to look after my children.

Participant # 27 - That is why I am preparing myself and learning, for my children. I lost one (she pauses and becomes sad) but I have the others that are still small and I will be devoted to them. When you loose a child it is a pain like no other and I know that my children need me. It is just that in life there is nothing larger than one's children.

Participant # 41 –My son is with my aunt and even though I know that he is well I know that I have not fulfilled my obligations as a mother. Because of my son I will fight and I know that I will not be here for a hundred plus years. I will get out and I will fight for my son.

Interpersonal relationships in prison. The concept of friendships in prison was particularly interesting because of its dualistic nature. On one hand there was a general sentiment that friendships in prison were to be approached with caution because of the potential to be manipulated. On the other hand, most women established close friendships with other inmates. According to the participants' comments, having friends in prison gives the women the opportunity to spend time with people that understand what they are going through and allow them to let down their guard. The following quotes reflect the feelings of the participants regarding the positive aspects of friendships among inmates.

Participant # 13- It is important (to have friendships) because when you are here you feel lonely and it is good to have people with whom to talk.

Participant # 33- (To my friend) I tell her my sorrows and I talk to her about my children,

about my problems...and we help each other. We talk about our cases. I did not come seeking friendships because this is not the place to seek them. You have to be careful because you never know but it is very hard been without anyone that will help you to think about good things.

Participant #39- When I arrived I was very fearful. I did not know anyone and you hear stories about how this is going to be and it is good when you find friends. The days can be easier.

Participant # 44-(name) is like my sister and (name) is like my mother. I tell them my things and ask for their advice and we help each other.

Romantic relationships were common among the inmates. Although romantic relationships were stressful at times, the women also explained that romantic relations were beneficial for them. The most frequent reason for such liaisons was the need for companionship and feeling loved. The women explained that romantic involvement in prison helped them to overcome feelings of loneliness and isolation. The following comments by the participants reflect this.

Participant # 11- Being with another inmate is different because she knows what you are going through because you are imprisoned and other things like if you have menstrual pain and things like that...you do not have to explain it to her.

Participant # 29 - I have my husband but you feel lonely and you need to share, talk...I don't know...someone that understands.

Recreation participation. Due to the constraining environment, the concept of recreation referred to any freely chosen activity or experience which gave the women a

feeling of enjoyment, well-being and satisfaction. Consequently, all types of activities and experiences within the prison environment were considered as potential opportunities for recreation insofar as they provided the women with opportunities to release stress, enhance self-esteem, foster new interests, develop positive- decision making and problem-solving skills. Activities that enabled the women to improve the social component of adjustment to incarceration and gave them a sense of gratification and contentment were also considered as recreation opportunities. These included any activity whose main purpose was to provide the women with personal or job skills to improve their life or simply activities that the women found enjoyable.

Participation in recreation activities gave the inmates outlets to seek wellness in many ways. A common thread throughout my conversations with the women was their availability of free time in prison. In other words, the women spoke frequently about having a lot of free time. This finding was particularly interesting considering their situation as incarcerated women. According to them however, the pursuit of things to do was important because it enabled them to deal better with incarceration. Most activities mentioned by the women were activities for self-improvement. In other words, the women generally engaged in activities that furthered their educational goals, spirituality, and allowed them to have physical as well as mental and emotional release. In this section I will focus on the most frequently mentioned sources of recreation for the women: writing, prison programs and workshops.

Writing. One of the activities frequently mentioned by the women as helpful in coping with the stress of prison was writing. The types of writing cited by the women included poems, songs, novels and letters. The women explained that writing gave them a

chance to express themselves as well as release tensions and deal with difficult feelings that they experience during incarceration. The opportunity to write enabled the women to escape the confines of prison, albeit momentarily, in their minds. The general feeling was that writing was a positive activity that helped them see their situation in a new perspective.

Some of the participants explained that they were writing autobiographies. Those who chose to write autobiographies explained that this activity provided them with an opportunity to contribute in a positive way to society. By using their life stories as cautionary tales to help others, particularly women, the participants believed that they could be productive to society.

Many of the women explained that writing gave them a sense of purpose, something to look forward to during their incarceration. Some chose to write letters to their families as their preferred method of communication. This was partly due to the expense of phone calls which many inmates considered to be prohibitive.

Some of the women explained that through writing they were able to meditate about their lives and the impact that incarceration had had on their lives as well as their families. For example, some of the women explained that they wrote poems, short stories and even books about their lives. They explained that when they wrote they had to think about their stories and it was as if by writing about it they were able to face their realities.

Writing served as means of entertainment, as an activity to beat boredom, as escape, as well as a source of solace, empowerment, hope and even companionship. Many women explained that the creative power that they found in writing helped them to want to become better people. The writing activities of the women helped to focus not

just on their past lives and on those activities that had led them to incarceration, but also enabled them to ponder about the future and consider how they wanted their lives to be when they left the prison. Many of the women explained that writing helped them to learn about themselves, their families, and their circumstance in ways that they had not considered prior to incarceration.

Prison programs. At EIMVA the incarcerated women have access to several types of programs. In this study I focused on programs that offered the women opportunities to feel stimulated and entertained in some way, physically or mentally. In other words, I focused on programs that gave the women opportunities to recreate and entertain themselves. Within the programs offered at EIMVA there are workshops, religious activities, and official recreational activities. Some were offered with the intention of helping the inmates learn trades, obtain basic education at the elementary and intermediate levels, obtain the skills necessary to take the high school equivalency exam, as well as providing the inmates with tools needed to be successful upon release. The women are also given the opportunity to work. They are employed in areas such as the kitchen, warehouse or cleaning and construction crews. The women also have access to a library.

Workshops. There were several types of workshops offered at EIMVA (DCR, 2007). Among these were those which focus on teaching the skills of a trade such as craftworks, cosmetology, industrial sewing, computers, bakery, theater, office clerkships and processing of information, flower arranging and construction.

Other workshops focus on giving the inmates opportunities to learn valuable social skills which can help them inside as well as outside the institution. Among these

are programs such as:

- Program- You decide- in Spanish “Tu Decides”- which focuses on preventing juvenile delinquency by placing students in intermediate and high schools in direct contact with the inmates through presentations.
- Learning to live without violence-in Spanish “Aprendiendo a Vivir sin Violencia”- which focuses on teaching inmates to recognize and change behavioral patterns that promote violence and drug and alcohol abuse.
- Course of professional improvement through the restoration of values- in Spanish “Curso de Mejoramiento Profesional Mediate la Restauracion de Valores -which focuses on repairing pro-social values within the inmates. It integrates several programs related to education, evaluation, advice, employment and legal advice).
- Living together in the community without violence- in Spanish- “Convivencia Sin Violencia en la Comunidad” which focuses on teaching participants basic principles about risks, need and responsibility. It is geared towards people convicted of crimes involving maltreatment such as domestic violence or sexual offense crimes.
- Can Vivir- This program puts the inmates in contact with dogs and gives the opportunity to learn how to train dogs to make

them adoptable. The city of Carolina makes dogs available to the programs and inmates are selected to participate based on level of security and most importantly, on behavior. The inmates must prove that they are able to handle the responsibility of caring for the animals in order to be selected. Additionally, once selected for participation the inmates must remain in good conduct to be able to continue their participation.

Religious programs- EIMVA offers the inmates the opportunity to participate in religious activities and programs from diverse religious denominations. The institution does not have any specific religious affiliation but the women receive visitors from many different churches. However, it is important to note that the religious make up of Puerto Rico is largely Christian and Catholic. The women receive visitor from Catholic as well as Protestant churches, all which have a Christian outlook. There were no members of other religions that visited the women.

*Leisure activities-*The women incarcerated at EIMVA have access to several types of leisure activities. Among these are sports tournaments in boxing, basketball, volleyball, and dominos. There are activities during holidays such as Christmas, Mother's day and New Years Eve. There is a week called "Women's Week" in which the inmates attend talks geared towards enhancing their values. Additionally, during this week the women are encouraged to write about a specific topic and in that way develop their sense of inspiration (DCR, 2007). The women explained that they should have two hours daily dedicated to recreation. During that time they can choose to leave their rooms and walk out in the yard. This is referred to as active recreation. They explained that if the weather

does not allow for them to go out or if there are not enough personnel for them to leave their rooms, they are given passive recreation in which they stay indoors. The women also play cards, watch movies, listen to music, read, or call their families. The participants explained that frequently they are not allowed to leave their rooms because of a lack of available personnel to provide security. Without guards the women are not allowed to leave their rooms.

Participant # 35- It's been a while since they have given us recreation because there are no guards.

Participant # 3 - We are supposed to have recreation for two hours everyday but it's been months since we've had it.

Participant # 5 - What happens is that they can give active recreation which is when they take you outside and all you do is walk or they can give what is called passive recreation which is when they leave you in the room and you watch movies or play dominos or cards or they take you out to a gym that is falling apart.

Participation in leisure and recreation activities gave the women benefits that went beyond the activities intended purpose. For example, the role of participating in craft making was to give the women the opportunity to learn a trade with which they could earn money. However, as a result of participation, the women not only gained other benefits.

The previous sections discussed the causes of stress experienced by the incarcerated women at EIMVA and how the women dealt with those. In this study the coping process referred to the relationship between the factors that caused distress on the

women and the steps undertaken by the women in order to manage the distress. The following section presents the outcomes of the coping process. As a result of the strategies used by the women to cope with stress, they positively enhanced their general sense of well-being.

Outcomes of Coping Process

In general, participating in any activity that allowed the women to relax, refresh or restore themselves, physically or mentally, had many benefits. Among the most frequently mentioned were opportunities for self-reflection, enhanced self-esteem, agency or self-efficiency, feelings of empowerment, positive outlook and direction in their lives.

Self-reflection. The women explained that participation in activities such as the workshops allow them, and even sometimes forced them, to focus inwardly and think about their lives and what had led them to incarceration.

Participant # 3- When I arrived I was very angry. I was always fighting and looking for trouble but there was a guard that talked to me and asked me a lot what was the matter with me. I went through a lot when I was little and been here I thought about all the things that happened to me and little by little, the more time went by the more I thought about why I was here and what had happened. When I first arrived the workshops were different but I always participated I tell you that I like them a lot because you can do a lot of things and they help you to sit down and think in what you are and what you do with your life.

Participant #10 - I like the Workshops. When I took Living without Violence, I realized

how I lived and that there were a lot of things that I could change to live well.

Participant # 11 - What happens is that when you realize things that happen in your life is like you notice things that you did not notice before. It is not the same when you are in a room because there (in the workshops) you can think in all the things that happen and when you hear other women talking you can identify with what they are saying and you reflect and say “hey I did not know that or that happened to me too.”

Self-esteem. Frequently the women mentioned that participation in activities of recreational value often led them to feel good about themselves and their abilities. The following comments by the participants reflect this.

Maria Santiago- It was not until I came here and began the Workshops that I learned that my hands could do such beautiful things.

Participant # 21- I learned to sew. Before I came here I did not know even how to sew on a button. It is weird how in a place like this you can find things that make you feel good.

Participant # 22- Well, participating in Can Vivir helps you as an inmate to learn a lot about how to treat others with patience and you realize that you can be patient. I like it a lot because you get involved in dealing with the dogs and you forget your problems. Also I know that I am contributing to society because you are helping another living being. I am glad that I was able to get into this program.

Participant # 29- I like it because it keeps me busy and you have to keep positive because

otherwise you will not be able to teach the dog.

Agency. The women explained that participation in programs such as the Can Vivir program gave them an opportunity to act independently and to learn to make choices that yield positive outcomes. In other words, the women explained that they felt in control even though the prison environment gives them very little control.

Participant # 38 - I've always liked animals but here I learned to have more patience and above all be more responsible. I have the control of how to train the dog. Once I was taught the basics I take care of the rest. I feel good.

Participant # 40 - You have to learn how to deal with the dog because each is different. I think that the most important thing that I have learned is that I learned new things and that I am responsible. That is the most important. Also you have to have good conduct because otherwise they will take you out of the program. So you have to be careful not get into trouble.

Participant # 43 – I like it a lot because I can work independently and also you fall in love with the dog and it is good to know that you are doing things that will help other people and the dog too.

Empowerment. By participating in the workshops and other activities within EIMVA the women were able to not only learn new skills that will improve their lives, but also felt good about themselves and felt in control of their lives. The following comments reflect this sense of empowerment.

