

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Kelley Moulton, for her persistent assistance, assurance, and patience. She has been kind and compassionate throughout the process.

I am also grateful to Mr. du Plessis, Head of Worcester's Correctional Center (Female Unit), and to Akhona Myendeki for their guidance, hospitality and practical assistance.

In addition, I'd like to thank the prison staff who helped with my research and, most importantly, the participants in this study for trusting me and sharing their stories. This project would not have been possible without their involvement.

I would also like to thank my parents for their unwavering support; Brian Bergman and Leela Cordon of Seva Unite for their assistance; Alina Garau for her insightful discussions and the staff at the University of Cape Town in the Law Department.

Plagiarism Declaration:

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the footnote* convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work(s) of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.
3. This dissertation is my own work.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
5. I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work.

Signed by candidate

Signature:**Date:** 13 February 2023

Abstract

In South Africa, there has been a lack of research on female offenders' incarceration experience. Research shows that female offenders are a vulnerable group with specific needs that deserve specialised treatment options. Yoga has become very popular as a holistic rehabilitation programme within many correctional centres, including South Africa. Yoga has become a symbolic resource that offenders can use to make sense of their incarceration experience and re(construct) their self-perception, while still incorporating 'peace-making-mechanisms' that fit into correctional centres' agenda. This study explores the impact of a yoga programme called 'The Freedom Project' in Worcester Correctional Centre. The objective of this study was to determine whether or not yoga could transform female offenders' behavioural patterns and help them cope with the pains of imprisonment. A qualitative research design allowed for rich accounts of the participants' yoga experience. The interviews were conducted with a panel of nine female offenders who participated in the yoga programme. While the design of the study makes it difficult to generalize the findings to the wider offending population, the participants nonetheless offered evidence that yoga is a life-affirming experience with a range of transformational consequences. The results of the study showed that the yoga programme allows for an open framework, and freedom of self-exploration and meets the goals of being a more women-centred and holistic approach within prison reform.

Keywords: yoga, rehabilitation, correctional centre, female offenders, incarceration

Table of Contents

Chapter One	6
Introduction	6
1.1 Incarcerated women in South Africa	9
1.2 Prison Yoga Programmes	12
1.3 Structure of the Dissertation	13
Chapter Two	15
Literature Review	15
2.1 Female offenders, legislation and prison reform	15
2.2 United Nations Rules on the treatment of female offenders	16
2.3 DCS and the White Paper on Corrections	17
2.4 Women in Correctional Centres	19
2.5 Treatment of Incarcerated Women	21
2.6 Yoga programmes in correctional centres	23
2.7 Yoga, rehabilitation and prisons	26
2.8 Conclusion	28
Chapter Three	29
Methods	29
3.1 Research question	29
3.2 Rationale	29
3.3 Methodology	30
3.3.1 Inclusion criteria	31
3.3.2 Research site	32
3.3.3 Data collection	32
3.4 The practicalities of research	35
3.5 Data analysis	37
3.6 Ethics and Prison Research	38
3.7 Limitations	39
Chapter Four	41
Analysis and Presentation of Data	41
4.1 Reflections on their incarceration experience	41

4.2 Relationships with fellow female offenders	41
4.3 Maintaining relationships with family.....	42
4.4 Conditions of the Correctional Centre	43
4.5 Relationship with Correctional Officers	44
4.6 Rehabilitation in Prison	45
4.7 Perceptions of Yoga	46
4.8 Yoga as a coping mechanism for incarceration	47
4.9 Personal yoga practice in prison	48
4.10 Physical experience and tuning into the body	49
4.11 Emotional regulation and self-control	50
4.12 Reflection and remorse for past crimes	53
4.13 Personal development and self-discovery	53
4.14 The possibility of practicing yoga post-release	55
4.15 The collective yoga experience.....	56
4.16 Conclusion	57
Chapter Five	58
Discussion	58
5.1 The incarceration experience.....	59
5.2 The yoga programme experiences.....	60
5.3 Directions for Future Research.....	64
5.6 Recommendations	65
5.7 Conclusion	66
Bibliography.....	68
Appendix A: Consent Form.....	78
Appendix B: Information Sheet	79
Appendix C: Letter of approval from the DCS	80
Appendix D: Letter of approval from UCT.....	81
Appendix F: Questionnaire	82

Chapter One

Introduction

'If you could describe what yoga means to you in three words more or less what would it be: Piece of mind, Release, Freedom, Relaxing, Calm, Escape, Serenity, Happy, Peaceful.'

Until recently, there has been a lack of research on female offenders'¹ incarceration experience in South Africa. This can be attributed to the small percentage of female offenders in the prison population (Artz & Rotmann, 2015; Artz et al, 2013; Steyn & Hall, 2015; Belknap, 2007; Agboola, 2014). As a result, our knowledge about offenders within the criminal justice system has largely been developed to describe the experiences of men (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012; Steyn & Booyens, 2017; Dastile, 2011; Artz & Rottman, 2015). This underrepresentation of female offenders within the field of crime and punishment has left an 'information void' about women's pathway to crime, the impact of incarceration and their rehabilitation² experience (Steyn & Hall, 2015; Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012, Dastile, 2011).

Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul reported in 2012 that, rehabilitation programmes focused on inner-healing and self-management were popular in Worcester Correctional Centre. This type of approach gave women the opportunity to gain insight into their criminal behaviour and life experiences (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012). Holistic interventions such as yoga³ programmes in

¹ In South Africa the term 'prisoner' has been replaced with the term 'offender'. 'Offender' refers to any person who has committed a criminal act or is detained within the custody of correctional centres (Qhogwana, 2017). In this dissertation, the words offender and prisoner will be used interchangeably.

² Rehabilitation includes a range of psychosocial programmes and services that address attitudes, mental health, personality and cognitive processes to assist offenders with various needs related to their offending or criminal behaviour and to help prisoners achieve a healthier lifestyle (Wormith et al, 2007). A broad definition of rehabilitation addresses social relations with others, education, vocational training and employment. Thus, the intention behind rehabilitation is to ensure that the offender does not re-offend (Dissel, 2008).

In South Africa, The White Paper on Corrections (2005) defines rehabilitation as a process that incorporates the correction of criminal behaviour, human development and the promotion of social responsibility. It involves multiple departments and governmental responsibilities and views rehabilitation as a holistic phenomenon rather than a strategy to prevent crime.

³ Yoga refers to physical, mental and spiritual practices which originated in ancient India. This type of discipline is based on the subtle science between the body and mind which focuses on creating balance and a healthy lifestyle. In essence, the word 'yoga' in Sanskrit means 'yuj' which means to join or unite. More specifically according to Vivekananda (2005), yoga evolves the whole person, physical vitality, emotions, wisdom, ethics, and a higher quality of relationships. Yoga allows a person to express their creativity and reach their full potential. It is important to mention that yoga includes different practices like physical postures, meditation/mindfulness or breathing exercises. Each yoga session of the 'freedom behind bars' Seva Unite programme (The Freedom project), starts

the prison has become a symbolic resource that offenders can use to make sense of their imprisonment and re(construct) their self-perception, while still incorporating ‘peace-making-mechanisms’ that fit into correctional centres' agenda (Griere, 2016). However, while there are several promising studies on yoga interventions in correctional centres' agenda, the voices of female offenders' have been absent. Karup (2016) argues that studies on this subject tend to compartmentalize the positive physiological and psychological changes that yoga has to offer, but often miss the meaning that offenders attached to this practice. According to Bosworth et al. (2005), including offenders' perspectives can help develop a stronger and more persuading critique of the current system. Moreover, the majority of research available on yoga within a correctional setting is based on international studies, creating an opportunity for exploring the impact of yoga in South African prisons.

To fill this gap, this study adds to our understanding of the treatment of female offenders, by supplementing the existing body of knowledge and theory development on female-specific rehabilitation in South Africa. Female offenders are a vulnerable group with specific needs that deserve specialised treatment options. Exploring female offenders' experience of yoga in the social context of correctional centres, helps us to learn more about how the practice influences their well-being, behaviour and understanding of themselves.

This study explores the impact of a specific yoga programme called the Freedom Prison Project, which was based on a highly successful yoga programme in India called Seva⁴ Unite. This non-profit project/programme was started in Cape Town by Brian Bergman and Leela Cordon⁵ to provide offenders with skills of self-evaluation and personal development through the practice of yoga. Inmates serving long-term sentences were able to enroll in a six-month module yoga course, to become yoga teachers within the prisons, to foster an understanding of self-discipline and selfless service.

with mindfulness, followed by physical postures, breathing exercises and finally meditation. However, this also changes based on the offenders' specific needs, for example, if the offenders reported feeling overwhelmingly stressed a session could also just be focused on breathing exercises. ⁴ ‘Seva’ is a Sanskrit word meaning service. Therefore, Seva Unite identifies ways to selflessly serve by encouraging yoga teachers to volunteer their time and energy by sharing their knowledge of yoga. ⁵ Leela and Brian were dedicated to practically living seva and shared their passion with volunteers, who also felt the call to serve others. They also relied mostly on the yoga community for donations and the expertise of yoga teachers.

The yoga project later collaborated with the Human Kindness Foundation, to develop the book 'We're All Doing Time' (Lozoff, 2015). This self-help manual encourages inmates to use their time in prison constructively as a means to personal development. Seva Unite distributes the book to offenders who request it and has distributed it to offenders all over Africa.

Starting with one yoga class in the admissions centre of Pollsmoor prison, the project expanded to the male juvenile section, the women's unit and later to Worcester's Correctional Centre. The classes in Worcester's female unit were held every week for a dedicated group of female offenders, for approximately sixty minutes. Each class included a mindfulness practice, physical yoga postural sequence, breathing exercises and meditation. However, over the past years the weekly classes turned into monthly classes and after running this programme for nine years, Brian and Leela decided that it was time to bring it to a close, due to lack of funding and 'bureaucratic rigmarole'.⁶

This study interviewed female offenders who participated in the yoga programme, who were still teaching/practising yoga within the correctional centre and who had been doing yoga for six months or more. This ensured that they had time to fully experience the impact of yoga. A convenience sample of nine female offenders was recruited for this study. A qualitative research design was used which allowed for rich accounts of female offenders' experience of yoga and assisted in gaining a better understanding of their views of the nature and impact of rehabilitation programmes in correctional centres and the effects that the yoga programme had in Worcester women's prison. The project's open, exploratory design allowed for various meanings, interpretations and reflections to emerge organically from the participants themselves.

