The Role of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise in a Female Prison

Dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements of University of Chester for the Degree of Master of Science

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of physical education, sport and exercise in the rehabilitation process of female prisoners. Research in this area is limited and often focuses on young offenders and male prisoners. Nine female prisoners from HMP Drake Hall, between the ages of 21 and 40, who participated in gym activities, at least three times a week were interviewed. This was a qualitative study using a grounded theory approach through in-depth open ended interviews. Questions focused on experiences and perceived outcomes related to their sport and exercise involvement. The data collected was then analysed using open, axial and selective coding. Five phenomena emerged from the raw data including Participation outcomes; General health awareness; Role of sport and exercise on rehabilitation for release; Developmental skills and experiences; Influence of sport, exercise or dietary awareness on plans post prison. Links between the phenomena were identified and a theory emerged beginning with the initial incarceration of a female through to participation in exercise and sport and results in the final release of a rehabilitated woman armed with the tools to cope with society in an acceptable manner. The Progression Model of Behaviour Changes through Sport and Exercise in Female Inmates developed from this research summarises the theory which evolved from grounded research. There were clear psychological, social and physical benefits of sport and exercise participation for the interviewees including increased confidence and self-esteem which contributed to the attraction to exercise and sport. The female prisoners also found that sport/exercise could be used as a coping mechanism to release feelings of aggression and anxiety. Due to the many positive outcomes associated with sport/exercise the prisoners planned their futures around this discipline. They chose to undertake coaching and academic qualifications, gained experience of instructing exercise and sport in Drake Hall and planned their careers upon release around sport and exercise. The prisoners expressed a desire to lead a healthy, socially acceptable and crime free life. This study will add to the limited body of literature in this minority population and will inform other female institutions of the rehabilitative processes associated with sport and exercise participation.
Declaration

This work is original and has not been previously submitted in support of a degree, qualification or other course.

Signed..................................................

Date..................................................
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Service, West Midlands Area Psychology & Safer Custody Unit.
**Vocabulary and Terminology**

*Inmate/Prisoner* These terms are used interchangeably and may be defined as a person kept in custody as a punishment for a crime (Collins, 2004).

*Physical Activity* Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure (Casperson, Powell & Christianson, 1985).

*Exercise* Physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive, and purposive in the sense that improvement or maintenance of one or more components of physical fitness is an objective (Casperson, Powell & Christianson, 1985).

**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Community Visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>Physical Education Instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEO</td>
<td>Physical Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAO</td>
<td>National Audit Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCRA</td>
<td>National Correctional Recreation Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDR</td>
<td>Resettlement day release</td>
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Descriptions of female prison class system

**Category A**
The highest level of security, allocated only at the female centre, Durham, within the high security estate. Category A is for prisoners whose escape would be considered highly dangerous to the public or a threat to national security.

**Closed**
Closed is for prisoners who are not trusted in an open prison and are considered to have a high risk of escaping.

**Semi-Open**
There is a higher level of trust in a semi-open prison however there is still a perimeter fence. Inside the fence prisoners may walk around relatively freely between work and leisure times.

**Open**
Open prisons are for trusted prisoners and there are no perimeter fences.

There are 14 female prisons in England and Wales, two are open, two are semi-open (including Drake Hall) and the rest are closed with the exception of one Cat A prison. In addition to these prisons there are remand centres. There are different types of remand custody. Until a prisoner is sentenced, the treatment they receive in custody reflects the fundamental principle that an individual is innocent until proven guilty. The majority of those who are in custody on remand are remanded in custody awaiting trial and have not been convicted of a criminal offence. A prisoner who is held on Judges Remand has been convicted and is waiting to be sentenced. As a rule once on Judges Remand a prisoner will follow the same regime as a convicted and sentenced prisoner.

**Basic, standard or enhanced** status - Under the *Incentives and Earned Privilege Scheme* there are three regime levels in a prison: Basic, Standard and Enhanced. The level a prisoner is on will determine the number of privileges he or she may have access to.