Participant # 14 - I know that I am in control of what I do. When I am training the dog I decide how to train him and how I will do it. There are times that you have to keep trying and repeating things so that the dog understands but

once he learns it I feel like I achieved it. It is like I could do it.

Participant # 19 - I like the workshops a lot particularly the one about living without violence and the pantomime. When I leave I want to go to schools and talk to the children about problems with drugs. I can give them the example because of what happened to me. I think that was God's purpose and why I had to come here, to create an awareness of what I can give and what I am worth.

Outlook-the prospect for the future. An outcome of participation was that some of the participants experienced changes in their perspectives. In other words, they were able to create awareness of their problems particularly those that had led them to incarceration and create a positive outlook about what they wanted their lives to become in the future. Additionally, they were able to create goals for themselves and visualize their lives after their release.

Participant # 36 - I was always partying and taking drugs and really I was not thinking about anyone but once I met other people and with the help of other inmates and what I learn in the workshops I think that when I get out of here I will be able to lead a better life and I will be able to be a better example for my children.

Participant # 15 - When I leave this place I want to have a food business. I know that it will be difficult because finding a job is one of the most difficult problems for inmates but I know that I can do it. I have my education and talking to people here and working I have been thinking that I can do it.

Researcher - How did you arrive to that conclusion. Was there a particular person or workshop that helped you?

Participant # 15 - Well, my friendships help me a lot because we talk and at times I felt discouraged and they would tell me 'girl you can do this and that and don't feel bad because this will pass and you will be able to move forward.' That helped me a lot, to feel that I had their support and also from the social worker but above all of the girls.

Participant # 31- I talk a lot with the chaplain and one day we were telling and she said to me 'I think that you should write your story' and I sat down and to do it I has taught me a lot of things about me. I have a lot of faith and I found the Lord here and I know that I had to come here because I was getting lost. I have a plan for when I get out and I feel calm because I know that God has something prepared for my benefit. I know that I will be alright.

Summary of the Results

Upon closely analyzing the findings of the study, the process by which the women cope with incarceration became apparent. Upon incarceration the women undergo a period of denial of their situation or false hope. Frequently, they do not readily accept their incarceration, thinking that they may leave the institution soon. After a period of time, the women accept their incarceration along with the constraints and deprivations inherent of the place and the fact that EIMVA is their new home, at least for a while. After accepting of incarceration, the women seek activities to pass the time while keeping them occupied. Participation in these activities leads to positive feelings and perceptions of freedom and independence. The women not only feel good about themselves and

learning new skills and discovering new ways to remain positive, but also realize that they can make choices that will impact their lives positively. At any point during this process the women undergo a self-reflection period in which they evaluate their lives prior to incarceration, the circumstances that led to their current situation, and re-evaluate their future. This means that the women start making plans about how they want to live their lives after they are released.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the results on the study. The illustration, which presents a theoretical model of the findings, shows that the coping process that takes place in prison begins with the actual act of imprisonment. Once the inmate has accepted the realities of dealing with the constraints and deprivations of prison, she encounters causes of stress which are specific to the context of incarceration. The incarcerated woman experiences lack of freedom, and stress stemming from the difficult conditions of prison life as well as from interpersonal relationships with family members and other prisoners. In particular, the incarcerated woman becomes preoccupied with the welfare of family members, particularly children. Additionally the need to reconcile the need for personal relationships while dealing with distrust or shame increases the internal tensions experienced by the female inmate. However, insofar as she acquires a perception of free will, she is better suited to better employ the coping strategies available to her in prison.

Personal relationships can be blessings in disguise for incarcerated women, particularly once they can negotiate them. They can offer the women sources of social and emotional support which arguable can make imprisonment more bearable. Additionally, the women are able to engage in activities which helped them to mediate

the negative feelings related to incarceration. Specifically, activities such as jobs or education which may be considered social commitments outside of prison become activities sought as opportunities for mental, physical and emotional refreshment, thus becoming recreational activities. The women also undertake religious activities and leisure activities in order to feel good. As a result of engaging in activities which the women feel have recreational value, they are able to engage in self- reflection and gain an increase sense of self- esteem, agency and empowerment, which provides them with a vision of the future that seems more positive than when they first entered the prison. Consequently, the incarcerated women's perception of free will increases and they are better able to use the coping strategies available to them. This becomes a cycle of potential improvement for the female inmate. The next chapter is a discussion of the findings through the lens of the capabilities approach.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

Recreation participation can benefit people by helping buffer the effects of everyday stress. Many researchers have explored the effect of recreation as it relates to the coping process and have founded it to be useful in helping one deal with the tensions and afflictions of daily life (Iwasaki, 2003; Kleiber, Hutchinson and Williams, 2002; Klitzing 2004; and Schneider and Iwasaki ,2003). However, the experiences of incarcerated people, particularly women, remain under-researched. This study sought to expand the stress-coping literature by examining the roles that recreation and leisure participation play in the coping processes of incarcerated women. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation project was to study whether leisure activities and programs serve as coping tools in the lives of incarcerated women in a women's prison in Puerto Rico. The capabilities approach was used a the conceptual framework in this study because it takes into account aspects of well-being, such as physical, mental, spiritual, social, and economic dimensions of life, which are important in the coping process.

A theoretical model was developed based on the findings of the study. As shown in Figure1 (See appendix B) the first step is to take into account the context in which coping takes place. The context is important because it helps to understand the particularities of the situation to be studied. The second step is to examine the elements of the coping process, namely the causes of stress and the coping strategies employed by the person or group being researched. Once the context and the elements of the coping process have been established, the third step is to determine the outcomes of the coping process, along with the mediating factors that may impact the coping process. The next

step is to determine whether the coping process taking place is positive or negative. The final step is to determine the effects of the coping on the population being studied.

The context for this study's population was prison. Faced with incarceration the women in this study encountered many causes of stress, specifically issues related to lack of freedom and interpersonal relationships. In order to cope with the causes of stress the participants used support systems, which included family and loved ones, and recreation participation. The outcomes of the coping process for the population in this study were an increase in their opportunities for self- reflection, increased self- esteem, agency, empowerment and opportunities to evaluate their outlook in life. The mediating factor in this case was the women's perceptions of free will in spite of the constraints of incarceration. The effectiveness of the coping strategies depended on the women's perception that they could choose to participate in activities without coercion. The more free will the women perceived they had the more effective their coping strategies were to them.

The concept of free will plays an important role in the coping process, in particular because it is a mediating factor in this process. As has been previously mentioned, free will is analogous to the concept of freedom and refers to the ability of the women to choose the activities in which they participate based on their own self- determination and free of coercion. The concept of free will was particularly important in this study for several reasons. First, the study took place in prison where the population's freedom is taken away from them. Second, freedom is intimately related to leisure. Iso-Ahola (1999) explained that leisure is characterized by an individual's perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation and feelings of pleasure, and this leisure state is usually achieved

through participation in recreational activities. He argued that in order for leisure to take place, a perceived sense of freedom and intrinsic motivation must exist. Also, Jackson and Burton (1999) argued that perceived freedom and autonomy are at the core of leisure. Thus, it was important to know how the women experienced freedom during leisure and recreation participation within the limiting environment in which they lived. Third, the concept of freedom is also related to the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999). Sen explained that positive freedom refers to whether a person has control over her actions, whereas negative freedom refers to the ability a person has to act free of barriers imposed by other people. I considered whether the women had control over how they chose to cope and whether they were able to make those choices free of external imposition. Accordingly, the concepts of freedom and free will were used interchangeably. As long as the women were able to choose without coercion from the opportunities available to them within the confines of prison, I considered them to have at least a certain degree of free will. Most of the women I interviewed at EIMVA had free will to choose how to spend their time. As previously mentioned, some opportunities for participation varied depending on the level of security under which the women lived. Although not all the women had access to the same activities, they still exercised free will in choosing how to cope and which activities to use to cope. In this study the participants' perceptions of free will and freedom allowed them to become motivated, and feel that they were in control of at least some aspects of their lives. Additionally, by participating in activities that allowed them to learn and cultivate new skills, the women felt more competent and this increased their feelings of motivation. This is in accordance with the theory of self-determination which states that conditions of motivation and autonomy appear to be influential for well-being

(Ryan & Deci, 2000). By perceiving themselves as having some degree of free will, the women also gained a sense of freedom, control and intrinsic motivation, all of which are important in leisure pursuits (Iwasaki, 1998).

Leisure and Coping

The findings of this study support the notion that leisure participation serves as a strategy for coping with stress in prison (Carter & Russell, 2005). The model in Figure 1 suggests that leisure participation provides a buffer against stress through its influence on how a person evaluates the stressful situations in their lives. By engaging in leisure activities the women in this study were able to re-evaluate their situation as incarcerated women in a positive way and as a result they were able to reduce their level of stress. This is congruent with Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993)'s assertion that leisure generated self-determination and social support dispositions buffer against stress.

An important finding in this study was that the women used support through their personal relationships and also engaged in recreational activities to cope with stress. This was compatible with Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) who argued that leisure is helpful in coping with stress through leisure companionship and leisure mood enhancing functions. By participating in the programs and activities available to them in prison, the women were able to re-evaluate their situation. Many women agreed that leisure participation enabled them to realize that they could improve their lives while incarcerated and become better people. The women explained that leisure just made them feel better about themselves and even though their goal was not self-improvement, they achieved it anyway. For example, writing was an activity that allowed the women to re-evaluate their lives. Many women wrote letters to family members, poetry, essays and books about their

lives and their experiences. Writing was often described as an activity used to release the tensions that they felt. This confirms what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed which was that all coping strategies work through reappraisal of the situation in order to achieve the desired effect in coping with stress. The women could not change the sources of stress because these were inherent to their environment. However, leisure served as a buffer by changing the ways in which they perceived their situation. They felt good about the activities in which they participated and by doing so they were able to reduce the stress that they felt due to their incarceration. Folkman (1997) explained that positive reappraisal may lead to positive emotions and as such it may buffer against stress. Positive reappraisal refers to the “cognitive strategies for reframing a situation to see it in a positive light” (p.1212). Participation in activities which the participants perceived as leisure activities provided them with the positive emotions that resulted in a reduction of stress. Recreation participation also allowed the women to improve their self-esteem when they realized that they had agency in their lives and that they could feel better about themselves in spite of their circumstances. Even though personal relationships were a source of stress for the women they were also used as strategies to positively cope with stress. This is in accordance to Iso-Ahola (1999) who argued that leisure is beneficial to a person’s health through the reduction of stress, the enhancement of self-esteem and the development and maintenance of social relationships.

The findings of this study resonate with Klitzing’s study of homeless women and the roles of leisure in their lives (2000) particularly because the experiences of incarcerated women are somewhat similar to the experiences of homeless women living on a shelter. In her study Klitzing found that as a marginalized group, homeless women

face stigmatization, stress, decrease in self-esteem and threats to their dignity as human beings. Incarcerated women also face those challenges. Additionally, she argued that “the use of the word leisure could be problematic to disenfranchised populations” and that “perhaps it is better to use the words free time, fun or enjoyment rather than leisure.” Although it is true that the challenges in using the word leisure in this study of incarcerated women were mainly due to language issues and incongruence in translation, it is also true that the women in this study consistently described their leisure activities in terms of enjoyment, fun and activities that made them feel better and cope with their incarceration. Klitzing explained that for the homeless women in her study enjoyment of leisure activities consisted of “time for self, including relaxing, leisure affiliation, with family, friends or significant people, and self-determined activities which consisted of doing something of a personal interest instead of concern for others” (p.145). The incarcerated women in this study also relied heavily on these aspects in order to facilitate coping. Particularly, the women in Klitzing’s study relied on social support in order to cope with their difficult circumstances. Likewise, the women in this study faced enormous challenges and relied on social support to deal with their everyday lives. Klitzing explained that in her study the participants were able to identify leisure activities that were fun, relaxing and brought them enjoyment in spite of the numerous restrictions and constraints within their environment. Additionally Klitzing found that “life experiences and constraints which were assumed to be highly restrictive to the women did not prohibit their enjoyment of leisure. Although such factors were assumed to be constraints by the researcher, unless they were perceived or experienced by the women [as constraints] they did not act as constraints.” (p.159) Likewise, in this study, I found

that the participants' perceptions were very important in order for them to negotiate through their circumstances. For women facing marginalization, "leisure can serve as a site for resistance by enabling them to serve as active agents despite the restrictions present in their lives" (Klitzing, 2000, p.176). Klitzing stated that "everyone has some power and autonomy in all situations" (p.165). This study about the experiences of incarcerated women confirms this statement. In the following section, the ways in which the participants of this study were empowered through leisure are discussed.