Jewkes (2014) believes that our personalities, histories, and emotions can serve as a guide for our study, enhancing our writing and analysis. Therefore, the nature of this study was inspired by my yoga journey. Holistic practices like yoga have empowered me to take control of my well-being. It has taught me that personal growth starts with taking responsibility for yourself. I realised the importance of holistic practices after taking part in a community project at an all-

⁶ Personal information via email from Leela Cordon.

girls reformatory High School in Bloemfontein called Rosenhof. This project was based on building confidence, self-awareness and mindfulness and my own lived experiences made me curious whether this approach would have an impact on individuals who have found themselves in a hopeless situation. After years of teaching yoga to women, I was aware of a desire to reconnect with feminine qualities such as empowerment, compassion and nourishment, which have been demonized throughout centuries of patriarchal religions, governments and social programming. I realized that when women begin to heal themselves whether it be at a heart level, mental level or physical level, they will be able to become the medicine women within their own family and community. The yoga in prison project was therefore a perfect fit between my academic criminological interests and my wider life experience.

1.1 Incarcerated Women in South Africa

Statistics in 2015 showed that female offenders represent 2.6 per cent of the overall prison population, with an incarceration rate of 7.2 per 100,000 compared to an overall rate of 292 per 100,000 (Steyn & Booyesen, 2017). The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) Annual Report of 2013/14 indicated that the majority of women are incarcerated for violent crimes (41%), economic crimes (39%) and drug-related offences (8%)⁷. Based on the data above, it is crucial to evaluate the role of gender in the criminal justice system and how the DCS reacts to the disparities between male and female criminal behaviour.

Research on female offenders suggests that their experiences, not to mention their trajectories of incarceration, are remarkably different from those of men. Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moulton (2012) argue that certain social disadvantages and circumstances contribute to female offenders' pathway to crime. Therefore, women have different needs from men based on victimisation, trauma, domestic violence, motherhood and poverty (Artz and Rotman, 2015; Messina & Grella, 2010;

⁷ This contradicts Steyn and Booyesen's (2017) findings that show that "the majority of previous arrests, previous prison sentences and current prison sentence were for economic offences."

⁸ Their pathways to crime are rooted in traumatic events such as domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse in the family, death of a parent or spouse, lack of education, growing up in a low socio-economic environment, childhood trauma, such as - abandonment, neglect, abuse, sexual intercourse at a young age and unhealthy relationships etc. (Steyn & Hall, 2015; Steyn & Booyesen, 2017; Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moulton, 2012).

Byrne & Howells, 2002). For instance, women are more likely to be sexually or physically abused, which could be dangerous, and be a risk factor for criminal behaviour (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moulton, 2012). Thus, their experience of victimisation plays an important role when it comes to the prison environment and the nature of rehabilitation programmes (Steyn & Booyens, 2017; Artz et al., 2012).

Currently in South Africa, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) policy is guided by both domestic and international law. The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights notes that women who are incarcerated: “are particularly vulnerable to penalization measures⁹” (UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, 2011). The United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders developed a gender-specific approach that addresses female offenders’ needs (Ackermann, 2015). The UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (also known as the Bangkok Rules) protect the basic human rights of women who are incarcerated by focussing on issues such as the social, emotional, and economic impact of incarceration for both women and their children who may be incarcerated with them. Rule 12, provides that individualised, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed mental health and rehabilitation programmes should be made available to female offenders (Bangkok Rules, 2010/2016), was based on the unique nature of female offenders' needs and to respond to their victimisation vulnerabilities. Despite the Bangkok Rules' comprehensive view of women’s specific needs, there remains work in ensuring that correctional centres, like South Africa, successfully implement these rules and address these needs in their rehabilitation programmes.

In South Africa, the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998 requires correctional facilities to create gender-sensitive environments (section 16 (4)) as well as non-discriminatory and gender-responsive programmes (section 41(7)). Furthermore, section 32(8) states that correctional centres should create a needs-

⁹ “Due to structural discrimination, women have less representation in structures of power and therefore are disproportionately disadvantaged in their dealings with State authorities and less able to practice their rights. Often penalization measures have a much more onerous impact on women than men, given that women are overrepresented among the poor, have less access to education, employment and economic resources, and assume the principal burden of care and domestic work” (Sepulveda, 2012, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, 2011)

based rehabilitation programme for individualised assessments of offenders' specific needs, criminogenic risk factors and criminal history. Steyn and Booyens (2017) suggest that anger management and substance abuse programmes should be approached differently, to cater for women who use drugs and alcohol to numb their emotions to escape their lived realities. Programmes should also take account of the fact that while female offenders may feel like they can express their anger more freely in a correctional setting, they may lack the coping mechanisms to manage their emotions, due to years of repressing their anger (Steyn & Booyens, 2017; Sorbello et al, 2002). Scholars have also suggested that the DCS should focus on gender-specific rehabilitation programmes that incorporate a more empowering, holistic and women-centred approach to prison reform (Steyn & Booyens, 2017).

This type of responsive approach requires in-depth assessments done by assessors with practical experience of offending behaviour based on scientifically proven needs and risk assessment tools (Steyn & Booyens, 2017). However, Steyn and Booyens (2017) and Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul (2012) show that the DCS often fails to provide these services due to the lack of social workers, psychologists and correctional officials, who can assist with the execution of rehabilitation programmes¹⁰.

Research shows that incarceration has a significant impact on gender-related health issues such as hygiene, substance abuse, and physical and mental health. South African female prisoners suffer from 'high levels of poor health' (Luyt & du Preez, 2010) and poor mental health among female offenders contributes to suicide ideation, impaired ability to follow rules, disciplinary problems and self-harm (Steyn & Hall, 2015). This negative effect on offenders' mental health often contradicts the goals of rehabilitation (Steyn & Hall, 2015).

Furthermore, female offenders' complex physical health issues, like maternity care, menstruation, screening services for breast, ovarian and cervical cancer, dental care and long-standing untreated diseases are often neglected (Luyt & du Preez, 2010; Agboola, 2014; Dixey et al., 2015). This disregard for women's specific health issues can be described as inhumane and degrading, and can often

¹⁰ Consequently, the lack of resources and staff shortages, rehabilitation programmes become mainstream almost like a 'one size fits all' (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012).

lead to secondary victimisation (Dixey et al., 2015). Volatile relationships between women, high levels of violence, conflict with officials and lack of resources are psychologically and physiologically distressing for female offenders, making it very difficult to cope in a correctional centre setting (Steyn & Hall, 2015).

Structural and institutional deprivations like loss of liberty, family ties, health services, autonomy and security, attack female offenders' sense of self-worth and individuality (Steyn & Hall, 2015; Karup, 2016; Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012). In addition, the negative impact of incarceration can impede offenders' personal growth and self-reflection process (Karup, 2016; Steyn & Hall, 2015). Developing qualities like finding intrinsic value and embarking on a journey of self-discovery can help offenders create a sense of personal autonomy provide them with a better understanding of themselves and their pathways to crime and help them cope during incarceration (Karup, 2016; O'Donnell, 2014). Such processes of self-reflection can play a vital role towards addressing their 'struggles for freedom about space, time and body' (Becci, 2012). (Liebling, 2014; Karup, 2016 and Jang et al., 2019).

1.2 Prison yoga programmes

Even though offenders have limited ability to exercise control over their environment while incarcerated, perhaps paradoxically, yoga can provide women with the necessary skill set to better cope with the impact of incarceration and provide them with the opportunity to “redefine their circumstances into something meaningful” (Karup, 2016; Jang et al., 2019). Yoga and rehabilitation share the same goals when it comes to self-integration and personal growth. Furthermore, the multi-dimensional qualities of yoga allow it to be offered as either a sports programme or as an addition to mainstream rehabilitation programmes (Karup, 2016; Griera et al., 2016). There is a growing body of research supporting the impact of yoga and mindfulness on offenders' physical and mental health. Lundstrom et al. (2021) found that yoga reduced stress, anxiety and depression among female offenders¹¹. Similarly, Harner et al. (2010), found that yoga helped offenders to regulate their

¹¹ This study was conducted in Denver's County jail and participants consisted of women.

emotions and motivated them to participate in treatments that are specifically aimed at reducing their risk of criminal behaviour¹².

Moreover, studies on the physical benefits of yoga have shown that offenders who practiced yoga regularly reported increased strength, and reduced joint and muscular pain (Karup, 2016; Cowen & Adams, 2005). Offenders claim that breathing exercises help with issues such as asthma, anxiety and panic attacks (Karup, 2016) and yoga offers prisoners a means to transcend their circumstances by exploring their spirituality. Griera (2016) shows that offenders felt that practising yoga gave them a sense of purpose and helped with moral guidance, which had a profound impact on their daily lives.

In light of the immense strain on resources in correctional centres due to limited financial funds, an ageing population and political benchmarking (Williams et al., 2007; Karup, 2016; Steyn & Booyens, 2013, Steyn & Hall, 2013), yoga may be considered valuable both as supplementation for rehabilitation programmes and as a preventive health care measure. Griera (2016) notes, that holistic practices such as yoga, can help maintain institutional order, by providing the offender with self-regulating tools that create smooth relationships and a non-violent environment, which in turn supports correctional centres' essential aims of security and control. Such programmes can also meet correctional centres' pressing need to keep offenders occupied, since 'boredom can become one of the worst punishments and a source of problems concerning cohabitation in prisons' (Rocheleau, 2013). Yoga programmes can fill female offenders' time at a low cost, can be offered to a wide range of offenders and can improve current rehabilitative practices (Griera, 2016).

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation examines these issues in a single prison in the Western Cape. To undertake this task, chapter two will focus on offenders' incarceration experience and how yoga fits into the broader framework of rehabilitation programmes. Chapter three discusses the methodological approach of this study including its qualitative methods, sampling procedures as well as ethical considerations. Chapters four and five present the research findings, which convey the participants' direct experience of incarceration, their motivations for participating

¹² Harner et al. (2010) research was conducted at a medium-security state prison for women located in the Eastern half of the United States.

in the yoga programme and the impact, it had in helping them to cope with imprisonment. These chapters also discuss the effects yoga has both physically and mentally, the influence it has on their relationship with themselves and others and the role it plays in their spiritual and personal development. Finally, the dissertation concludes by reflecting on the implementation of yoga as a rehabilitation programme and makes future recommendations about policy and practice.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Female offenders, legislation and prison reform

Scholars have observed that correctional centres turned into political warehouses during the apartheid era as people who were convicted of political crimes were incarcerated with so-called 'regular' offenders. The number of female offenders increased during the state of emergency due to their involvement in political activities (Luyt & du Preez, 2010).

Female offenders endured some of the worst conditions of confinement (Pete, 2008). African female offenders experienced harsh treatment ranging from lengthy solitary confinement, torture, sexual violations, forced labour, and physical and verbal abuse (FSAW, 1989; Van Hout & Wessels; 2021). During the 1960s women prisoners suffered from lack of food, sexual violence and were denied menstrual products (Van Hout & Wessels; 2021), scholars also described women prisoners as victims of chronic neglect by the criminal justice system.

The release of Nelson Mandela in the early 1990s played an important role in reforming prisons. During this period the Criminal Procedure Act was amended (Act 107 of 1990) to circumscribe the use of the death penalty. Amendments were also made to the Correctional Services Act (Act 8 of 1959) to end racial segregation within prisons. Prison services gradually moved away from the Department of Justice, and shifted from a militarised penal system to a more democratic and rights-based justice system (Artz et al., 2012). The department was eventually renamed the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and legislative and policy reforms to incorporate internationally accepted correctional system designs (Van Hout & Wessels, 2021).

2.2 United Nations Rules on the treatment of female offenders

In 2010, a set of rules focussing on the needs of female offenders were adopted by the General Assembly. The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (more commonly referred to as the Bangkok Rules) were created to address the needs of the influx of female offenders on a global scale (Artz and Rotmann, 2015; Artz, Hoffman Wanderer and Moul, 2011). The Bangkok Rules established a set of guidelines for policymakers and legislators about admission procedures, healthcare, humane treatment, search procedures, children who accompany their mothers into prison, safety and security, correctional officials, reintegration upon release and specific needs of women (Artz & Rotmann, 2015; Artz et al., 2012, Carlen, 2012). These principles of fair and just treatment of female offenders are intended to be used in conjunction with the Tokyo Rules because they represent the universal objectives of justice for women prisoners (Artz and Rotmann, 2015).

Various of the Bangkok rules focus specifically on the treatment of female offenders. Rule 12 sets out that correctional centres are required to provide individualised gender-specific, trauma-informed mental health treatment and rehabilitation programmes. Rule 15 specifies that female offenders who have a history of substance abuse need to have access to substance treatment programmes that address victimisation. Rule 40 sets out that prison administrators must classify women in a way that addresses the gender-specific needs and circumstances of women prisoners and ensures appropriate and individualized planning and implementation towards rehabilitation, treatment and reintegration into society. Rule 41 stipulates that gender-sensitive risk assessments and classification should take into account a variety of factors including the generally lower risk posed by women prisoners to others, as well as the particularly harmful effects that high-security measures and increased levels of isolation can have on women prisoners. It should also consider essential information about women's backgrounds, such as violence they may have experienced, their history of mental disability and substance abuse, as well as parental and other caretaking responsibilities in the allocation and sentence planning process and should ensure that women's sentence plans include rehabilitative programmes and services that match their gender-specific needs. Rule 41 also stipulates that prisoners with mental health-care needs should be housed in accommodation which is not

restrictive, and at the lowest possible security level. They should receive appropriate treatment, rather than being placed in higher security level facilities solely due to their mental health problems. Rule 42 states that female offenders have the right to a balanced and comprehensive programme of activities which take into account their gender-appropriate needs (Artz & Rotmann, 2015; Artz et al., 2012). The Bangkok Rules also highlight the importance of rehabilitation and social integration and of research on programmes for female offenders to reduce recidivism (Artz & Rotmann, 2015; Artz et al., 2012).

2.3 DCS and the White Paper on Corrections

The Correctional Services Act (Act 111 of 1998) sets out the purpose of DCS as “to contribute to maintaining and protecting a just, peaceful and safe society by enforcing sentences of the courts in the manner prescribed by this Act and detaining all prisoners in safe custody whilst ensuring their human dignity as well as promoting the social responsibility and human development of all prisoners and persons subject to community corrections.” To enact this vision, the White Paper on Corrections was designed to provide DCS with a policy, legal and implementation framework in which they must operate based on the Bill of Rights contained in the South African Constitution. This includes the right to equality, human dignity, security, forced labour, health care, services, education, freedom of religion and most importantly human treatment (Artz & Rotmann, 2015). (White paper on Corrections, 2005).

The White Paper has played an important role in transforming the DCS by introducing a paradigm shift towards correct offending behaviour in a secure, safe and humane environment, to succeed in rehabilitation and avoid recidivism (The White Paper on Corrections, 2005; Artz and Rotmann, 2015; Artz et al., 2012). DCS views rehabilitation as a holistic phenomenon that focuses on correcting offending behaviour as well as personal development (White Paper on Corrections, 2005). This approach includes holistic sentence planning of offenders at all levels including the social, moral, spiritual, physical, work, educational/intellectual and mental (Muntingh, 2006; White Paper on Corrections, 2005).

In its 2002 mission and vision statement, the DCS highlighted some key objectives including providing inmates with a variety of rehabilitation programmes,

strategies and interventions based on their specific needs and focus on the individual offender (White Paper on Corrections, 2005; Steyn & Hall, 2015). This profile-based rehabilitation model incorporates different programmes (academic education, vocational training, diagnosis and treatment of problems, building family ties and psychological treatment) to create the optimal treatment plan. To successfully implement these programmes, the DCS depends on the cooperation of NGOs, the private sector and other government departments (White Paper on Corrections, 2005).

The White Paper also highlights that rehabilitation programmes should be based on female offenders' needs and that gender-based considerations should inform the management of female offenders (Artz et al., 2012). Regulations promulgated under the Correctional Services Act focus specifically on the treatment of female offenders and include that male and female offenders should be housed separately (although not necessarily in separate facilities, section 7(2)(b)), that there is an obligation to create a gender-sensitive environment in correctional centres (section 16(4)), and that prisoners have the right to non-discriminatory and gender-responsive programmes (section 41(7)).

However, while some regulations are discussed further, the regulations fail to elaborate on what exactly constitutes a gender-sensitive environment and gender-responsive programmes (Artz and Rotmann, 2015). The White Paper on Corrections also contains limited provisions that address the treatment of female offenders, focusing mainly on female offenders with children, the availability of crèche facilities, incarcerating women closer to home and providing them with development opportunities (White Paper on Corrections, 2005; Artz and Rotmann, 2015; Artz et al., 2012).

Even though the DCS offers a range of rehabilitation programmes, scholars argue that none of these programmes addresses female offenders' specific needs like histories of abuse, parenting skills and self-image development (Steyn & Booyens, 2017; Sorbello et al., 2002). The DCS argues that training facilities and rehabilitation programmes have been under-resourced because of the lower number of female offenders. Despite these resource limitations scholars have argued that it is important to discuss the conditions in which female offenders are detained, their rights and correctional centres' responsibility in providing gender-specific needs-based programmes.

2.4 Women in correctional centres

Research suggests that social and environmental differences play a major role in the behaviour of men and women given their gender roles and socialisation (Bloom et al., 2004; Wright et al., 2013). Gender differences shape the reality of women's lives and the context in which they find themselves (Bloom et al., 2004) and while there is no single shared life experience amongst female offenders, literature suggests that there is a common trajectory from victim to offender (Harner & Riley, 2013; Artz & Rotman, 2015; Steyn & Booyens, 2017; Artz et al., 2012). Studies show that female offenders differ dramatically from males in their personal histories and pathways to crime. Women are less likely to commit violent offences and are more likely to have been involved in drug and property crimes which are economically motivated (Artz & Rotman, 2015; Bloom et al., 2004; Steyn & Booyens, 2017). Many female offenders are serving time for crimes related to substance abuse (Steyn & Booyens, 2017).

Physical conditions such as overcrowding, healthcare, nutrition and hygiene have important health implications for female offenders in South Africa (Abzoogole, 2016). Correctional centres do not always provide offenders with adequate healthcare, for example, doctors or medical staff are not always available and female offenders can wait months to receive proper treatment (Abzoogole, 2016; Artz et al., 2012). Furthermore, inmates are sometimes malnourished and have limited access to physical activities which has a significant impact on both their physical and mental health (Douglas et al., 2009; Abzoogole, 2016).

Female offenders have reported that psychological services and counselling are severely lacking (Artz et al., 2012). Resident psychologists are seldom available and the social worker is often responsible for providing individual counselling, running rehabilitation programmes and making assessments on admissions (Artz et al., 2012). Women have to wait weeks, and sometimes months, to see a psychologist, which discourages them from making appointments in the first place (Artz et al., 2012).

Research on female offenders' mental health in South Africa showed that 69% of female offenders suffer from depression, 68% from anxiety, and 74% from stress (Steyn and Hall, 2013). These mental health issues often lead to a lack of interest and involvement on the part of the women in prison, which negatively influences the

impact of rehabilitation programmes. In a similar vein, Booyens and Steyn (2017) reported that 77% of female offenders did not receive any treatment from a psychologist, while those who were treated suffered from depression (81%), suicidal thoughts (28%) and suicide ideation (25%). Nieuwoudt and Bantjes (2019) found that structural factors in correctional centres, such as gangsterism, substance abuse, violence, overcrowding, high levels of psychopathology and inadequate mental health resources led to increased suicide ideation behaviour.

Inmates also experience a wide variety of physical health problems such as tuberculosis, HIV and Aids, insomnia, chronic back pain, migraines and different variants of hepatitis (Luyt and du Preez, 2010). More than half of the women in this study reported feeling unhealthy, did not have immediate access to medical assistance and were not able to consult a psychiatrist/psychologist, only 5% of the women in prison frequently participated in physical activities while roughly a third reported having limited access to any physical exercise. Incarceration in South African correctional centres, therefore, has a detrimental effect on female offender's overall health and does not meet the appropriate standards (Luyt and du Preez, 2010).

These findings are not limited to South Africa. In America, women housed in maximum-security prisons reported that they experienced limited access to medical care and that health problems such as gynaecological, dermatological and gastrointestinal never received any attention (Harner & Riley, 2013). Female offenders in State and Federal Correctional Facilities reported having chronic health problems, such as arthritis, asthma, hypertension, and hepatitis (Harrison & Beck, 2005). Women also reported other health impairments, such as problems with speech, hearing, vision, and mobility, and a quarter of the women had been injured since entering prison in accidents and fights.

Research also suggests that mental health problems are more prevalent among female offenders than their male counterparts (Blanchetts & Brown, 2006; Messina & Grella, 2006). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2005, only 55% of male offenders reported having mental health problems, whilst female offenders were as high as 73% (James and Glaze, 2006). Female offenders frequently have histories of childhood trauma, sexual abuse, substance abuse and mental illness and as a result often lack the necessary coping mechanisms which makes them more susceptible to adjustment disorders (Messina & Grella, 2006; Anumba et al., 2019)

Consequently, women who are incarcerated experience high rates of anxiety, depression and substance abuse (Messina & Grella, 2006).