Capabilities in Prison

One way to understand how the capabilities approach is applicable to the current is to equate the prison environment with an environment of poverty. Regardless of a person's life conditions prior to incarceration, once incarcerated she may experience what could be considered as poverty, particularly given the limited resources available in prison. She may experience lack of money, lack of adequate food, shelter, and healthcare and other abilities to make decisions regarding her own life. The capabilities approach was developed to understand how deficits in people's lives can impact their access to basic human functionalities in order to live with dignity. Consequently, I used the capability approach as a diagnostic tool to assess the recreational opportunities at EIMVA towards enabling inmates to positively cope with imprisonment.

This study provided evidence of the utility of the capabilities approach in understanding the prison environment. It suggests that perceptions of freedom can be just as important as actual experiences of freedom when living as an incarcerated person. Sen (1999) contended that freedom is at the center of a person's capabilities. The women in this study did have freedom in spite of been incarcerated. Their experience with freedom

was somewhat different than what most people experience. They experienced a limited type of freedom. They had limited opportunities for employment and education. Also ate their breakfast, lunch and dinner at specific times set by the institution. However, they had access to showers without restrictions and they engaged in specific activities such as construction work, custodian work, behavioral workshops and craft workshops that enabled them to feel less restricted. Additionally, based on the findings, it was concluded that the limitations faced by the women while incarcerated did not preclude them entirely from achieving capabilities. However, in order to achieve basic capabilities the women had to rely on the perceptions of freedom and well-being. For example, while some women explained that they were having a difficult time adjust because they were not able to work and live in the same way they did prior to incarceration, other women explained that they were very happy with the work they did and the life they led inside prison because it allowed them to feel like free women.

Prison life exposes a person to restrictions in terms of basic needs such as shelter, food, healthcare, and opportunities to support oneself economically as well as to make decisions regarding one's own life, regardless of their life circumstances prior to incarceration. Incarceration is therefore a capabilities deprivation. A capabilities deprivation refers to issues, events or circumstances that limit a person's right to do well in life. Arguable incarceration is the factor that most negatively impacted the women's well-being. The women were not able to move freely or to generate income to support their families or to pursue personal goals the way a person who is not incarcerated does. However, this study suggests that the women who reside at EIMVA are able to fulfill many basic capabilities. Additionally, the study suggests that when opportunities for

social connectivity and personal capacity are available to inmates, they are able to increase their capabilities and cope better with incarceration. The degree of coping reached by an individual was contingent upon the opportunities available to them. The more opportunities available to a woman, the better they were able to cope.

It is important to make a distinction between functionings and capabilities. Robeyns (2003) explained that “functionings are the beings and doings of a person, whereas capability is the various combinations of functionings that a person can achieve” (p.11). Furthermore, Sen (1987) explained that “a functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Functionings are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions since they are composed different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom in the positive sense, what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may want to lead.”(p. 36).

Nonetheless, to understand how the capabilities approach can be used to evaluate the potential of recreational participation as a coping strategy for incarcerated women I considered the means they had to achieve functionings whether they had the freedom to achieve such functionings and finally whether they achieved said functioning. In the case of the women at EIMVA, the *means to achieve* were composed by the activities provided to the women in the prison and by what those activities provided to the women. The activities included workshops ranging from learning work-related skills such as sewing, to dealing with emotional states such as *Living without Violence*. The *means to achieve* are always influenced by personal, social and environmental factors (Robeyns, 2003). Robeyns refers to these as *conversion factors* because these “influence how a person can convert the characteristics of a commodity into a functioning” (p.13). At EIMVA,

participation in a sewing workshop facilitated a functioning such as acquiring the skill of sewing to get a job insofar things such as inmates' intelligence or willingness to learn allowed it. In other words, the sewing workshop provided the women with the functioning of learning to sew to gain an employable skill but this depended on the inmate's ability to learn how to sew. If the inmate could not learn how to sew, then the sewing workshop was of very limited help in achieving the function of learning to sew to gain employment. By engaging in activities such as sewing workshops, the women not only gained a functioning, but were also able to gain an increased sense of self-esteem, control and generally feel better about themselves. As a result, they were able to cope better with incarceration.

The idea of capability is "closely related to the idea of opportunity" (Robeyns, 2003, p.13). In this case opportunity referred to the perceived freedom to achieve. The incarcerated women's opportunity at EIMVA was close to the idea of Sen's positive freedom as opposed to negative freedom. Positive freedom means that a person can achieve something freely whereas negative freedom means that a person can achieve something because they are free from external coercion. For that reason, capability refers to the ability to freely make choices regarding one's life or as having agency. Continuing with the previously mentioned example of the incarcerated women at EIMVA and the sewing workshop, when a woman freely choose to participate in the workshop, then the functioning of leaning how to sew to gain an employable skill was achieved. Based on this, I concluded that the incarcerated women at EIMVA who participated in this research project had opportunities for agency. Furthermore, the activities offered at EIMVA which were considered recreational activities have the potential to facilitate functionings. Thus,

recreational activities at EIMVA can enable incarcerated women to achieve opportunities that may result in them achieving the goals of living a life with dignity. As a result, they not only gained personal capabilities but also positives ways of coping.

Sen (1999) believed that the basic capabilities of a person are: “the ability to be well nourished, to avoid escapable morbidity or mortality, to read to write and communicate, to take part in the life of the community, to appear in public without shame” (p.126). Nussbaum (2000) incorporated more feminist concerns into Sen’s capabilities and prioritized ten central human capabilities: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses and imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and controls over one’s environment. The recreational experiences of the women at EIMVA reflected in physical, economic, mental, care and social capabilities.

Physical capability. The physical capability referred to the women’s ability to move freely from place to place and to be secure from violence. The women used their recreational activities to increase their perception that they could move freely from one place of the institution into another. By going into a different building or working outdoors, they were able to think of themselves as free women. Additionally, the women generally felt free from violence. They felt that violence was generally something that was the result of one’s behavior, and thus was under one’s control.

Economic capability. Economic capability refers to being able to seek employment on an equal basis to others, get paid, to have property and to be recognized by coworkers (Nussbaum 2006). At EIMVA women obtained money as payment for work as well as from family members. Women are also paid for their work through

bonificación, which meant that hours worked counted toward the completion of sentences. A woman worked for a certain amount of hours and as a result the time of her imprisonment was reduced. Her sentence remained the same but the actual time served was decreased. The amount of hours worked and the type of work that counted toward reducing time served varied according to the level of security of the woman. This option was only available to some of the women in minimum and medium security.

Mental capability. Mental capability refers to the ability to cultivate human traits of imagination, senses and thought through adequate education that equips the individual with literacy skills and scientific training. It includes the ability to use the mind in ways protected by freedom of expression (Nussbaum, 2001). Activities that provided the incarcerated women with outlets of self-expression were instrumental in improving their coping efforts by shifting their focus from sole avoidance of criminal or inappropriate behaviors and into self-improving ones. Among the specific activities that enabled the women to cultivate their mental capabilities included activities such as writing, reading, and participating in workshops.

Writing enabled the women to cultivate their mental capabilities by providing them with outlets of emotional release that were creative and personal. The women in this study engaged in different types of writing. Some inmates expressed themselves through musical writing, some worked on letters to loved ones, others wrote poems while others decided to write about their personal stories. Engagement in writing seemed to be the most consistent way in which the women could face themselves, their specific situations and their incarceration experiences. The women's opportunities to write were not hindered in any way by the administration.

Writing as a recreational activity gave the women opportunities to improve their well-being. They explained that they were able to reflect closely on the reason of their incarceration and the purpose of their lives. In this regard, writing served as an educational opportunity for the women. Two of the women who wrote self- biographical novels explained that writing their stories pushed them to want to learn more, not just of writing as a creative process but also as a therapeutic outlet. Additionally, the women explained that writing helped them connect to other people. For example, a woman who wrote letters to her loved ones explained that she felt as though she was engaged in physical conversations with the recipients of her letters. She also explained that she was forced to think more carefully in order to convey her true thoughts and emotions.

Another way in which the women were able to improve their mental capabilities was by participating in workshops such as Can Vivir. Can Vivir is a workshop in which the participants learn to teach dogs simple obedience commands. The participants explained that this workshop helped them to become more aware of themselves and search for solutions to specific problems. For example, one woman explained that sometimes she needed to consider different ways in which to train the dogs because not all commands work all the time for all the dogs. Interestingly, she explained that she had become more aware of how impatient she was and that through dog training she learned many things about herself that will allowed her to engage in social interaction in appropriate ways.

Care capability. This capability refers to being able “to show concern for other human beings” and other species, “being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and to the world of nature” (Nussbaum 2006, p.77). Several recreational

activities enabled the incarcerated women at EIMVA to improve this capability.

Participation in informal recreational activities such as playing cards, dominos, and formal recreational activities such as Can Vivir and sporting competitions helped the women to demonstrate emotional closeness to people and animals. Participation in these activities fomented friendships that were instrumental in coping with incarceration and gave the women opportunities to care for other living things. Some of the women that participated in Can Vivir explained that they were able to care for their dog and form a relationship in which they felt appreciated, loved and accepted.

Social capability. Social capability refers to “being able to live with and towards others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another” (Nussbaum 2006, p.77). Even though personal relationships provided the women with reasons to be stressed, they also provided the women with opportunities to engage in close relationships with others. Personal relationships were pivotal in the women’s ability to cope because it gave them a sense of connection to others and it reduced their perception of isolation. The women that expressed having more positive personal relationships with family and loved ones coped better with the incarceration.

Research Questions

The following section is a discussion of the research questions of the study. The primary question of the study is addressed first. This deals specifically with the use of recreation as a coping tool. Later then secondary questions of the study are addressed. These questions focus on the areas of free will and general coping.

Primary. The principal question of this study was how do recreational

experiences impact the coping abilities of incarcerated women at EIMVA in a way that enables them to negotiate through the constraints of incarceration? For the participants in this study, leisure and recreation participation was fundamental in their ability to positively cope with the stress of incarceration. The concept of recreation had an interesting connotation in this study. It is important to note that the translation for the word *leisure* in Spanish is *ocio* which literally means *to do nothing*. Therefore, when asking about leisure I used the word recreation and the phrase *occupying one's time*. When I asked the participants what they considered to be recreation, invariably they described the two hour period that they were supposed to receive daily. Upon close analysis of our conversations, it was clear that all activities in which the women engaged while incarcerated fulfilled roles that are associated with recreation and leisure, such as opportunities for social support, perceptions of freedom, motivation and relief from boredom. By engaging in interpersonal relationship the women were able to relate to others, release stress, change their perception about their situation, gain perspective about their lives and make their everyday lives more fulfilling and enjoyable. By engaging in activities such as jobs in the prison and workshops, the women increased their perceptions of freedom and were able to feel better about themselves. The women were able to feel good about themselves and become motivated when they participated in activities such as jobs, workshops, religious activities, etc.

Participation in recreation also gave the women opportunities for self regulation and autonomy. The women enjoyed the activities in which they chose to participate and seemed to be able to deal with the rules and regulations. The warden and other members of the administration described the prison population as “calm without problems”

especially while engaging in activities associated with leisure pursuits. Participation in leisure activities gave the women an opportunity to handle their stress in positive ways. However, participation in recreational activities was not enough for some women who used self injury in the form of cutting themselves as a source to cope with the stress. However, in this study I did not focus on the negative ways of coping, and therefore I did not pursue that line of questioning. Additionally, during leisure and recreation participation the women were able to decide how to use their time independently of each other. For some women this enabled them to increase their perceptions of freedom.

Secondary. The following were the sub-questions that informed the central question. These focused on the areas of free will and coping.

Free will. The question related to free will was: do inmates have the freedom to choose how to spend their time? Do inmates have the freedom to choose how to spend their recreation time?

While the women were not completely free to choose how to use their time, they were able to choose from several workshops and activities. Leisure and recreation participation often led to feelings of freedom by enabling the women to engage in activities that increased their feelings of self-determination and control. In other words, by participating in activities such as jobs or workshops the women were not only passing the time, but also were able to make choices that had positive implications. For example, women that participated in craft making workshops not only entertained themselves and reduce boredom, but they also learned valuable skills that could potentially lead to new jobs and ways of supporting themselves and their families.

Coping. There were six sub-questions related to general coping. The first question

was: what stressors do inmates encounter? The main sources of stress for the women were the lack of freedom, the loss of control, the inability to be close to family members, especially children, and their inability to help them if and when they had problems. Additionally, personal relationships among the inmates were a source of stress. Friendships were difficult particularly because of the potentiality for deception. Romantic relations were also a source of stress because frequently these required that the women engaged in homosexual relationships which were contrary to their values and beliefs. The stressors encountered by the women increased their feelings of loneliness and isolation and as result the women became often depressed and powerless. The women also became anxious particularly if they felt that they had no control of their lives. Lack of control made them feel unsure about their future which increased their stress.

The second question regarding general coping was: what strategies do inmates use to cope with these stressors? Interestingly, some of the sources of stress were also used as strategies for coping. For example, interpersonal relationships such as communicating with family members were frequently cited as a coping strategy. The women looked forward to seeing family members, particularly children. Also, the women relied on friendships and on romantic partners inside of the prison for companionship and social support. Additionally the women relied on participation in activities that enable them to increase positive feelings about themselves and about their situation.

The third question was: is recreation participation a strategy used by the women to cope with stress? Recreation participation served as a coping strategy for the women. All activities at the prison were perceived as potential sources to offset the negative effects of the stress of incarceration. Additionally, all activities in the prison gave the

women opportunities for self determination, self expression and self control. This finding parallel previous research which found that recreation participation has the potential to enable empowerment by providing opportunities for social support, perceptions of freedom, motivation and relief from boredom (Coleman, 1993; Iwasaki, 2003; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a, 2000b; Iwasaki & Smale, 1998).

The fourth question was: How do inmates perceive their strategies for decreasing stress? Participation in leisure and recreation activities was perceived as an opportunity to increase their perceptions of freedom and gave them motivation to create and maintain a positive outlook. The inmates perceived their efforts as worthwhile in decreasing stress. The more positive activities the women got involved in, the better they felt about themselves. Their motivation was increased and they actively sought more ways to feel good and to obtain a different perception about their incarceration. For example Maria Santiago who arrived with a bad attitude, upset, depressed and mad at the world was faced with a lot of free time. During this free time she sought ways to occupy her time. She enrolled in jewelry making class. By learning to make jewelry she felt proud that she was capable of learning a new skill, that she was capable of “producing beauty” (her words) and that she could feel good in spite been incarcerated. She decided to seek other activities that replicated that feeling and throughout the years she has held a number of jobs in the prison including roof work and other construction type work. She also found participation in sports such as boxing helpful in feeling good about herself. Maria more that likely will never leave prison, but she welcomes everyday and see it as new opportunities available to her. She said that she is no longer mad at the world and that she is proud of who she has become. She attributes these changes to her participation in

activities that allowed her to be at peace with her environment.

The fifth question was: does participation (or lack thereof) in recreational activities facilitate or hinder whether the women view themselves as empowered? Women that participated in more recreational activities felt more in control of their lives in spite of their environment. Recreation participation enabled the women to increase their perceptions of self-control and self-efficacy. In other words, skills and positive perceptions of self (i.e. higher self-esteem, perceptions of self- control) were seen as result of their own abilities and actions.

The last question was: does recreation participation during incarceration influence the women's capability? Recreation participation does influence the women's capability by providing the women with opportunities for social connectivity and personal capacity. The women are able to increase their ability to achieve functionings, to improve their lives.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations. The interviews depended on the self-disclosure of the inmates and their truthful responses. Although it is assumed that the participants responded candidly to all the questions of this research project, the inclusion of a research method that would allow them to submit their responses anonymously could help to confirm or deny their responses during the individual interviews and the focus groups. Another limitation of this study is that the participants were self-selected, thus the sample was not representative of the prison population. However, the findings may provide insights into the incarceration experience.

Another limitation of this study is that all of the women were from Puerto Rico. It

may be beneficial to compare the experiences of these women with those of other backgrounds such as women in prisons where the prison culture is not as homogeneous. In addition, the inclusion of a research measure that allowed for the collection of more personal information would have expanded the knowledge about the population and their ways of coping. For example, knowing the level of education, family life and home environment may provide a better understanding of their choices and ways of coping as well as adjustment. This information was collected in order to build rapport with the women who participated in this study, however the women's responses were not considered in the analysis of the data. Further, the inclusion of questions regarding issues such as types of family and community environment that contributed to their development as children and their experiences prior to incarceration may have provided more insight into their ways of coping and whether the women's coping abilities were developed prior to incarceration. The study did not take into account the opinions of the prison personnel. It may have been helpful to investigate their opinions and thoughts regarding the prisoners.

Suggestions for Future Research and Practical Applications

The primary goal of this research project was to increase knowledge about the recreational experiences of incarcerated women at EIMVA. Moreover, this research project sought to provide insight knowledge regarding whether recreational experiences impacted the coping abilities of incarcerated women in ways that enabled them to negotiate through the constraints of incarceration. However, upon close analysis, I have concluded that there are other areas that deserve further development. The issue regarding the effects of recreational participation on recidivism is an area worth

expanding. More specifically, longitudinal studies that compare groups of inmates who participate in recreational activities with groups of inmates with no involvement in programs could offer further insight into the benefits of recreation inclusion in prison. Additionally other areas that could be expanded in the future include: whether incarceration time impacts coping abilities, whether differences exist in terms of coping abilities and outcomes between women that will be released versus women who have perpetual sentences; the impact of recreation participation and coping for female inmates who have been diagnosed with a mental illness; and whether culturally and ethnically appropriate recreational opportunities facilitate coping opportunities for incarcerated women. The findings in this research project provide the foundation upon which the research design of subsequent research projects may be developed.

The findings in this research project can contribute to the treatment of incarcerated women not just in Puerto Rico, but also in other correctional facilities. The inclusion of activities of recreational value as part of diversion programs in correctional facilities may help inmates not only to cope with the stress of incarceration, but also may help reduce recidivism by providing inmates with opportunities to exercise their agency. The results of this study may provide insight into how women cope with incarceration. Recreational activities can also aid on the transition to and from prison by providing women with opportunities of self-improvement.

Summary

An article in the New York Times (2008) stated that “the United States has less than 5 percent of the world’s population. But it has almost a quarter of the world’s prisoners” (p.1). However there is a certain cynicism that exists in terms of prison

populations, particularly incarcerated women. The prison population continues to grow at an exponential rate. More prisons are built each year and more people are in and out of the corrections system continually. Nonetheless, many people still feel uncomfortable dealing with this population. However, the countless problems reflected by the increasing incarceration rates in the United States are progressively harder to ignore. In 2011 the primary issue is not just how to be tough on crime but also how the economy is being impacted by the high number of incarcerated people. An approach being considered, calls for the release of some inmates in order to alleviate many states' budget crises. The New York Times (2011) declared that "states spend \$50 billion a year to house prisoners and experts say incarceration is the fastest growing expense in the state budgets, except for Medicaid" (p.1). Releasing prisoners makes economic sense. However, releasing prisoners carries a new set of problems. In New Hampshire, according to Jim Reams, president of the National District Attorneys Association, "the problems have to do with the fact that they didn't fund any system for the maintenance and the monitoring of the people in the community. They just started dumping them out with the predictable results". This means more crime. A revolving door effect takes place. Still no new programs are put in place to tackle the root of the problem which seems to be why so much crime occurs in the first place and how can inmates become better members of society? More consideration should be placed on providing inmates with opportunities to become productive citizens upon release.

This study sought to understand the ways in which incarcerated women cope with their situation. However the findings suggest that there is the potential for many incarcerated people to become productive members of society. By providing

opportunities for self-reflection and self-improvement released inmates can be empowered to lead meaningful lives. The primary contribution of this study was to show that recreation does have a place in correctional facilities and that it is not a privilege as was previously thought. An interesting finding of this study was that in prison, given the enormous limitations faced by the women, recreation can include any activity and not just those related to non-work activities. Even work related activities were considered leisure activities. The contributions of leisure and recreation to prison populations also present benefits that impact society in general and not just the particularly incarcerated person.

This study showed that the capabilities approach is a useful tool with which to evaluate prison environments. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that prison populations can lead meaningful lives. People's perceptions of freedom are tailored to the situation in which they find themselves. Even under very constricting circumstances, a person may see herself as free. Additionally, in prison people can find real opportunities to obtain basic human functionalities which lead them to seeking positive ways of coping and ways to live with dignity. It is possible to instill a positive cycle of self improvement in the lives of many incarcerated people. This is not to say that all inmates are alike. Certainly it is important to take into consideration people with irremediable circumstances such as severe mental illness or dangerous psychopathies. But if we can provide an inmate with real opportunities to learn new skills, to feel as though her contributions count, to prepare her to rejoin society and lead a productive life, then perhaps the issue regarding prisons will no longer be how many more to build, but rather how many to close.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, B., Humphries, J. and Robeyns, I. (2003) Exploring the challenges of Amartya Sen's work and ideas: an introduction. *Feminist Economics* 9 (2-3), 3-12.
- Aguilar, T. and Asmussen, K. (1989). An exploration of recreation participation patterns in a correctional facility: A case study. *Journal of Offender Counseling, Services & Rehabilitation*, 14(1), 67-78.
- Aitchison, C. (2001). Gender and leisure research: The "codification of knowledge". *Leisure Sciences*, 23, 1-19.
- Barber, K. M. & Allen, K. R. (1992). *Women & families: Feminist reconstructions*. New York: Guildford.
- Baunach, P.J. (1985) *Mothers in Prison*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Beasley, C. (1999). *What is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory*. Sage Publications: London
- Belenky, M. F., Blythe, M.C., Goldberger, N.R. & Tarule, J.M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bella, L. (1989). Women and leisure: Beyond Androcentrism. In E.L. Jackson & T. L. Burton (Eds.), *Understanding leisure and recreation: Mapping the Past, charting the future*. State College, PA: Venture.
- Belknap, J. (2001) *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime and Justice* 2nd ed. Wadsworth Thomson Learning Australia • Canada • Mexico • Singapore • Spain United Kingdom • United States
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) Retrieved from <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1745>
- Calloway, J. (1981) *Correctional Recreation Today: A Pitiful Reflection of our Past Inadequacy*. *Parks and Recreation*, 16-2, 22-28.
- Carey, R.J., Garske, J.P. and Ginsberg, J. (1986). The prediction to adjustment to prison by means of an MMPI-based classification system. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 13, 347-365.
- Carter, M. and Russell, K. (2005) *What is the Perceived Worth of Recreation? Results from a County Jail Study*. *Corrections Today*. 80-91

- Catalano, R. (1989) Aftercare services for drug- using institutionalized delinquents. *Social Service Review*, 63(4), 553-577.
- Charmaz, K. (2005) Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies, In Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edition (pp.507-535), Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis (Introducing Qualitative Methods Series)* Sage Publications Ltd
- Chesney-Lind, Meda. 1997. *The Female Offender: Girls, Women and Crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cofresi, N. I. (1999) "Gender Roles in Transition among Professional Puerto Rican Women." *Frontiers-A Journal of Women's Studies* 20(1) p.161-78.
- Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1997). *Research methods in education (4th ed.)*. New York: Routledge
- Coleman, D. (1993). Leisure based social support, leisure dispositions and health. *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 25, Issue 4, 350–361.
- Coleman, D., & Iso-Ahola, S.E. (1993). Leisure and health: The role of social support and self-determination. *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, 1993, 111-128.
- Covington, S.S. & Bloom, B. (2004). *Creating Gender-Responsive Services in Correctional Settings: Context and Considerations*. Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2004.
- Craig, E. (2005). *The shorter routledge encyclopedia of philosophy*. Routledge. London and New York.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2006). *Qualitative Inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions (2nd ed.)*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- Cushing, J.L. & Williams, J.D. (1995). The wild mustang program: A case study in facilitated inmate therapy. *Journal of Offender rehabilitation*, 22, 95-112.