The prison environment therefore fundamentally influences female offender's mental health and rehabilitation experience (James & Glaze, 2006). Nurse, Woodcock and Ormsby (2003) investigated the impact of the prison environment on mental health and showed that isolation, lack of mental stimulation, drug misuse, negative relationships with prison staff, conflict, bullying of vulnerable inmates and lack of family contact contributed to poor mental health among offenders and officials in southern England. Harner and Riley (2013) indicated that constant fear, anxiety, limited access to mental health services, physical health issues, stress and negative relationships with officials worsened female offenders' mental health status in maximum security settings. Violent incidents between inmates contribute to high levels of anxiety and constant pat-downs and strip searches were traumatic experiences, especially for women who have suffered from sexual abuse (Harner & Riley, 2013). It is, therefore, important that correctional centres do not produce the same traumatic and victimising experiences before female offenders' incarceration (Steyn & Hall, 2013).

It is worth recognising that not all women have a negative prison experience. Some female offenders have a positive incarceration experience both physiologically and psychologically as prison is an opportunity for better nutrition, health care and treatment (Artz et al., 2012; Douglas et al., 2009; Harner & Riley, 2013). These differences in experience are reflective of a larger social issue between the disparities in women's health – especially those who have experienced poverty, substance abuse, victimization and mental illness (Harner & Riley, 2013).

2.5 Treatment of Incarcerated Women

Research shows that when gender differences are not recognised within correctional centres, women often fall victim to the pains of incarceration. Muthaphuli (2008) argues that it is important to understand that female offenders come from different backgrounds and that they need to receive rehabilitation programmes that focus specifically on their criminogenic needs if they are to be fully rehabilitated. Equality of treatment does not mean that female offenders should be treated in the same manner as their male counterparts, it refers to creating programmes that

incorporate female offenders' pathways to crime (Carlen, 2012; Bloom, Owen and Covington, 2004). Gender-specific programmes should reflect an understanding of female offenders' different realities and create programmes that address both their strengths and challenges. Programmes should also acknowledge that gender makes a difference when it comes to rehabilitation programmes; management and staff should aim to create an environment that is based on safety, dignity and respect. Programmes and policies should include healthy relations with children, family and communities; address substance abuse and mental health through culturally relevant services and provide sufficient supervision; female offenders should have the opportunity to improve their socio-economic status. Programmes should also be provided for re-entering communities with sufficient services and supervision.

Furthermore, Wright et al. (2012) highlight the importance of the relationship between female offenders' needs and institutional adjustment. For example, female offenders with a history of physical or sexual abuse may be at increased risk for maladjustment to incarceration (Steiner & Wooldridge, 2009). Consequently, when female offenders' needs are neglected misconduct and violent assaults are often the result (Wright et al., 2021). In light of this, researchers suggest that female offenders should receive rehabilitation programmes that focus specifically on skill-based and women-centred treatment programmes that are more responsive to their experiences (Wright et al., 2012).

Rocheleau's (2013) exploration of the pains of imprisonment argues that lack of opportunity to engage in constructive activities often leads to prison misconduct, while programmes that focus on self-improvement can result in lower levels of disruptive and violent behaviour. In the same vein, female offenders in Worcester's correctional centre reported that rehabilitation programmes played a "positive role" in their incarceration experience in keeping them active and occupied (Artz et al., 2012). However, they also complained about the inconsistency in the availability of these programmes. For example, sports programmes offered by external organisations were discontinued for the women's unit, while the men's sessions were still running. Furthermore, activities like soccer and netball were only available to them when correctional officials had the time to supervise these programmes (Artz et al., 2012). This negatively affects female offenders' incarceration experience and often results in

feelings of hopelessness, violence and depression (Rocheleau, 2013; Wright et al., 2012).

Popular programmes that were oriented towards emotional intelligence such as Inner Healing, Heartlines and Restorative Justice helped women with forgiveness, self-reflection, self-management and insight into their pathways to crime (Artz et al., 2012). Thus, holistic programmes can help offenders with physical and psychological discipline, which can promote general cohabitation between inmates and prison staff, creating a safer and more conducive environment for rehabilitation (Griera et al., 2015).

2.6 Yoga programmes in correctional centres

Even though yoga developed from the Hindu, Buddhist and Jainism religious traditions in India and incorporates some of their concepts, it holds no dogmatic demands or beliefs (Taylor, 2003). There is a common misperception that the practice of yoga requires one to change their religious beliefs or practices but yoga should be better understood as a spiritual path which has been practised by people from all different backgrounds (Taylor, 2003).

Yoga was introduced during the 19th century to Western society by Swami Vivekananda (2005). During this period yoga was evaluated for its physical and psychological effects (Kraftsow, 1999). Yoga slowly became mainstreamed through the “Modern Yoga Renaissance” which mainly focused on the physical practice of yoga. Yoga as exercise was first popularized by yogis, who combined Hatha Yoga postures with Western gymnastics, wrestling, and other techniques (Kraftsow, 1999). Today, yoga is a staple of holistic health and has grown into a massive industry, with an estimated 300 million practitioners worldwide and counting (Kraftsow, 1999).

Beyond the physical postures, breathing exercises and meditation the philosophy of yoga provides guidelines for a healthy and well-rounded individual (Kraftsow, 1999). This includes the relationship they have with themselves, others and their spiritual beliefs. It incorporates the proactive system of responding to a situation rather than reacting which evokes a sense of personal responsibility when facing a difficult situation (Kraftsow, 1999). It allows an individual to examine the physical, emotional and spiritual barriers to healing.

Yoga has only recently been introduced to the environment of correctional centres (Derlic, 2020; Kerekes et al., 2017). Studies on the use of alternative treatment programmes to help inmates cope with the prison environment suggest that yoga provides offenders with a framework for physical, emotional and spiritual well-being (Derlic, 2020; Kerekes et al., 2017; Rousseau et al., 2019). These programmes can be beneficial for targeting trauma and providing female offenders with techniques to regulate emotions and foster a positive connection with themselves (Rousseau et al., 2019).

Research has shown that yoga can have a wide range of positive effects on psychological health, including among older adults. For instance, participants reported that they felt more flexible, mobile, stronger, relaxed and energized (Bonura, 2007). Participants also experienced an improvement in their mental health, such as increased concentration, sense of accomplishment, confidence, serenity and awareness of both spiritual and emotional well-being. Yoga has the potential to provide participants with affordable preventative mental health care and complement modern medical care (Bonura, 2007). A study on a weekly yoga programme offered to female offenders in different environments (community, minimum- and maximum-security prison) showed lower levels of stress, depression and anxiety after each yoga session (Lundstorm et al., 2021). The results of the study suggest that even short-term yoga intervention can improve female offenders' mental health within a correctional setting (Lundstorm, et al., 2021).

Because female offenders' pathways to crime can be characterised by trauma, violence and substance abuse, yoga programmes that include elements such as gender-responsiveness, trauma sensitivity and integrated mindfulness can be beneficial (Rousseau et al., 2019). Such programmes address the psycho-social and physiological aspects of trauma while providing the offenders with a toolkit¹³ to improve emotional regulation (Rousseau, 2019). Findings have shown that female offenders experienced fewer symptoms of physical pain and were able to identify how emotions are linked to their bodies (Rousseau et al, 2019). Furthermore, the women were able to cope more effectively, they experienced lower levels of traumatic stress (depression and anxiety), increased self-compassion, a deeper sense of connection with other inmates,

¹³ According to Rousseau (2019) each session consisted of a group discussion, pranayama (breathing exercise), asana (physical yoga practice) and meditation.

heightened sense of emotional awareness and self-regulation (Rousseau et al., 2019).

Another study on the effectiveness of yoga on depression, anxiety and cognitive behavioural performance in a correctional centre showed that participants who were enrolled in the 10-week yoga programme experienced positive effects and reduced psychological distress compared to the control group (Bilderbeck et al., 2013). Moreover, participants who completed the yoga programme also showed increased performance in cognitive behavioural tasks. These results suggest that yoga has a tremendous impact on subjective well-being and mental health (Bilderbeck et al., 2013).

Harner, Hanlon and Garfinkel (2010) showed that 120-minute Iyengar¹⁴ yoga sessions twice a week (focusing on strengthening postures, balancing poses and relaxation techniques) resulted in female offenders' reporting feeling energised, refreshed, focused and connected with their bodies. In addition, women reported lower levels of stress and depression (Harner et al., 2010). Derezotes (2014) argues that yoga mitigates the sense of separation experienced in correctional centres by boosting offenders' self-esteem and teaching them techniques for emotional regulation. It also helps offenders adjust to correctional centres by focusing on the present moment, instead of dwelling on the past or getting anxious about the future (Rucker, 2005).

Karup's (2016) interviews showed that yoga helped offenders cope with the pains of imprisonment such as isolation, limited autonomy and loss of self-control and gave the women a new sense of self-worth, meaning and purpose in life. While many participants said that they decided to enrol for the programme mainly for the physical benefits, they later found themselves wanting to learn more about yoga for psychological and spiritual reasons (Karup, 2016). The majority of prisons reported that yoga had a direct impact on their behavioural changes (Karup, 2016).

Viorst (2017) focused on eight former inmates' perception of a 'Prison Yoga Project', specifically whether or not a regular yoga practice could change behavioural patterns. The inmates reported that non-physical practices such as meditation and breath work were beneficial because it helped them to cope better

¹⁴ The style of Iyengar yoga is focused on correct postural alignment, precision of movement and correct range of motion and as a result enables the practitioner to use a variety of yoga props to help them practice the postures correctly to help them get the most out of their practice (Harner et al., 2010).

when they experience tension or turmoil which serves as an antidote given their environment (Viorst, 2017). The participants reported feeling less aggravated and that they were able to respond to a situation rather than react (Karup, 2016; Viorst, 2017). Furthermore, they also experienced significant physical¹⁵ and psychological¹⁶ improvements and developed skills to find stillness and peace (Viorst, 2017). The participants in this study continued with their practice post-release and found that it was an essential tool to help them transition back into society (Viorst, 2017).

Yoga and rehabilitation share common goals in terms of personal development and self-integration (Auty et al., 2015). For example, the Good Lives Model¹⁷ focus on building on the individuals' strengths and focusing on accomplishment through goal setting (Karup, 2016). More often than not criminology focuses on the negative aspects of an offender such as social rejection (Becker, 1963), association with a strong criminal influence (Sutherland & Cressey, 1974), reaction to social strain (Agnew, 1997), lack of self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), and conditions of risk and criminal career (Farrington, 1995; Williams and McShane, 2014). Thus, rehabilitating offenders often implies that offenders need "fixing" which is perceived as judgemental and confrontational (Karup, 2016 and Viorst, 2017). Due to the gentle nature of yoga, it can therefore be supplementary to mainstream rehabilitation programmes (Karup, 2016).