- DCR: Departamento de Corrección y Rehabilitación (2007). Relación de Programas y Servicios del Departamento de Corrección y Rehabilitación. Oficina de planes Programáticos y Estadísticas Revisado: Febrero 2007.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1949) *The Second Sex*. Vintage Publishing
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp.1-29). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2002). *The Qualitative Inquiry Reader*. Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Diong, S.M. & Bishop, G.D. (1999). Anger expression, coping styles and well-being. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 4, 81-96.
- DuBois, B. (1983). Passionate scholarship: Notes on values, knowing, and method in feminist social science. In G. Bowles & R.D. Klein (Eds.), *Theories of women's studies* (pp. 105-116). Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Dustin, D. (1992). The Dance of the Dispossessed: On Patriarchy, Feminism, and the Practice of Leisure Science. *Journal of Leisure Research*. 24 (4), 324-332.
- Fogel, C.I. (1991). Health Problems and needs of incarcerated women. *Journal of Prison and Jail Health*, 10, 43-57.
- Fogel, C.I (1993). Hard Time: The Stressful Nature of Incarceration for Women. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 14, 367-377.
- Folkman S, Moskowitz J.T. (2000). Positive affect and the other side of coping. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55, 647-654.
- Folkman, S. (1997). Positive psychological states and coping with severe stress. *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 45, 1207-1221.
- Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R.S. (1985) If it changes it must be a process: a study of emotion and coping during three stages of a college examination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 48, 150-170.
- Fox, J.D. (1982). Women in prison: A case study in the social reality of Stress. In R. Johnson & H. Torch (Eds.), *The Pains of Imprisonment* (pp.205-220). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fox, K. (1992). Choreographing differences in the dance of leisure: The Potential of Feminist thought. *Journal of Leisure Research*. 24(4), 333-347.

- Fox, K. M. (1994). Negotiating in a world of change: Ecofeminist Guidepost for Leisure scholarship. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26 (1), 39.
- Gallarde, Marlene K. (2005) Parents in prison: The impact differential of gender on incarcerated parents. M.A. dissertation, California State University, Fullerton, United States -- California. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations database. (AAT 1426310)
- Giallombardo, R. (1966). Social roles in a prison for women. *Social Problems*, 13, 268-288.
- Glaser, B.G. (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of Grounded Theory*. Sociology Press
- Glaze, L, Minton, T & West, H. (2010) Bureau of Justice Statistics Correctional Surveys. Retrieved from <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/glance/tables/corr2tab.cfm#>
- Hahn Rafter, N. (1985) Gender, Prisons, and Prison History. *Social Science History*, 9, (3), 233-247.
- Hairston, C.F. (1991). Mothers in Jail: Parent-child separation and jail visitation. *Affilia*, 6, 9-27.
- Hanson, R. W., Moss, C. S., Hossford, R.E. & Johnson, M.E. (1983). Predicting inmate penitentiary adjustment: An assessment of four classificatory methods. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 10, 293-309.
- Hartney, C. (2006) US Rates of Incarceration: A Global Perspective. fact Sheet Research from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. Retrieved from http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2006nov_factsheet_incarceration.pdf
- Haywood, C. & Mac an Ghaill, M. (2003) *Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research and Social Practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hefferman, E. (1972) *Making it in Prison: The square, the cool, and the life*. Wiley-Interscience (New York)
- Hefferman, E. *Making it in Prison: The Square, The Cool, and The Life*. New York: John Wiley, 1972.
- Henderson, K. (1994) Perspectives on analyzing gender, women, and leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26 (2), 119-132.
- Henderson, K. (1996). One size doesn't fit all: the meanings of women's leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28 (3), 139-155.

- Henderson, K. A. (1990). Anatomy is not destiny: A feminist analysis of the scholarship on women's leisure. *Leisure Sciences*. 12 (2) 229-239.
- Henderson, K. A. (1990). The meaning of leisure for women: An integrative review of the research. *Journal of Leisure Research*. 22(3), 228-243.
- Henderson, K. A. (1991). The contribution of feminism to an understanding of leisure constraints. *Journal of Leisure Research*. 23 (4), 363-377.
- Henderson, K. A. (1994). Broadening an understanding of women, gender, and leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26 (1), 1-7.
- Henderson, K.A. and Bialeschki, M.D. (1992). The social structure of leisure and feminist research. *Loisir & Societe/Society and Leisure*, 15(1), 63-77.
- Henriques, Z.W. (1982) *Imprisoned mothers and their children*. Washington, DC: University Press of America.
- Houck, K.D. & Loper, A.B. (2002) The relationship of parenting stress to adjustment among mothers in prison. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 72, 548-558.
- Houston, B. K. (1987). Stress and coping. In C. R. Snyder & C. E. Ford (Eds.), *Coping with negative life events* (pp. 373-397). New York; Plenum Press.
- Immarigeon, R. and Chesney-Lind, M. (1992). *Women's Prisons: Overcrowded and Overused*. San Francisco CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.
- Iso-Ahola S.E. (1980). *The social psychology of leisure and recreation*. Dubuque, IA: Wm.C.Brown Publishers
- Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1999). Motivational Foundations of Leisure. In Jackson, E.L & Burton, T.L. *Leisure Studies: Prospects for the Twenty First Century*. (pp.35-49). Pennsylvania: Venture Publishing.
- Iso-Ahola, S.E., & Park, C. J. (1996). Leisure related social support and self-determination as buffers of stress-iones relationship. *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 28, 169-187.
- Iwasaki, Y. (1998) *Leisure and Stress-Coping: Reconceptualizations and Analyses*. Ph.D. Dissertation
- Iwasaki, Y. (2001). Testing an optimal matching hypothesis of stress, coping and health: leisure and general coping. *Society and Leisure*, 24 (1),163-203.
- Iwasaki, Y. (2003). Examining rival models of leisure coping mechanisms. *Leisure*

- Sciences, 25, (2-3), 183-206.
- Iwasaki, Y., & Mannell, R. C. (2000a). Hierarchical dimensions of leisure- stress coping. *Leisure Sciences*, Vol. 22, 163-181.
- Iwasaki, Y., & Mannell, R. C. (2000b). The effects of leisure beliefs and coping strategies on stress-health relationships: A field study. *Leisure/Loisirs*, Vol. 24, Issue 1-2, 3-57.
- Iwasaki, Y., & Smale, B. J. A. (1998). Longitudinal analysis of the relationship among life transitions, chronic health problems, leisure, and psychological well-being. *Leisure Sciences*, Vol. 20, 25-52.
- Jackson, E & Burton, T. (Eds.) (1999). *Leisure Studies: prospects for the Twenty-First Century*, State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Jiang, S. and Thomas Winfree Jr., L. (2006) Social Support, Gender, and Inmate adjustment to Prison Life. *The Prison Journal* 86(1), 32-55.
- Johnson-Listwan, S., Cullen, F. and Latessa E. (2006) How to Prevent Prisoner Re-Entry Programs From Failing: Insights from Evidence Based Corrections. *Federal Probation*, 70-3,19-25.
- Jones, D. (1976) *Health Risks of Imprisonment*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath
- Kleiber, D. A., Hutchinson, S. L., & Williams, R. (2002). Leisure as a resource in transcending negative life events: Self- protection, self- restoration, and personal transformation. *Leisure Sciences*, Vol. 24, 219-235.
- Kleiber, D. A., Hutchinson, S. L., & Williams, R. (2002). Leisure as a resource in transcending negative life events: Self- protection, self- restoration, and personal transformation. *Leisure Sciences*, 24, 219-235.
- Klitzing, S. (2004). Women in a homeless shelter: Stress, coping and Leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 36, Issue 4, 483-512.
- Kratcoski, P. & Babb, S. (1990). Adjustment of older inmates: An analysis by institutional structure and gender. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 6(4), 264-281.
- Kreuger R.A. (1988) *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage.
- Krushan, N. (1992). Women and Imprisonment in the U.S. In W. Churchill W. and Vander Wall J.J. (Eds.), *Cages of Steel* (p.331-358). Washington, DC: Maisonneuve Press.

- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Lazarus, R. (1999). *Stress and Emotion: A New Synthesis*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Lee, R.D. (1996) Prisoner's rights to recreation: quantity, quality, and other aspects. *Journal of Criminal Justice* (24) 2 p.167-178.
- Liptak, A. (2008) U.S. Prison Population dwarfs that of other nations. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/world/americas/23iht-23prison.12253738.html>
- Listwan, S. J., Cullen, F. T., Latessa, E. J. (2006) How to Prevent Prisoner Re-entry Programs From Failing: Insights From Evidence-Based Corrections. *Federal Probation*. 70(3), (p. 19-25).
- Little, S.L. (1995). Research on recreational settings. *Parks and Recreation*, 30, (2), 20-27.
- MacKenzie, D.L. & Goodstein, L. (1985). Long- term incarceration impacts and characteristics of long term offenders: An empirical analysis. *Criminal Justice Behavior* 12(4) 395-414.
- MacKenzie, D.L., Robinson, J.W. & Campbell, C.S. (1989) Long term incarceration of female offenders: Prison Adjustment and Coping. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 16, 223-238.
- Mannell, R. (1980). Social-psychological techniques and strategies for studying leisure experiences. In S. Iso-Ahola (Ed.), *Social-psychological perspectives on leisure and recreation* (p.62-88). Springfield, IL; Charles C. Thomas
- Marshall, G. (Ed.), (1998). *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Mellor, P.A. (2003) The inside story on prison health, *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 326, 59-61.
- Miller, R.L. & Brewer, J.D. (Eds.), (2003). *The A-Z of Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Morgan D.L. (1997, 2nd Edition) *Focus groups as qualitative research*. London: Sage.

- Nussbaum, M. (2000) *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. (2006) *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*.
- Olesen, V. (2003). *Feminisms and Qualitative Research at and into the Millenium*. In Denzin, N.k. & Lincoln, Y. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Owen, Barbara. 1998. *"In the Mix": Struggle and Survival in a Women's Prison*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Parry, D. C. (2003). *A Feminist Analysis of Women's Experiences with Infertility: Examining the Roles of Leisure and Conceptualizations of Family*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Parry, D.C., (2005). *Women's leisure as resistance to pronatalist ideology*. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 37, 133-15.
- Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP) (s.f.) *Programa de Gobierno 2004*.
- Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) (s.f.) *Programa de Gobierno 2004*.
- Penner, T. and Pevec, I. (2004) *Gardens in Prisons*. Retrieved November 28, 2007 from <http://www.cityfarmer.org/prison.html>.
- Pilcher, J. and Whelehan I. (2005) *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies* London, Thousand Oaks, New York: Sage Publications.
- Pitman, M. A. ; Eisikovits, R. A.; Dobbert, M. L. (1989) *Culture Acquisition: A Holistic Approach to Human Learning*. New York: Praeger
- Planell Larrinaga, Elsa E. (1996) *Puerto Rican rural women: Effects of male migration on female roles. A case study of a Puerto Rican community*. Ph.D. dissertation--The State University of New Jersey.
- Pollock, J.M. (2002). *Women, prison, and crime (2nd Ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Powell R.A., Single H.M., Lloyd K.R. (1996) 'Focus groups in mental health research: enhancing the validity of user and provider questionnaires', *International Journal of Social Psychology* 42 (3): 193-206.
- Pressman S. & Summerfield G.(2000)*The Economic Contributions of Amartya Sen*. *Review of Political Economy*. 12(1), p.89-113.
- Rawls J. (1999) *A Theory of Justice: revised edition*. The Belknap Press.

- Rawls, J. (1996), *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reed, W. (1981). The prison milieu and health problems. *Journal of Prison Health*, 7(2), 144-153.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Robertson, B.J. (2000). Leisure education as a rehabilitative tool for youth in incarceration settings. *Journal of Leisurability*, 27, (2), 27-31.
- Robertson, B. & Russell, K.(2006). *Correctional Recreational*. In *Introduction to Recreation and Leisure*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Robeyns, I. (2003). *The Capability Approach: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. 3rd International Conference on the Capability Approach, Pavia, Italy, September 6, 2003.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the Making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Schneider, I. E., & Iwasaki, Y. (2003). Reflections on Leisure, Stress, and Coping Research. *Leisure Sciences*. Vol. 25, Issue 2-3, Apr-Oct., 301-305.
- Sen, A. (2005) Mary, Mary quite contrary! *Feminist Economics* 11(1) 1-9.
- Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (1987) *The Standard of Living*, edited by G. Hawthorn. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.
- Sen, A., Agarwal B., Humphries, J. & Robeyns, I. (2003) *Continuing the Conversation*. *Feminist Economics* 9(2-3), 319-332.
- SenGupta, Hopson, Thompson- Robinson, (2004) *Cultural competence, in evaluation: An overview*. *New Directions for Evaluation* 2004(102), 5-19. The Belknap Press. Cambridge, Mass. London, England.
- Shaw, S. (1985). The meaning of leisure in everyday life. *Leisure Sciences*, 7, 1-24
- Shaw, S. M. (1994). *Conceptualizing Resistance: Women's Leisure as Political Practice*.