2.7 Yoga, rehabilitation and prisons

One of the purposes of the DCS is to develop rehabilitation programmes for female offenders, to change their behaviour, successfully integrate them into the community and ultimately reduce the rate of recidivism. As a result, rehabilitation programmes have been developed on a deterrence-based approach that stays fixated on negative experiences (Rucker, 2015; Karup, 2016). Ronel et al. (2013) argue that

¹⁵ Former inmates reported that they experienced less back pain, tension and muscle tightness, as well as more flexibility and that the asana practice was an essential tool for healing and general health (Viorst, 2017).

¹⁶ According to Viorst (2017) participants noted that they experienced greater emotional intelligence and awareness after the yoga programme.

¹⁷ The GLM developed by Ward and Gannon (2006) has been implemented in rehabilitation programmes.

positive emotions can broaden offenders' behavioural patterns and build on their personal 'resources'.

In line with these findings, yoga may also promote reintegration into society and deterrence by assisting people in embracing positive characteristics such as finding new meaning in life, positive thinking, positive emotions, self-awareness and taking personal responsibility (Rucker, 2015). To comprehend how yoga could fit within this framework, the next part will give a quick summary of contemporary rehabilitation programmes.

The "Risk-Need-Responsivity" (RNR) paradigm focuses on meeting the criminogenic demands of inmates (factors that predict offending behaviour). Yoga's ability to reduce substance abuse, aggression, emotional reactivity, and self-control, suggests that it may be compatible with these RNR models (Rucker, 2015; Ronel et al., 2013; Karup, 2016). This risk-need model, on the other hand, ignores the role of individual agency and, by focusing solely on deficits, may be stigmatizing and damaging to female offenders' self-perception.

In contrast, The Good Lives Model (GLM) aligns with positive criminology by building on the positive to address the problems more effectively. This model proposes that individuals strive to obtain primary goods that can be defined as personal characteristics, state of mind, activities or other experiences that might influence psychological well-being (Ward, Mann & Gannon, 2006). For example, accumulating knowledge can increase one's sense of self-worth and interpersonal skills (Huynh et al., 2015). To support this Ronel et al. (2013) research on a meditation program in prisons, showed that cumulative positive experiences are likely to contribute towards effective rehabilitation programmes. Based on the fundamental premise of positive criminology, meditation practices bring unification amongst offenders in terms of social, individual, and spiritual spheres. Based on the information above, it can be argued that yoga may support the development of inner resources like stress management, improved focus, emotional regulation, and positive thinking (Ivtzan and Papantoniou, 2014; Butzer et al., 2016; Eggleston, 2009; Wiitekind, 2018).

2.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature on female criminality, their incarceration experience and the effectiveness of alternative and holistic rehabilitation programmes such as yoga. While the impact of incarceration and re-entry sets the stage and defines the individual experiences of female offenders, their children, families, and their communities, what is required is a multi-layered response. The literature showed that the reason why female offenders are not currently receiving programmes that are women-centred and responsive to their needs is based on theoretical, administrative, and structural barriers that are deeply rooted in the implementation of policies and financial resources. The current rise of "Positive criminology" highlights the necessity of a 'more thorough healing paradigm', Rucker (2015) believes that yoga falls within the same category as positive criminology, and can be separated from common 'therapy' methods that 'may very easily become coercive' in a prison environment. Holistic activities like yoga have grown in popularity as a new rehabilitation model and have been developed because of 'individualized' sentencing plans. In light of this, 'personal transformation, self-responsibility, and self-management of individual behaviour' are translated as some of the therapeutic advantages of yoga. Although prisoner self-regulation is not the main topic, it nevertheless serves as an essential framework for this research.

Chapter Three

Methods

3.1 Research question

This research set out to examine female offenders' experience of yoga within Worcester Correctional Centre. To answer this question, it also sought to understand the physical and mental effects of prison yoga for women, how the participants view how yoga is useful inside the correctional centre, and how they make use of yoga to create emotional awareness and adjust behavioural patterns.

3.2 Rationale

In South Africa, the majority of empirical studies on justice, punishment and more specifically detention have been developed on the experiences of men. Literature on women in conflict with the law highlights the fact that women who are incarcerated require a different approach than that of men. Artz et al. (2012) suggest that female offenders are some of the most socially and economically vulnerable people in South Africa and therefore, have different needs from men because of the unique way they experience victimisation, trauma, domestic violence and poverty (Artz & Rotman, 2015; Messina & Grella, 2010; Byrne & Howells, 2002). These vulnerabilities, along with other risk factors, shape female offenders' pathway to crime and their incarceration experience (Artz et al, 2012). Furthermore, the experience of incarceration often leads to distinct mental and physical health issues which imply the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes (Steyn and Hall, 2015).

It is, therefore, critical to explore alternative and cost-effective programmes based on women's specific psychological and physiological needs. Holistic rehabilitation programmes, like yoga and other mindfulness practices, have recently been integrated into correctional practices (Auty, Cope & Liebling, 2015; Karup, 2016). Yoga has become extremely popular in many correctional centres around the world (Muirhead & Fortune, 2016), but there is a limited number of empirical studies available on the benefits that yoga brings to offenders – particularly in South Africa. To fill this gap, this project interviewed participants in the Seva Unite yoga programme (The Freedom Project) which presented yoga classes in the Worcester Correctional Centre

in the Western Cape and examined the effect yoga has on female offenders while incarcerated, the factors that might have contributed to either a positive or negative experience of the programme and the impact of practical implementation of yoga in their daily lives.

3.3 Methodology

From an ontological perspective, one can argue that the meaning of the world is found within individual realities. Corbetta (2003) argues that one cannot assume that there is one universal reality for all, rather there are multiple perspectives upon which people draw their social experience and shape their reality. Based on these facts, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate method for this study due to its naturalistic and interpretative qualities (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Bowling (2002) notes that qualitative research has the potential to identify topics that have not been fully explored or understood. It was therefore appropriate for offering a deep and insightful understanding of not only female offenders' yoga experience but the impact that yoga had on their behaviour within a prison setting.

An exploratory research design is well-suited for developing insight into a complex phenomenon which would otherwise be difficult to measure with a quantitative research design, because it allows the researcher to examine the holistic and unique nature of human beings (Hogan et al., 2009; Maxwell, & Mittapalli, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Using this kind of design allowed the researcher to get to the heart of the participants' views and feelings about practising yoga and to explore the impact of holistic practices as rehabilitation programming (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Babbie, 2010).

A feminist-informed qualitative exploratory methodology also allowed for an empathetic connection between the participants and the researcher, to focus on their lived experience of the Seva Unite yoga programme (The Freedom Project) within a correctional centre and the challenges that they face daily. Moreover, this method also allowed for the acknowledgement of the impact of incarceration in terms of gender, race, class or sexuality, and reflected how society continues to reinforce stereotypes that further discriminate against women. These factors play an important role in how women are discriminated against within the realm of

rehabilitation.

This research method is not aimed at generalisation but rather at eliciting in-depth reflection and meaning of female offenders' yoga experiences. Qualitative research was therefore specifically appropriate for recognising patterns to build and reflect the dimensionality of rehabilitation programmes within correctional centres.

3.3.1 Inclusion criteria

Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to single out the participants who had particular characteristics who were able to best answer the research question, and who had specific knowledge and experience of the phenomenon (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). One of the advantages of purposive sampling is the ability to reach saturation and the target sample quickly. For this study, participants were female offenders who participated in the Seva Unite yoga programme (The Freedom Project), who were still teaching and practising yoga in the correctional centre and who had been doing it for six months or more. These criteria were set to ensure that they had sufficient time to fully experience the yoga programme.

After research access permission was secured, the case worker at Worcester Correctional Centre provided a list of the women who participated in the programme that matched the criteria. Effective communication was often a challenge in negotiating access, particularly since this started during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having a contact on the inside who worked with the prisoners and the Seva Unite programme was very beneficial and allowed for easier access to the participants.

Interviews were conducted with nine female offenders who participated in the programme. Four of the women identified as Coloured, four as White and one as African. A few of the women were held in maximum security prison, while the majority of the interviewees were in medium security. Similar to Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moults' (2012) study of female offenders in Worcester's and Pollsmoor correctional centres, the majority of female offenders fell into the ages between 18 to 39 years old. The race and age-based demographic reflects the melting pot of cultures within correctional centres and the constraints it presents in terms of guiding rehabilitation policies and practices.

The Seva Unite Programme (The Freedom Project) was run by a non-profit organisation that had been running since 2010. The organisation first started in Pollsmoor in the male sections and slowly expanded its services to Worcester female correctional centre. Besides the volunteer-led yoga classes, inmates were able to enrol in a free six-month module-based ‘Yoga and Mindfulness’ correspondence course, and if the yoga truly inspired them, they were able to enrol in a ‘Teachers Training Course’. Seva Unite only provided their services to selected correctional centres within the Western Cape and only Pollsmoor and Worcester had female sections.

3.3.2 Research site

The research took place at the Worcester Correctional Service Centre in the Western Cape. It is a standalone all-female correctional centre; however, a separate male section is located on the same grounds. According to Artz et al. (2007), Worcester Correctional Centre has a capacity for 211 female offenders with ten single cells and ten communal cells. At the time the interviews were conducted the head of the centre mentioned that Worcester Correctional Centre housed roughly 181 inmates in maximum-security and fifty-one of these women had committed violent offences.

The majority of women incarcerated at Worcester serve longer sentences. This was useful in terms of the research because the population is more stable than at Pollsmoor where women cycle in and out of the centre, often in short sentences. The women at Worcester also spent more time participating in the yoga programme and were therefore able to give accurate descriptions of their yoga experience.

3.3.3 Data collection

Patenaude (2003) argues that prison research should be policy-orientated with the specific aim of investigating offenders’ cognitive thinking patterns and behavioural intentions based on their subjective experiences. Qualitative research can provide depth and richness when researching these personal experiences (Patenaude, 2003), and enables the researcher to be flexible and creative when stepping into the field because of the “methodological landmines” of prison research. These landmines

include getting access to vulnerable and stigmatised groups, time constraints, working around their schedules and gaining and maintaining trust with both the institution and the participants (Abbott, 2018; Schlosser, 2008; Patenaude, 2003).

Researchers must not only consider their objectives but also the potential impact research can have on the participants, who may be sensitive and vulnerable. It is important to remember that inmates' research experience starts from the moment of recruitment up until the very last interview. Their interview experience can also be influenced by multiple factors, for instance, they may have been forced to participate by officials, the setting of the environment they are interviewed in or the researchers' body language and facial expressions. Thus, the participants' interview experience has a major effect on how they chose to respond to both you as an individual and then ultimately your research objective.

Despite the methodological challenges, there are numerous versions of the prison experience, which implies that there is no ultimate truth when it comes to being incarcerated. Therefore, analysing a study from multiple perspectives reminds the reader that the participants are not merely numbers, they are living breathing human beings, with different personalities and characteristics. These are the type of qualities that qualitative research offers to the field of criminology and prison research.

Literature on conducting research in correctional centres indicates that qualitative research can shed light on offenders' behaviour from multiple perspectives ranging from criminal activities, inmate culture and prison conditions (Copes et al., 2012). The most appropriate data collection method involved interviewing the offenders due to the study's exploratory nature (Patenaude, 2004; Copes et al., 2012; Bosworth et al., 2005), and the fact that it allowed the researcher to gain deep and meaningful insight into the participants' subjective experience (Patenaude, 2004; Copes et al., 2012; Bosworth et al., 2005).

Having a combination of individual and group interviews also allowed the women to reveal both their personal and collective experiences of the programme. Individual interviews allowed the female offenders to tell their own stories and show their vulnerability concerning their yoga journey without being scared that it might be used against them by other inmates or risk losing their personal

experience in the sea of voices. These interviews focused on the experience of female offenders and the impact incarceration had on their lives. It was important to understand how they experienced Worcester correctional centre and, the role these institutions play in maintaining and forming relationships, the impact it has on their rehabilitation process and how it influences their health.

The second key focus of the individual interviews was to examine the yoga programme through the unique lens of the participants. I asked about what got them interested in the programme in the first place (for example through recruitment or a fellow inmate, recommendation from a psychologist, curiosity or pure boredom) because this plays a role in how they perceived yoga for the first time and the potential impact it had on their motivation to continue with the programme. It was also important to find out whether their experience of the programme played any significant role in how they coped with the challenges of being incarcerated. Thus, in essence, this section reflected on both perceived personal impacts and the collective or general impact it had on their prison experience as a whole.

The third key focus was on whether or not the female offenders experienced a sense of awareness and mindfulness while they participated in the yoga programme. This question sought to examine if the programme allowed them to connect with their physical body, and whether it helped them to cope with any emotional difficulties such as anxiety, trauma or depression. It aimed to find out if the yoga program helped them to reflect on their past crimes, their sense of remorse and what they want for themselves in the future, bringing the unconscious actions and beliefs toward the light.

The last section focused on the interviewee's personal development and the potential outcome of yoga in the prevention of reoffending. Personal development was operationalised as the participants' ability to reflect on whether or not the programme helped them to gain a better understanding of themselves and how this influenced their relationships.

On the other hand, the group interview allowed participants to exchange ideas and meanings, during which different realities could be explored and developed. The group interviews focused on the impact yoga had on the female offenders as a collective within the prison population, perceiving the yoga group as a 'sub-culture'

of sorts. This section aimed to establish if the yoga programme created a sense of community between the inmates as well as their interactions and behaviour towards other inmates and vice versa. These questions also aimed at finding out whether or not they experienced any barriers around showing up to the yoga classes. It was also necessary to inquire about any specific improvements to the yoga programme for future implementation. For this study nine individual interviews were conducted and one group interview. It is important to mention that five out of the nine participants understood English but preferred to interview Afrikaans. To this extent, both the researcher and participants were differently involved in the production of knowledge.

Semi-structured interviews are flexible and interactive by nature and use a guide that is based on specific topics and questions. Semi-structured interviews are the perfect instrument when it comes to following up on open-ended questions and exploring different realities in depth (Adams, 2015). This method of data collection also helped to build a foundation of trust between the researcher and participant because it opens up a two-way conversation (Adams, 2015; Silverman, 2000; Babbie, 2010), provides the participants time to open up about sensitive experiences, and on the other hand, it allowed the interviewer to acquire and probe answers to the questions and the reason behind the answers. Semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to change the order of the questions, accommodating for fact that the participant responses sometimes fit into multiple categories.

3.4 The practicalities of research

Permission to conduct research at the correctional was formally requested from the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) (see Appendix C). On the first day of data collection, before entering the centre, I had to go through the logistics of correctional centre security, which included being searched, producing my identity document and checking my possessions. I had a deactivated cell phone with me for recordings, but I wasn't allowed to take it in with me. Fortunately, the head of the centre offered to lend me his tape recorder.

Upon arrival, I was introduced to Mr du Plessis, the head of the centre¹⁸ as

¹⁸ According to the DCS website, the head of a centre is responsible for internalising the critical and transformational role they play in changing the face of corrections, ensuring that DCS delivers on its duty to promote the philosophy of corrections from a developmental perspective and to drive change

well as the case officer¹⁹. The psychologist arranged a list of names who participated in the Seva Unite Programme (The Freedom Project) before my arrival. After these introductions, I was escorted to one of the classrooms where the potential participants were waiting for me. The correctional centre was busy and noisy, with inmates walking around in the passages. For the group interview, I opened the session with a brief introduction on who I was and the purpose of the study. I stressed the fact that participation was completely voluntary and that all information would be confidential. This was followed up with a discussion of the consent form and information sheet. After the initial formalities, I shared my yoga journey with the participants to establish a foundation of trust and mutual respect.

Before I started with the official group interview, I asked the participants to introduce themselves and what their superpower would be, this ‘icebreaker exercise’ changed the energy in the room and allowed the participants to relax. The group interview was very comprehensive, however, I often had to seek out the more introverted participants' perceptions. After our group session, I thanked the ladies for their time and explained how the rest of the week would unfold.

On the following day, I was escorted to a correctional official's office to conduct individual interviews with the participants. This arrangement allowed for some privacy as even though the correctional officials were not present in the room, they were able to observe us through a window of the maximum-security courtyard. This sense of privacy allowed the women to be more at ease and honest with me. Even though we were in a private office, time and again someone (either an inmate or official) would come bursting into the office. Although this did not have a major effect on the interviews it did disrupt the flow of the conversations. Before I started each interview, I took the participant through a 5-minute guided meditation to be fully present. Therefore, the individual interviews allowed for a much richer and more personal yoga experience to emerge.

On the last day of my visit to the correctional centre, I gave the participants a group yoga session, a way of thanking them for their participation in the study.

internally and in the broader society, ensuring offender management, ensuring proper offender classification and placement.

¹⁹ The Case officer's role is to help with issues related to the prisoner's cell and personal issues. For general day-to-day issues, prisoners should speak to their case officer. They will enter case notes and updates on prisoner well-being and progress.

Reflecting on this day, small acts of kindness played an important role in recognising our shared humanity and our sense of self-worth. For instance, they were all very surprised by the fact that they could do yoga on an actual yoga mat and not a slippery towel. After the session, the women were relaxed and expressed their gratitude for the week we spent together, by giving me a handmade card. We parted ways with a group hug and a few encouraging words.

3.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data collection and analysis can be approached from a diverse range of epistemological, theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. According to Watt (2015), qualitative data analysis is about organizing and interpreting different structures and dimensions of the specific data collected. The main aim of data analysis is to describe the subjective experience of an individual based on a certain phenomenon, it also allows the researcher to focus on both the differences and commonalities (Watt, 2015; Flick, 2013). The second aim of qualitative data is to identify the conditions and explanations for different experiences such as the circumstances that made it easier to cope with being incarcerated. Flick (2013) describes data analysis as not only recording and describing different experiences but also analysing the phenomenon beyond the individual's awareness. Thus, these types of interactions can be linked back to theory as well as certain practices and routines, which play an important role when it comes to analysing different experiences.

An inductive thematic analysis approach was used to identify codes and themes that derived from the data, in other words, this method leaves room for more exploration. The thematic analysis involves more interpretation and involvement of the researcher (Flick, 2013), it focuses on organising and identifying patterns, it helps to identify patterns that are relevant to the research question, it allows the researcher to be flexible when it comes to analysing a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thus, the two main reasons for using thematic analysis are due to its flexibility and accessibility.

A qualitative research software (Nivivo) was used to obtain rigour in organising the data and helped the researcher to work more methodically and attentively. This software reduces the number of manual tasks and gives the

researcher more time to discover themes derived from the data.

3.6 Ethics and Prison Research

There are several important ethical considerations when it comes doing to research in a correctional setting. Researchers often experience anxiety about the “ethical boundaries” and the responsibility they have towards the participants (Artz et al., 2012). Offenders are a vulnerable population with limited autonomy, often placed in the same category as children and pregnant women. On the other hand, women in prison can also be highly emotional and manipulative (Geer, 2002). It is important to keep in mind that environments along with social interactions have a major impact on inmates’ emotional lives and this in turn affects their perceptions, interactions, authenticity and autonomy (Geer, 2002; Denzin, 1984). There is always the risk of traumatising or exploiting female offenders during the research process. It was therefore important for me to respect the dignity, rights and safety of the participants.

Because of the complex setting, researchers face heightened scrutiny from research ethics boards. Ethical clearance was obtained from both the Department of Correctional Services and Cape Town University (L0137-2019).

Before the interview, all participants were provided with consent forms (Appendix A), ensuring that participation was completely voluntary. This helped to mitigate the risk of correctional officials ‘forcing’ offenders to participate in the study. Further, participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. It was also important to thoroughly explain to offenders the purpose of the study and provide them with an information sheet (Appendix B) describing the nature of the study and the use of the data.

Data protection and confidentiality were also discussed with the participants. Due to the nature of group interviews, confidentiality could not be guaranteed, participants were therefore encouraged to share their personal experiences for the individual interviews. This issue was also addressed by asking them to sign a confidentiality form. The participants were also asked for permission to tape-record

the interviews²⁰. They were also informed that confidentiality would be maintained by the researcher unless safety concerns were an issue.

Steps were taken to ensure the participants' emotional well-being was taken care of during the research process. Extra caution was taken to minimise any distress by phrasing my questions carefully. During the individual interviews, most of the participants shared a great deal about their pathway to crime. I didn't want to lose their trust by telling them not to share their stories, however, I also didn't want them to feel like I was taking advantage of them. So, when it came to the most difficult question "Has yoga influenced how you think or feel about the crime you have committed?" I reminded them, that they were more than welcome to dismiss it. I decided to only use the data that was relevant to the research question and keep the rest confidential²¹. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity, this enabled the participants to speak more frankly.