Journal of Leisure Research, Vol. 33, Issue 2, 186-201.

- Shaw, S. M. (1994). Gender, Leisure and Constraint: Toward a Framework for the Analysis of Women's Leisure, *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 26 (1), 8-22.
- Shin, HaeRan (2005) Gendering the culture of capability poverty: The lives and careers of Korean immigrant women. Ph.D. dissertation-- University of Southern California
- Sky, P. (1994). The power of perspectives: A case for feminist leisure theory. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26 (1), 88-96.
- Slater, J., Groves, D. and Lengfelder, J. (1992). Correctional recreation and its impact: Self-esteem components of prison inmates. *Psychology: A Journal of Human Behavior*, 29(3-4), 37-39.
- Stanley, L. (1990) *Feminist praxis: Research, theory, and epistemology in feminist sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1983). *Breaking out: Feminist consciousness and feminist research*. London: Routledge.
- Strauss, A.L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Stumbo, N. and Little, S. (1991). Implications for leisure services with incarcerated women. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 24(2), 19-40.
- Tamay, E. (1972). Psychiatric morbidity and treatment of prison inmates. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 53-59. Thoits, PA (1983).
- Torres-Vidal, E. (2008) *The Social Construction of Maternity as seen by women who were pregnant or women who gave birth while incarcerated and by staff of the Escuela Industrial Para Mujeres de Vega Alta*. Ph.D. Dissertation
- Travis, J., Solomon, A. & Wahl, M. (2001) *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Re-Entry*. Washington DC, The Urban Institute.
- Tseng, W., Matthews, D., Elwyn, T. S. (2004) *Cultural competence in forensic mental health : a Guide for Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and Attorneys*. New York, NY : Brunner-Routledge.
- Veal, T. (1998). Leisure studies, pluralism and social democracy. *Leisure Studies*, Vol. 17

(4), 249-267.

Ward, D. & Kassebaum, G. (1965) *Women's Prison: Sex and Social Structure*, Chicago. Aldine.

Wearing, B. (1990). *Beyond the ideology of Motherhood: Leisure as resistance*. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 26, 36-58.

Wearing, B. (1995). *Leisure and Resistance in an Aging Society*. *Leisure Studies*, Vol.14, 263-279.

West, H.C. (2010). *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2009- Statistical Tables*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. U.S. Department of Justice.

Whitney-Gildea, J. L. (2001) *Social connections and adjustment to prison life among female inmates*. PhD Dissertation.

Wollstonecraft, Mary (1792) *A vindication of the rights of woman*. Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. Retrieved from <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/WolVind.html>

Wood, J.T. (1999). *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender and Culture*. Belmont, Ca: Wadsworth.

Yin, R.K. (1989). *Case study research*. Newbury Park. CA: Sage

APPENDIX A

Using leisure as a coping tool: A feminist study of the recreational experiences of incarcerated women in a Puerto Rican prison Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism
College of Applied Life Studies
104 Huff Hall
1206 South Fourth Street
Champaign, IL 61820
217.333.4410 (p)
217.244.1935 (f)

Investigators: Kimberly Shiness, Ph.D., 217-333-5201, Marizel S. Dávila, M.S., 217-417-6269

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. The purpose of this research is to examine whether leisure programs serve as an adjustment and coping tool in the lives of incarcerated women in a women's prison in Puerto Rico. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You must be at least 18 years old or older to participate in this study.

Before you participate, you must provide informed consent indicating that you (1) are informed about the procedure; (2) give your consent voluntarily (that is, participate because you want to); and (3) know that you can withdraw at any time.

Procedures

This investigation will involve your participation in in-depth interviews or focus groups. As a participant, you will also be asked to share your experiences about using leisure and recreation programs to cope with your life while at the institution. The interviewer will inquire about your mood, coping, anxiety, life satisfaction, and perceived constraints. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. With your permission, these interviews will be taped and then transcribed. The tapes will be destroyed no later than one year after your interview. It is expected that all audio recordings will be destroyed by August 2009.

To complete the interview, you will meet a project investigator. The project investigator will be available to answer any questions you may have about the interviews. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. You will be given a transcription of the interview. You will have a week from the time that you receive the transcript to revise it and notify the researcher whether you have any questions about it.

To complete the focus group you along with the other focus groups participants will meet with a project investigator. The project investigator will be available to answer any questions you may have about the focus group. The focus group will last approximately 1 hour. You will be given a transcription of the interview. You will have a week from the time that you receive the transcript to revise it and notify the researcher whether you have any questions about it.

You may choose to participate in the in-dept interviews only, the focus group only or both. You may choose to stop the interview, stop your participation in the focus group or refuse to answer any question or questions at any time for any reason without any penalty. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and your decision to participate (or not) will not affect in any way any procedures or decisions related to parole.

The information obtained from this study will be used for a dissertation project and it will be disseminated in a dissertation, academic presentations, and journal articles. No personal identifiable information will be used in any of these venues.

Potential Risks and Benefits

During the interviews you will be asked to share your experiences with the recreational activities within the institution in coping with incarceration. During the focus group you will be asked to share your own experiences and refrain from naming other people. Please note that the investigators have to follow all rules and regulations of the institution and all illegal activity will have to be reported.

Some of the risks of the study include: providing information related to the commission of activities that are not sanctioned by the institution, the potential to offend other people, the potential to share private feeling and thoughts. In order to reduce these risks, you will be asked to share only those experiences regarding leisure and recreational activities that are sanctioned by the institution.

Participation in this research study may provide you with an improved self image, mental health, intellectual and spiritual well-being as it will focus on the positive aspects of recreation.

Confidentiality

No personal identifiable information will be obtained from you. The researchers will assign you a subject number, and will maintain any information about you in a locked cabinet. Efforts will be made to keep data confidential, however absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, particularly when participating in the focus groups as there will be others present. Additionally, you will be in touch with the office of the superintendent and or social worker and they will aware of your participation in the study.

Consent

When you sign this document, you are stating that the interviews have been fully explained to you, that you understand the data obtained from the study are to be used for research purposes only, not for the evaluation or diagnosis of any disorder. You are stating that it has been explained to you and that agree that your responses will be part of a dissertation research project and presented at academic conferences and published in academic journals.

You are also stating that you have had the opportunity to ask questions concerning any and all aspects of the interviews, that you are aware that participation is voluntary, that you will not be compensated for your participation and that you may withdraw from participation at any time. Additionally, you have been informed that your decision to participate (or not participate) in this study will not affect in any way any procedures or decisions related to parole. The parole board will not take into account whether or not you have participated in this study in their parole decisions.

If you decide to withdraw your consent to participate in this research study for any reason, you should contact Marizel S. Davila, M.S. 1-217-417-6269 (If charges apply, please call collect).

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. If at any time, either now or later, you have a question, you are free to ask it, and you can contact the researcher listed at the top of this consent form, who is responsible for this study. If you wish to speak with someone specifically about your *rights as a participant* in this study, you may contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at (217) 333.2670 (you may call this number collect) irb@uiuc.edu. An Institutional Review Board is a group of people who review research to protect your rights.

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews/ focus group discussions may be recorded on an audio recording device. I have the right to refuse to allow such taping without penalty.

I consent to the use of audio recording.
of audio recording

I do not consent to the use

I the undersigned hereby consent to be a participant in the project described in this form, conducted by the Department of Recreation, Sport & Tourism at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

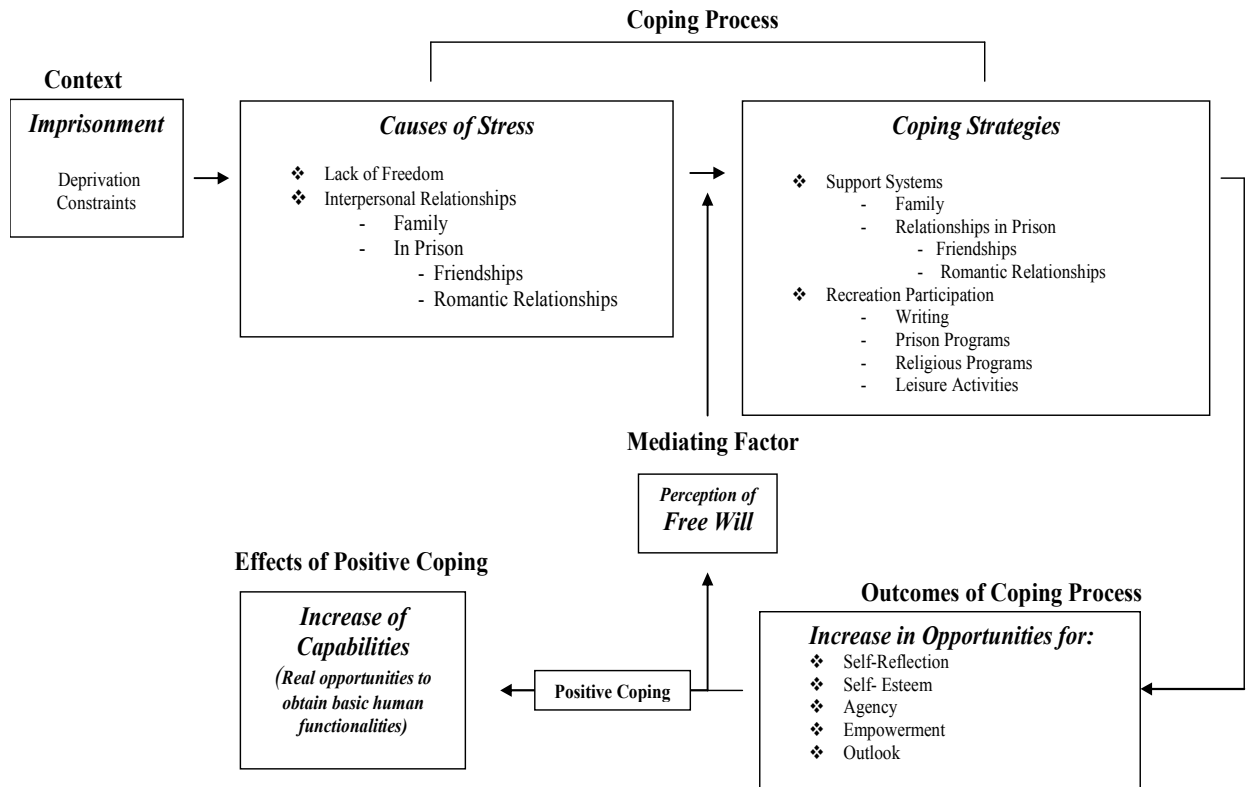
Date

Signature of witness

Date

APPENDIX B

Figure 1
Theoretical Model of the Process of Coping with Incarceration and its Effects on Prisoner Capabilities



APPENDIX C

Participants Quotes in Spanish

Causes of stress

Lack of freedom.

Participant # 2 -Cuando uno llega por primera vez y pasa ese portón... se cierra y es como... (Se toca el pecho, abre los ojos y mueve la cabeza.) Es como si uno fuera un animal. Uno se desespera.

Participant #4- Yo me sentí como que el mundo se me acabó, como que no podía acoplarme porque... Es como que tú quieres salir y no puedes. Yo pensaba, wow ¿y ahora que?

Participant # 7- Lo más difícil cuando uno llega aquí por primera vez es sentir el miedo de lo que va a pasar y sentir que no puedes hacer lo que quieres...Que tienes que hacer lo que otro te manda.

Participant # 13-Caminar...uno quisiera caminar y lo que le dan a uno es un cantito de patio que en realidad... yo terminé sentándome porque no se puede (bregar).

Participant # 15- - Hay muchas cosas que uno quiere hacer y no puede.

Loss of control over their environment.

Participant # 3 -Yo no sentía que tuviera control de mi vida. Yo estaba en la droga y vivía pa' eso. Yo no tenía fuerza de voluntad pa' dejar eso.

Participant # 5 - (Yo) confiaba mucho y creo que no tenía control de mi vida. No tenía mucha malicia y por eso fue que caí aquí. El asesinato lo cometió otro no yo pero por estar confiando es que a uno le pasan las cosas. Hay que tener malicia y más cuando uno cae en estos sitios...se aprende.

Participant # 22 - Yo no tenía control. Pero yo hago buche y tiempo. Tenía mi trabajo pero me gustaba mucho el pariseo, el escalamiento, el robo. Me gustaba mucho el relajó. Me gustaba hacer mis cosas y por eso caí en esto.

Participant # 27 - Cuando uno está en las drogas uno no tiene control de su vida y si eso se mezcla con otras cosas como gente pues uno se deja llevar y termina haciendo mucha estupidez.

Participant # 40 - Es que lo que pasa es que hay mucho descontrol porque uno se deja llevar por el gustito, el gustito de la droga, el gustito de la prostitución, el gustito del pariseo y uno deja su vida.

Participant # 10 - A uno le dicen que aquí le van a limpiar el pico a uno y que esto es lo peor del mundo.

Participant # 17 - Uno oye que le van a limpiar el pico. Esto no es un sitio adecuado para nadie. A mi me dijeron “gordita cuando tu vayas pa’lla van hacer fiesta contigo. (Van a decir) carne nueva, vida nueva.”

Participant # 1 - Tenia un miedo por que uno oye que en la cárcel las mujeres están al garete y pendiente pa’coger a uno y hacerle algo.

Living conditions.

Participant # 36 - Hay tanta gente y yo soy un poco...

Interviewer- ¿delicada?

Participant # 36 - Si, pero uno no puede decir nada ni actuar por que entonces es un problema.

Participant # 38 - Hay un montón de gente puerca. Tú te preocupas de que tus sabanas estén limpias y cuando miras a la del lado parece que camino por todo el salón con las sabanas...bien sucias...es un asco.

Participant # 5 - En Ponce (en máxima) había mas privacidad porque uno esta solo (en la celda).

Participant # 12 - Lo mas bonito para la mujer es la privacidad pero aquí no hay privacidad.

Participant # 20 - (Aquí) uno no puede estar en pijama (por que lo más que hay son oficiales varones). En Ponce tienen mas mujeres (guardias) trabajando con mujeres (confinadas).

Participant # 23 - Aquí hace calor, pero si uno se quita la camisa le dan una querella. Las camisillas no proceden.

Participant # 28 - No hay privacidad. Si tienes el panty machado, rápido te relajan. Eso es humillante. Uno se abochorna.

Participant # 26 - Y hay que hablar claro. A veces pues como todo el mundo uno

tiene que tirarse un peito y allá viene una (y grita) “ay que puerca” y todo el mundo se entera y te pegan el vellón.

The following are some of the comments made by the women regarding leadership and living conditions.

Participant # 6 - En Ponce no había liderato (para las mujeres) pero se dejaban llevar por los varones.

Participant # 7 - (En Ponce) Todo es controlado. Hay un respeto. Hay una asociación (de los hombres) y las mujeres se benefician de eso.

Participant # 21 - Allí (en Ponce), están los (gang names have been deleted). Ellos saben correr eso allí.

Participant # 24 - Las mujeres no están asociadas con ningún grupo pero se benefician.

Participant # 25 - Pero se les trata peor (que los hombres). Su voz pesa menos que la de los varones.

Participant # 26 - Aquí uno tiene (la oficina de) quejas y agravios pero lo que pasa es que las palabras de los guardias pesan más que las de uno.

These were some of the comments offered by the women regarding the lack of a leader.

Participant # 3 - (Aquí) cada cual vela solo por lo suyo. Las asociaciones son problemáticas... porque esto es tierra de nadie.

Participant # 16 - En Ponce si los varones dicen “esto es blanco” es blanco aunque la administración diga que es azul.

Participant # 17 - (En Ponce) ellos tienen abogados, tienen una corporación... La asociación civil pro-derecho al confinado que los ayuda.

Participant # 18 - Lo que pasa es que en Ponce, los varones se unen y se van en baja (huelga) todos juntos. Aquí las mujeres se van por las malas.

Participant # 8 - Las mismas confinadas no dejan que haya un líder por que si aqui empieza a subir un líder, alguien que viene y dice “a vamos a organizarnos y a hacer esto” rápido van y se lo dicen a los guardias. Se forma caos y cosas negativas.

Participant # 14 - No se vela con quien se habla. Hay que estar pendiente por que uno no sabe quien es quien.

Several of the women also reported feeling powerless when facing unfair or disrespectful treatment.

Participant # 2 - (En la cafetería) Uno no puede repetir, mejor botan la comida.

Participant # 7- Aquí humillan mucho al confinado.

Participant #12 - Hay mucho discrimen contra la mujer (aquí).

Participant # 29 - En Ponce, hay respeto mutuo y la administración le llama la atención a los guardias que les faltan el respeto a los confinados pero en Vega Alta (EIMVA) si te faltan el respeto no puedes hacer nada.

Participant # 30 - Hay uno que se pasa faltado el respeto y se pasa diciendo “ridícula” y “lárgate”.

Participant # 31- Si uno hace una queja de agravios sale perdiendo por que le dan la razón a los guardias y hasta te pueden trancar hasta por 30 días.

Participant # 42 - En Vega Alta (EIMVA), los oficiales varones le quitan la dignidad a las confinadas.

The following highlight some of the comments made by the women about lack of adequate food, shelter, clothing and hygienic supplies and medical care.

Participant # 2 - La comida es mala...no hay compasión. Yo hasta empecé a padecer del estomago.

Participant # 33- ¿Se acuerdan lo del asopao con hongo?

Participant # 32 -¿Y los de las habichuelas con gusanos? El oficial no lo creía ni a nosotros (las que trabajan en la cocina) pero cuando metió la cuchara y la levanto salio llenita de gusanos... (Pone una cara de asco.)

Participant # 35 - Una vez dieron arroz con salchicha toda la semana y la mayoría ya estaba cansa (de comer lo mismo) pero como una bajo a comer, las otras se tuvieron que quedar con hambre.

Participant # 45 - Si la comida esta fría lo que dicen es “en la sesión hay microondas”.

The following quotes reflect thie womens opinions about shelter.

Participant # 9 - Esto es un centro de ingreso pero decidieron hacerlo una cárcel permanente pero aun no esta preparado para que tanta mujer viva aquí.

Participant # 11 - En los salones se supone que hubiera aire acondicionado. Los hicieron pa que hubiera aire pero no hay aire. Lo que nos tienen son unos abaniquitos y a veces se pone...hace un calor...

Participant # 26 -Yo nunca me imagine que tuviera que vivir con 48-49 mujeres en un mismo sitio.

Medical care was also reported as less than desirable and as a contributing factor to stress and preoccupation.

Participant # 5 - Aquí lo que le dan a uno es ese jabón Safeguard y algunas no podemos usarlo. Yo tengo una condición de urticaria en la piel que hace que tenga la piel bien reseca y ese jabón es malísimo para mí porque me deja la piel bien reseca y me pica mucho pero uno dice eso y no hacen nada.

Participant # 7 - Muchas padecemos de alergias y aquí no se nos provee nada.

Participant # 34 - Ir al área medica toma un montón de tiempo. Se tardan muchísimo en llevar a uno...

Participant # 36 - Y lo que las mujeres hacen a veces es cortarse. Si le dicen al oficial "mira necesito a área medica" y el oficial no quiere y le dicen que no pues a cortarse...

Participant # 34 Porque si se cortan pues la llevan más rápido a área medica porque no las pueden dejar así...

Participant # 37 - Si, las llevan pero les dan una querella. Si se cortan las aíslan por 2 días y después las llevan al psiquiatra.

Participant # 36 - Cortarse es el desquite de todo confinado y vimos sangre y se fue el coraje y se obtiene el control.

Participant # 44 - Yo padezco de la tiroides y a mi los médicos (aquí) me dijeron que ellos no bregan con hipotiroidismo.

Clothing and hygienic supplies were also described as frequent source of problems because these were limited by the administration, specifically a male warden who did not understand the needs of women.

Participant # 9 - La ropa es un lío porque lo que te dan no te sirve.

Participant # 10 - Tu le pides una camisa size medium y te la dan extra large (She stands up to show me why her uniform is so ill-fitting on her.)

Participant # 6 - Y los panties...lo que le dan a uno son esos panties (brand) que no sirven y se estiran de nada y a uno le dan 4 panties cada 4 meses.

Participant # 8 - Y las toallas sanitarias, le dan a uno 3 paquetes cada tres meses y a veces eso no le da a uno.

Interviewer- ¿Y si se te acaban te dan mas?

Participant # 8- No, no dan na.

Participant # 7 - Algunas hacen tampones pero si se dañan (la toalla sanitaria) haciendo el tampón pues eso es una menos que tienen.

An interesting finding was that some women did not find the conditions of prison to be depriving, but rather as fulfilling of their basic needs.

Participant # 28 - No es un sitio adecuado pero aquí como, me baño, tengo amistades y en la calle yo no comía bien, dormía por ahí, a veces ni me bañaba.

Participant # 35 - Yo me baño 3 y 4 veces al día.

Participant # 39 - Tenemos el control de nuestras vidas pero no la libertad. Pero aquí nos bañamos cuando queremos, desayunamos, almorzamos, comemos, tenemos la comisaría.

Participant # 2 - Aquí nos dan los tres martillos.

Interviewer- ¿Y que son los 3 martillos?

Participant # 2 - Desayuno, almuerzo y comida.

Participant # 35 - Yo esto lo veo como un retiro. Un retiro de todo para pensar, para evaluar, para aprender a valorar a mi familia.

Interpersonal relationships.

Family.

Participant # 29 - Yo no veo a mi familia hace meses.

Interviewer - ¿Por qué?

Participant # 29 - Por que ellos viven lejos y no pueden venirme a ver mucho.

Interviewer - ¿Cuan lejos viven ellos?

Participant # 29 – En Hormigueros.

Participant # 41 - Mi mama vive en Lajas y no guía así que no puede venir mucho. Ella viene cuando consigue pon pero eso no es siempre.

Participant # 43 – Es que uno no puede ver a la familia mucho. Yo no veo a mi familia desde que me trajeron a qui hace 5 meses. Cuando estaba en Ponce iban a verme mas frecuente pero ahora están lejos.

Participant # 16 – Yo perdí a toda mi familia en una masacre y hace un tiempo que no veo a mis hijos.

Interviewer - ¿Y el papa de los nenes?

Participant # 16- El esta encarcelado también.

Participant #41- Mi hermana no viene a verme y eso es lo mas que me ha dolido porque cuando ella estaba aquí yo venia a verla con frecuencia. Pero ella le dijo a mi mama que ella no venia porque ella no quería acordase de esto aquí y que y que no se la perdido nada aquí.

Motherhood.

Participant # 26- Yo prefiero que no vengán aquí, que no me vean aquí porque es bien triste, bien triste.

Participant # 30- Yo prefiero que (mis hijos) no me vean aquí. Es difícil explicar por que uno esta aquí.

Participant # 21- Yo le digo a mis nenas “mami esta en una escuelita y tiene que terminar las asignaciones. Cuando mami acabe las asignaciones

entonces se puede ir.” Y cada vez que vienen me preguntan “¿mami acabaste las asignaciones?” y cuando les digo que no me dicen “pues mami acaba pa’ que te puedas venir con nosotros” y eso a mi me parte el alma... Siempre lloro después de ver a mis hijos. Es bien duro, bien difícil.

Participant # 43 – Uno no sabe como explicar. Los nenes no entienden y siguen haciendo preguntas y uno no sabe como hacer. Es mejor que no sepan mucho. Pero lo malo es cuando alguien dice algo que no debe y (los nenes) se enteran por ahí.

Many of the women were concerned about the welfare of their children.

Participant #37-Mis hijos están con mi mama. Yo se que están bien pero yo no puedo hacer nada si algo pasa...

Participant #42-Trato de estar pendiente cuando hablo y trato de aconsejarlos en lo que puedo.

Participant # 1- Pues yo le digo que estoy en una escuela especial para gente que se portan mal y que me tengo que quedar porque me porte mal. No se como van a entender. No se que mas decirles.

Participant #9 -Yo no se donde están mis nenes. Yo se de familiares (de los papas) que saben de los nenes, pero no se nada del bebe. Yo se que el papa se lo llevo a Estados Unidos pero no se el nombre (del bebe)... Hace 4 años que no veo a mis hijos. Pero mi mama siempre me procura. Ella era la que me buscaba en los puntos de drogas.