It was evident from the individual interviews how deeply these women wanted to be heard and recognised as human beings and not the stigma that was attached to them. They were craving to share their pain and fears with someone willing to listen. The pure vulnerability that they shared with me, made me realize that they are not so different from the rest of us. They are not offenders at heart but rather traumatized individuals in need of compassion and healing. My week was filled with both tears and laughter but I know now that bearing witness to their stories was part of the healing process for them. Thus, researching rehabilitation can be an opportunity to open a dialogue which focuses on growth and self-empowerment, something that most of them have been deprived of their whole lives.

3.7 Limitations

This study has several limitations which were considered before entering the field. Correctional centres are a closed environment where everyone's activity is regulated, therefore, simply gaining access to the correctional facility was problematic at first. However, the researcher applied for permission through the

²⁰ The interviews were deleted from the tape recorder after I uploaded it to a password-protected folder, the personal data collected will also be erased following the completion of this research.

²¹ Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity; this enabled the participants to speak more frankly.

Department of Correctional Services, and after some initial difficulties in negotiating access to the centre, arrangements were finalised.

Another interrelated issue was gaining and maintaining the trust of the inmates. Due to the nature of group interviews, confidentiality could not be guaranteed. However, participants signed confidentiality forms and were always aware that what they were saying might be disclosed beyond the group. It was important to get to know the individuals to build a foundation of trust, another option was for me to share my own yoga experience with the participants.

Another limitation was that women from other cultures were less inclined to participate in a yoga program because it did not reflect their cultural norms. It was important to respect their cultural beliefs and to remind the respondents that the participation was completely voluntary and that they were able to withdraw at any stage during the interview process. However, I also think it was an important factor to document why they view the practice of yoga as a “negative” experience. I was also aware that I might disrupt the correctional centre's schedule and that female officers had to be present at all times. However, the researcher worked around their schedule and after the psychologist provided the department with a pre-existing list of participants.

Chapter Four

Analysis and Presentation of Data

4.1 Reflections on their Incarceration Experience

In the book 'The Society of Captives', Gresham Sykes (1958) identified the challenges offenders face while being incarcerated. These challenges include deprivations of liberty, goods and services, contact with family and friends, autonomy and security. The women in this study provided a vivid description of their experience of incarceration – much of it referencing these same aspects. They highlighted key themes such as relationships with family, inmates, correctional officers, prison conditions and rehabilitation programmes. The women's views of incarceration were important for the foundation of the study because it provided an understanding of the external stressors which influenced their ability to cope with imprisonment. Each woman brought with her a range of psychological and social difficulties that influenced their experience. Their stories are a reflection of the psychological effects of incarceration, which is not always visible, and the impact it has on their self-worth and individuality.

4.2 Relationships with fellow female offenders

The majority of female offenders felt that their relationship with other inmates was one of the biggest challenges that they faced in prison. Seven out of the nine participants felt that conflict with other inmates played a major role when it came to making it difficult to regulate their emotions on a day-to-day basis.

The women also reported that there was a lack of mutual respect and trust and a lot of jealousy and envy between inmates. For example, participants reported that inmates often sabotage each other, due to jealousy:

'There are people in this prison that just want to sabotage you. When my mom brings me new shoes and clothes, people get very jealous because my mother still supports me, and they don't have that support structure.' (P8).

The women reported that it was hard to build trusting relationships because fellow inmates may have ulterior motives such as material gain or sharing of

personal information with other inmates. Participants also reported that the lack of mutual respect often led to conflict situations, for example, where *'people are backstabbing each other and don't adhere to the rules. They are extremely noisy and inmates don't respect each other'* (P7). Furthermore, inmates become victims of bullying and abuse, and their behaviour towards one another often contradicts the purpose of incarceration which *'is supposed to be a place of rehabilitation to help you get back to the straight and narrow.'* (P7). In line with observations by Shapiro (1995) and Artz et al. (2012), conflict among female offenders has a negative influence on their attempts at self-improvement and ultimately on their rehabilitation process.

Some participants felt like their fellow inmates were like pseudo-family and formed part of their daily support structure. Participant 2 explained that *'I do have a few inmates that I am close with. That would probably be about four and they support me.'* Similar to a study by Wulf-Ludden (2013) participants reported that having friends in prison can offer different perspectives and advice regarding the problems and challenges that they encounter. For example, participant 9 mentioned that her experience with other inmates was *'educational'* because she saw it as an opportunity to learn about different cultures and personalities. Positive relationships with other inmates can help women to better cope with being incarcerated and can have a positive influence on their behaviour in prison (Artz et al., 2012; Shapiro, 1995). This needs to be taken into account when designing and implementing rehabilitation programmes to ensure that female offenders' have the opportunity to create positive friendships or networks that can motivate them to change their behaviour or provide support both in and outside prison.

4.3 Maintaining relationships with family

Research shows that incarceration can either have a negative or positive impact on female offenders' relationships with family members. Participant 8 reported that irregular visiting schedules placed an immense strain on her relationship with her child, which is disappointing because she *'worked so hard to build that relationship. And now it feels like this place is just ripping it apart because I can't see or speak to my/our kid'*. Scholars argue that female offenders' relationships with

family, friends, children and significant others can influence their behaviour and coping mechanisms while being incarcerated (Wright et al., 2013). One participant felt very disconnected from her family and explained that limited contact with her children caused her a lot of anxiety, making it difficult to cope with imprisonment. She explained:

'My mom is looking after my kids, but I don't talk to them a lot. I am afraid that something similar that happened to me will happen to them, knowing that I am not even there to protect them. Just thinking about it gives me panic attacks.' (P5).

Others experienced their incarceration as having a positive impact on their relationships because being in prison gave them the skills to communicate better with loved ones and gain a better understanding of the impact of their actions on them. Moreover, women also reported that programmes like restorative justice helped them to build better relationships with their family members, for example, participant 2 mentioned that she *'became a lot closer to my mom and our relationship is a lot better.'* The feeling in general amongst the participants was that building positive relationships with their family members can aid as a coping mechanism, motivate them to change their behaviour and stay connected to the outside world. Programmes that help foster this sense of connection, responsibility and openness can therefore assist women in their rehabilitation and transition out of prison eventually.

4.4 Conditions of the Correctional Centre

For the majority of the respondents, the prison conditions were relatively acceptable except for food and health care. One participant mentioned that the men do not properly prepare the food and that *'If the women were in charge of making the food it would be better.'* (P6). This is a very simple example of women having agency and taking responsibility for their health. Women also reported that they struggled with physical and mental health services. Participant 6 argued that the nurse on call was *'difficult to reach because she would always be in a meeting'*. With regards to mental health, participants felt like they didn't get to see the psychologists as often as they would've liked and mentioned that they would receive

'heavy medication' for a particular mental health status, and while some would take the prescribed medicine now and again to avoid dependency, others would take it to *'get high and to have at least 6 hours of escape from reality'* (P8).

The majority of the inmates were very unhappy about the inconsistency of rules about visits, especially during COVID-19. Participant 4 explained that prison officials would inform them about the visitation rules the previous day and the next day it would change *'They would tell us that visitation is only an hour long, but then all of a sudden it changes to only thirty minutes.'* (P4). Female offenders are expected to comply with the rules and decisions, made on their behalf, by the correctional centre. Such deprivation of autonomy has negative physiological and psychological consequences. Therefore, programmes that empower them to take responsibility can help them to better cope with being incarcerated.

4.5 Relationship with correctional officers

For some of the inmates, their relationship with the members²² was generally good and felt like a lot of them truly cared about their well-being. For example, participant 1 felt like she could *'share'* her feelings with some of the correctional officers. Other participants noted that there was a sense of mutual respect between the members and the inmates.

However, this did not mean that the relationships between members and inmates were always good. Participant 2 described that there will always be *'one or two that they don't get along with'* and Participant 7 added that *'they don't want you to be honest here and times they can treat you like you are nothing, they call us bandits.'*

A participant further noted that once an inmate got into a relationship with another inmate the members would distance themselves from the women. Participant 3 described that when she got involved in a same-sex relationship, the member she usually interacted with remarked that she *'become cheeky when in relationships because we don't listen to them [about staying out of same-sex relationships in the prison].'*

²² Correctional officers are referred to as 'members' in the prison environment. This dissertation uses the same terminology and uses member, officer and official interchangeably.

At times the inmates felt like they were judged by the officials because of the crimes that they committed. For example, participant 9 described that *'when I came back to prison all the members attached a stigma to me'*. Another inmate said that she felt like she could not trust the correctional officials because they would share information with other women who were incarcerated, which created conflict between the inmates. Participant 6 noted that *'offenders would complain to the members about another inmate [and] then [that member] talks to everyone about it'*. Furthermore, the women also perceived the correctional officials as unfair, inconsistent and degrading towards the inmates. Participant 9 explained:

'You never know what you are going to get from the members, you never know if they are going to be in a bad mood from home or what rules they are going to decide to put in today.'

4.6 Rehabilitation in Prison

The majority of the participants felt that the rehabilitation programmes offered by DCS were not successful, mainly because of inconsistent and poor implementation. Participant 9 explained that *'the way that the programmes are structured and the way that they have been planned is very good and they definitely would work if they were approached differently'*. Other participants felt like the programmes such as 'Substance Abuse', 'Cross Roads' and 'Anger Management' lacked substance and were too short to make an impact in their lives. For example, the women felt that programmes should be afforded the proper place in the rehabilitation programming in the prison, rather than being run simply to meet targets. Participant 9 explains:

'You see, you can't take a programme that changes someone light-heartedly. You can't do it because you just need to get it done. I mean you are changing somebody's life and how they have been feeling and thinking since they were children.'

Participants explained that the reason why these programmes failed can be attributed to the fact that the correctional officials are *'overworked'* and understaffed. Participant 9 recommended that for rehabilitation programmes to be more successful the correctional centre *'needs somebody that is only there for*

rehabilitation. That's their whole aim, that is all they have to do. Is rehabilitate you.'. Furthermore, the women also felt that rehabilitation programmes would be more effective if ex-offenders were able to be involved in the programmes because it would be easier for inmates to relate. A participant pointed to a Substance Abuse programme that she had experienced at Pollsmoor Correctional Centre:

'So, when you see someone who has been where you are and you see how they have changed their lives, then you are just like, wow, I can do it too. And like he was an ex-gangster so I could see like the ladies who grew up in that type of environment listened to him with respect because he knew what he was talking about.' (P9).