Participant #24- Yo trato de hablar con mis hijos varias veces a la semana para darles consejos y ver como están las cosas pero es difícil cuando uno no esta ahí con ellos. A mi me da miedo que les pase algo, que alguien me los pueda...que me les hagan algo. La calle no esta buena. Ellos están con mi mama y ella se preocupa por ellos pero no es lo mismo que si yo estuviera. Yo no entiendo como es que hay mujeres que no se preocupan por los hijos o que les hacen daño. Yo me muero si algo les pasa.

Interpersonal relationships in prison.

Friendships in prison.

Participant #1 -Cuando uno habla se conoce y uno va tratando y viendo hasta que se da cuenta que esa confinada es una persona en la que se puede confiar.

Participant #10 - Hay que tener cuidado porque algunas mujeres son “nice” contigo para que les hagas favores, les des la comisaria, cigarrillos y si no tienes que darle se mueven a otra.

Participant #18 - Tengo conocidas pero a veces hay demasiadas cosas que pasan y es mejor no estar muy cercano a nadie.

Participant #27- No vine a hacer amistades. No estoy aquí para hacer amistades.

Participant #32 - No es lo mismo que en la calle. En la calle pues uno tiene mas oportunidad de conocer a la persona, pero aquí uno nunca sabe...

Romantic relationships.

Participant # 26-Estoy con alguien pero no esta bien. (¿Por que?) Porque eso es pecado. Dios hizo hombre y mujer pero pues...

Participant #23 -Es dificil porque la culpabilidad y el deseo de estar con alguien son problemáticos.

Participant # 1-Hay confinadas que tienen a una aquí y a un marido en calle. Saben que eso esta mal. Dios lo castiga pero lo que pasa es que la situación se da y pues...

Participant # 20- Yo tengo a alguien aquí pero yo se que no esta bien. Ella quiere seguir (la relación) cuando salgamos pero yo no. Esto esta mal.

Interviewer- ¿Por qué?

Participant #20- Porque el homosexualismo es un pecado.

Interviewer- ¿Te consideras lesbiana?

Participant #20- No (enfátiza). Lo que pasa es que...pues uno cae en eso por que esta solo y cuando viene a ver no se da cuenta hasta que yo estas envuelta.

Participant # 26- Yo intente (una relación lesbica)con alguien pero no funciono.

Some of the women explained that although heterosexual, they engaged in romantic relationships with other women.

Participant # 17- Yo tengo mi marido pero uno se siente solo y necesita de

alguien. Cuando salga de aquí yo vuelvo con mi marido.

Participant # 6- Hay unas que llegan de la calle (y dicen) “no, eso (lesbian relationships) yo no lo hago”, que si esto que si aquello y después están mas envueltas que un pastel.

Participant # 23- Yo tengo mi pareja pero ella sabe que es porque estamos aquí. Ella dice que en calle quiere estar conmigo también pero...no creo.

Coping strategies.

Interpersonal relationships as support systems.

Family.

Participant # 4 – Mi hijos son los que me mantienen con animo. Yo no los veo mucho pero cuando los veo es una mezcla entre alegría y vergüenza. Cuando salga les quiero dar un buen ejemplo para que no caigan aquí. Yo trato de estar pendiente de ellos y los llamo mucho. Yo sabia que venia para acá y antes de venir reuní a mi familia y deje dicho quien se iba a encargar de que. Yo les explique a ellos lo que estaba pasando. Aun estando aquí cuando hablo con ellos, ellos me cuentan lo que les pasa, me piden consejos de sus cosas. El día a día con mis hijos me da fuerza para hacer esto por que esto no es fácil pero yo se que voy a ser mas fuerte por mis hijos.

Participant # 2 - Yo se que yo voy a poder estar con mis hijos (cuando salga) y ahora que tengo un nieto me mantengo enfocada en salir de aquí y en poder tener un trabajo cuando salga para poder ayudarlos.

Participant # 17 – Tan pronto salga de aqui voy a buscar a los nenes. Ellos son lo primero. No importa donde estén yo los voy a buscar y si tengo que entrar en los caseríos pues entro y los busco porque ahora yo tengo que velar por mis hijos.

Participant # 27 – Por eso yo me estoy preparando y aprendiendo, por mis hijos. Perdí a uno... (pausa y se compunge) pero tengo a los otros que aun están chiquitos y yo voy a estar pendiente de ellos. Cuando se pierde a un hijo es un dolor como ninguno y yo se que mis hijos me necesitan. Es que en la vida no hay nada más grande que los hijos.

Participant # 41 – Mi hijo esta con mi tía y aunque yo se que esta bien yo se que no he podido cumplir como madre. Por mi hijo es que yo voy a luchar y yo se que no voy a estar aquí por ciento y pico de años. Yo voy a salir y voy a luchar por mi hijo.

Interpersonal relationships in prison.

Participant # 13- Es importante (tener amistades) porque cuando uno esta aquí se siente solo y es bueno tener a alguien con quien hablar.

Participant # 33- (A mi amiga) yo le cuento mis penas y le hablo de mis hijos, de problemas...y nos ayudamos. Hablamos de nuestros casos. Yo no vine buscando amistades porque esto aquí no es como de buscar amistades. Uno tiene que tener cuidado porque uno nunca sabe pero es bien duro estar sin nadie que te ayude a pensar en cosas buenas.

Participant #39- Cuando llegue aquí tenía mucho miedo. Yo no conocía a nadie y uno oye esas historias de cómo va a ser esto aquí y es bueno cuando uno consigue amistades. Los días se pueden hacer más fáciles.

Participant # 44- (nombre) es como mi hermana y (nombre) es como mi mama. Yo les cuento mis cosas y les pido consejos y nos ayudamos mutuamente.

Romantic relationships were common among the inmates.

Participant # 11- Estar con otra confinada es diferente por que ella sabe lo que uno esta pasando por estar confinada y otras cosas como si uno tiene dolor del periodo y cosas así...uno no tiene que explicarle.

Participant # 29 -Yo tengo mi marido, pero uno se siente solo y necesita compartir, hablar...no sé... alguien que entienda.

Recreation participation.

Participant # 35- Hay tiempo que no nos dan la recreación por que no hay guardias.

Participant # 3 - Se supone que la tengamos la recreación por dos horas diarias pero hace meses que no la dan.

Participant # 5 - Lo que pasa es que pueden dar la recreación activa que es cuando te sacan y lo que haces es caminar o te dan lo que se

llama la recreación pasiva que es que te dejan en el salón y ves películas, juegas domino o cartas en el salón o te llevan a un gimnasio que se esta cayendo.

Outcomes of Coping Process

Self-reflection.

Participant # 3- Cuando yo vine yo tenia mucho coraje. Siempre estaba peleando y buscando problemas pero había un guardia que me hablaba y me preguntaba mucho que era lo que me pasaba. Yo pase mucho cuando estaba chiquita y estando aquí me puse a pensar de to' lo que me había pasao y poco a poco mientras mas tiempo pasaba yo pensaba mas en porque yo estaba aquí y en lo que había pasado. Cuando yo llegué los talleres eran diferentes pero yo siempre he participado y yo te digo a mi me gustan mucho porque uno puede hacer muchas cosas y ayudan mucho a uno a sentarse y a pensar en lo que uno es y en lo que uno hace con la vida de uno.

Participant #10 -A mi me gustan los talleres. Cuando cojí Vivir sin Violencia me di cuenta de cómo yo vivía y de que había muchas cosas que yo podía cambiar en mi vida para bien.

Participant # 11 - Lo que pasa es que cuando uno se da cuenta de cosas que pasa en la vida de uno es como que puedes darte cuenta de cosas que antes no te dabas cuenta. No es lo mismo cuando uno esta el salón porque allá (en los talleres) uno piensa en todo lo que le pasa pero cuando uno escucha a otras mujeres hablando uno se identifica con lo que están diciendo y uno puede reflexionar y decir "oye yo no sabia eso o así mismo me paso a mi".

Self-esteem.

Maria Santiago- No fue hasta que yo vine aquí y empecé a coger los talleres y clases que yo aprendí que mis manos podían hacer cosas tan bonitas.

Participant # 21- Yo aprendí a coser. Antes de venir aquí yo no sabía ni pegar un botón. Es raro como en un sitio como este uno puede encontrar cosas que hagan a uno sentirse bien.

Participant # 22- Bueno pues participar en Can Vivir ayuda a uno como confinada a aprender mucho de como tratar a otros con paciencia y uno se da cuenta de que puede ser paciente. A mi me gusta mucho porque uno se envuelve bregando con los perros y se

olvida de los problemas de uno. Además yo se que haciendo esto estoy contribuyendo a la sociedad por que estas ayudando a otro ser viviente. Yo me siento contenta de haber podido entrar en este proyecto.

Participant # 29- A mi me gusta que me mantiene ocupada y que uno tiene que mantenerse positivo porque de lo contrario no se puede enseñarle al perro.

Agency.

Participant # 38 - A mi siempre me gustaron los animales pero aquí aprendí a tener mas paciencia y sobre todo a ser mas responsable. Yo tengo el control de cómo entrenar a mi perro. Una vez me enseñaron lo básico lo demás lo hago yo. Me siento bien.

Participant # 40 - Uno tiene que aprender a como bregar con cada perro porque cada uno es diferente. Yo creo que lo más importante que he aprendido es que yo puedo aprender cosas nuevas y que puedo ser responsable. Eso es lo más importante. También uno tiene que tener buena conducta porque si no te sacan del programa. Así que uno tiene que estar pendiente de no meterse en problemas.

Participant # 43 - A mi me gusta mucho porque uno puede trabajar independiente y además que uno se encariña con el perro y es bueno saber que estas haciendo algo que va ayudar a otra persona y al perro también.

Empowerment.

Participant # 14 - Yo se que yo estoy en control de lo que yo hago. Cuando yo estoy entrenando a un perro yo soy quien decide como voy a bregar con ese perro y como lo voy a entrenar. Hay veces que uno tiene que seguir tratando y repitiendo las cosas para que el perro aprenda pero después que lo aprende yo me siento como que lo logre, lo aprendió. Es como que yo pude.

Participant # 19 - A mi me ayudan mucho los talleres, particularmente el de vivir sin violencia y las pantomimas. Cuando salga de aquí yo quiero ir a escuelas y hablarle a muchachitos de los problemas con las drogas. Puedo darles el ejemplo por lo que me paso a mi. Yo creo que ese era el propósito que Dios tenía para mi y por el cual yo tuve que venir aquí, a crear conciencia de lo que yo puedo dar y de que yo si valgo.

Outlook-the prospect for the future.

Participant # 36 - Yo me pasaba pariseando y metiéndome drogas y realmente no pensaba en nadie pero después de conocer a otra gente y con la ayuda de otras confinadas y lo que aprendido en los talleres pienso que cuando salga de aquí voy a poder llevar una vida mejor y voy a poder ser un mejor ejemplo para mis hijos.

Participant # 15 - Yo cuando salga de aquí quiero tener un negocio de comida. Yo se que va ser difícil porque conseguir trabajo es uno de los problemas mas difíciles para el confinado pero yo se que puedo hacerlo. Yo tengo mi educación y hablando con gente aquí y trabajando me he puesto a pensar y si creo que lo puedo hacer.

Researcher- ¿Como llegaste a esa conclusión? ¿Hubo algo, alguna persona en particular o algún taller que te ayudo?

Participant # 15 - Pues mis amistades aquí me ayudan mucho porque hablamos y a veces me sentía desanimada y ellas me decían ‘oye chica pero si es que tu puedes hacer esto y esto y aquello y no te sientas mal que esto va a pasar y tu vas a poder echar pa’lante’. Eso me ayudo mucho, sentir que tenía apoyo de las muchachas y también de la social pero sobretodo de las muchachas.

Participant # 31- Yo hablo mucho con la capellada y un día estábamos hablando y ella me dijo ‘yo creo que deberías escribir tu historia’ y yo me senté a escribirla y hacerlo me a enseñado muchas cosas de mi y de cómo yo he vivido y sobre todo de cómo tengo que vivir. Yo tengo mucha fe y aquí encontré al Señor y yo se que yo tenia que venir aquí por que me estaba perdiendo. Yo tengo un plan para cuando salga de aquí y me siento bien tranquila por que se que Dios me tiene algo preparado para mi beneficio. Yo se que voy a salir bien.