On the other hand, many women felt that the restorative justice programme was very successful because of the way the programme was structured. Many of the participants described the restorative justice programme as transformative. For example, participant 6 said that the programme helped her to reflect on her past crimes and *'heal from the inside out'*. Another important aspect of the restorative justice programme is the fact that it provides the inmates with *'tools they can use in the future'* (P8) and gives them the space to reflect on their past crimes. Furthermore, this particular programme also allowed them to connect with their family and reconcile with the victim's family members. Participants also reported that they learned more from the restorative justice programme because of the duration and its focus on values.

4.7 Perceptions of yoga

Reflecting on their first impressions of yoga, the participants reflected on the many misconceptions they had before starting the programme. Some participants thought that yoga was a religion *'worshipping due to lack of a better word, the Egyptian Sun god like Ra and Seth'* (P2). Another woman reported that she was scared and nervous about attending a yoga class because there were rumours that practising yoga *'was like being hypnotised'* (P4). Other participants were under the impression that only inmates of a certain race were allowed to do yoga. Due to the prison environment, women thought that practising yoga would *'be a bit awkward'* and they thought that the programme would only focus on the physical aspect of the

practice and *'nothing about spirituality'*. One participant said that they were also scared of other inmates' reactions to doing yoga, and how yoga practice would 'fit' within the prison walls:

'What are the people in my class going to think? What is it going to be like meditating in this environment?' (P9).

Despite their misconceptions, the participants were curious enough to test it out for themselves and said that after attending a couple of yoga classes and reading some literature about the practice they felt like they got a better understanding of what the programme was really about.

A few of the participants were recruited by fellow inmates, who felt like yoga would help them feel better either physically or emotionally. For example, participant 1 described that her friend *'was always the one who would approach me, when I was down in the dumps, and she invited me to come and do a yoga class with her'*. The psychologist also recommended the yoga programme to participants who were struggling with depression and anxiety. Participant 5 explained that she was recommended to try the programme to help cope:

'I did not have any coping tools. My coping tools used to be sex and drugs. This is when they taught me the breathing exercises to help with my panic attacks.'

4.8 Yoga as a coping mechanism for incarceration

Many women reported that yoga helped them to regulate stressful situations between themselves and other inmates. For example, participant 7 said that yoga helped her to stay *'focused'* and helped her to respond rather than react. She explained:

'It helps me with breathing in and out. It's all there it just helps me to take a minute for myself "Should I, or shouldn't I?'

Like Viorst's (2017) research, the majority of women reported that yoga helped them to find solitude amongst the constant noise of prison life, and specifically exercises like breathing and meditation helped them to *'switch off'*. Participant 8 reported that *'this yoga course helped me learn how to block off and*

how to like... not hear it.

The women also said that after a yoga class, they felt more relaxed and were able to sleep better at night. Participant 6 described: *'I had difficulty falling asleep, but when I started to focus on my breath and doing a body scan it helped me sleep better'*. One woman reported that yoga helped her to *'relax'* before she goes to sleep, and it also helped her to *'slow down my brain, and it's helped me a lot through the trauma of losing my family and of facing what I did'* (P9). This resonates with Rousseau et al., (2019) who showed that female offenders coped more effectively and showed lower levels of traumatic stress after practising yoga.

Practising yoga before bedtime helped the women to physically relax and become more aware of their bodies. The participants use different techniques to do so, for example, participant 4 would *'do the exercises, you know, to use the stretches that will just release my body'* while Participant 9 said that *'when I feel my body getting really tense and frustrated, I'll do the humming breathing exercise'*.

This aligns with Karup's (2016) findings on the physical benefits of yoga as well as Harner et al.'s (2012) study in which participants reported feeling more connected to their bodies after each practice. For others, yoga allowed them to stay in the present moment to focus on their day-to-day activities and *'not to push everything down. So that I can heal – because why? You can only do one thing at a time'* (P5).

It is also important to note that yoga did not help everyone cope with the harsh realities of prison life. Although yoga did provide them with some techniques to find relief and manage stress and emotions in prison, some participants still found it very difficult to be incarcerated.

4.9 Personal yoga practice in prison

A somewhat surprising finding was that the women did not practice yoga by themselves. Some of the women attributed this to the lack of space, remarking that *'it depends if there is time and if there is space'* (P8). Because she found it difficult to find a space this participant explained that she would try to practice yoga or meditation while the other inmates were watching television.

The women didn't feel safe to practice yoga in their cells because being vulnerable meant that you are open to being victimised by other inmates. For example, participant 9 explained that she didn't practice yoga on her own '*because the ladies [other inmates] like to comment and they are a bit narky*'. Participant 8 also reported that there are dangers to practising yoga outside of the safety of the group explaining that '*I think it is dangerous doing yoga here. If you don't know how to protect yourself against people.*

For some, it was nearly impossible to do yoga on their own, or in a group without a facilitator. For some, the problem was practical: they didn't practice on their own '*because there is no one to demonstrate the yoga poses*' (P6). For others, the problem was not only that it was hard to concentrate. but showing any form of vulnerability can be used against you in prison. As participant 8 explained:

'So, if you don't have the strength to keep yourself focused and block them out, then it becomes more dangerous than good to do yoga in the maximum section'.

It is important to note that little research is available on offenders practising yoga on their own. While one participant did mention that her practice often involved reading about Buddhist teaching through a book called 'The Law of Karma', which provided her with deeper insight and a heightened sense of awareness, it is unclear how easily available self-study materials would be in the prison setting. Given the constraints noted above, it is also unlikely that self-guided yoga materials would have the kind of individual and group benefits described by the women. Much like Karup's (2016) research showed, group yoga classes provided the women with a safe space or a 'sanctuary' from the harsh prison culture.

4.10 Physical experience and tuning into the body

Much like Wimberly and Engstrom (2017) described, participants in this study reported that the physical aspect of yoga helped them with their cravings for substances like drugs and alcohol which the women suffered from '*mainly because there is no crutch for me in prison*' (P2). Participant 8, who had been a heroin addict for most of her adult life explained:

'...heroin is a physical addiction, whereas other drugs are more mental and

emotional. So, heroin has got that physical aspect. Yoga gives you endorphins and giving your body that something else really helps you with the cravings. Because you find, like even though you have been clean for five years you still feel like your body is craving drugs and then I go and do yoga and then I feel better.

This participant also described that yoga helped her with joint pain which was a side effect of her heroin addiction.

For other participants, yoga helped with frustration, body pain and stress that accumulates in the body from being locked up in their cells. For example, participant 9 said *'I find that if I'm angry, and I feel out of control, then I'll run to the bathroom, and I'll just start stretching just to get that energy out and calm my body down.'* Becoming aware of the mind-body connection comports with Rousseau et al.'s (2019) findings on female offenders' ability to identify how emotions influence their bodies. Moreover, participants also reported feeling more *'flexible'* and *'healthy after a yoga session'* (P7).

For one woman in particular, the yoga programme helped her to accept her body and create a positive body image after years of abuse:

'It taught me to accept myself. Because I had a lot of scars on my body from all the rape. My face was full of cuts, even inside of my mouth, over my eye to inside my nose and my back. So, I have learned to accept my body. Because I didn't like my body very much because of everything that happened to me from when I was 9 years old to that time, Miss. I wasn't very proud of myself. Yoga taught me how to accept my body even with all the scars, I can now look in the mirror and tell myself that I am beautiful' (P5).

This sentiment comports with many international studies that show that increased self-worth and self-acceptance are a common benefit for offenders who have participated in a yoga programme (Karup, 2016; Derezotes, 2014; Harner et al., 2010; Rousseau, 2019; Lundstorm, et al., 2021).

4.11 Emotional regulation and self-control

Almost all of the participants reported that the yoga programme helped them

to become more aware of their emotions and exercise better self-control. For example, participant 4 mentioned that *'Yoga is restorative, it has helped me, really, because now I can just relax, or just take a deep breath and address my problems.'* Much like Karup's (2016) research, the women learned how to observe their emotions, instead of suppressing them. For example, participant 3 said that:

'What yoga has taught me is that when there is something stressful to work through, I can't postpone it every time, I should allow my mind free range. Just go where it wants to go.'

Crucial to this process was experiencing a state of higher consciousness or as Participant 8 described it *'opening your mind to a different dimension'*. Participants who reached this state appeared to better cope with incarceration and the challenges it presents daily and were able to better communicate their feelings rather than *'taking it out on other people'* (P5). For others, the tools of yoga gave them the opportunity for rational thinking. As participant 4 explained:

'Sometimes I would get very angry if someone would just rub me up the wrong way. [Now] I'll just tell myself to go back into the deep breath and release, by then I will be able to solve the conflict.'

Yoga therefore helped the women to reflect on their anger and to walk away from a situation that aggravated them through a deeper understanding of the other person's journey. For example, participant 8 noted:

'[The yoga programme] helped me when someone is gaslighting [you] ... it helps you to understand that they are not aware of what they are doing, they are not necessarily on the wrong path, they are just not at the point where I am at. You make your own choices how you are going to react to the situations.'

Short-term yoga intervention can help to lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression (Lundstrom et al., 2021). In line with Lundstrom's research, the women in this study felt like meditation and yoga helped them to become *'stronger emotionally.'* (P7). The classes taught the inmates *'how to react, how to respond, how to deal'* (P8). As Participant 5 illustrated:

'When I do yoga, I feel calm again. I had a couple of anxiety attacks while I was here because I couldn't handle the stress. But yoga helped me with

it, especially the meditation.'

Many accounts of the yoga class showed how women initially experienced the physical benefits it had to offer and later discovered how it affected them both emotionally and spiritually. For instance, participant 4 described how she enjoyed the breathing exercises with movement:

'I love that breathing exercise (demonstrating it by putting hands overhead and then letting it all go the way down, voicing the exhalation) it is amazing cause you can let go of a lot of anger. You might look like you are mad but it feels amazing.'

For some women, yoga classes allowed them to let go of 'built-up energy', while for others the classes offered them the opportunity to let go of their 'monkey mind' and focus on 'being in their bodies'. Similar to Karup's (2016) study, female offenders started to become more aware of the connection between their emotions and their bodies (i.e., how the breath is linked to emotions). For one participant this was an invaluable tool when having to cope with the challenges of incarceration:

'For me, I would say the coping mechanisms and the fact that it calms my mind because I have a very active mind, it is always all over the place.' (P2).

For other participants, it was the stillness and relaxation at the end of the yoga class that would draw them back to practice again. As Participant 3 explained:

'There was just this one particular thing that I loved about the programme it was after we did the physical yoga it was lying on my back and you just relax everything and you just lay there, like your body is there but your soul and mind and everything is just in another place.' (P3).

These findings show that, while the benefits are individual and varied, the practice of yoga offered the offenders a sense of freedom and empowerment from the confinement of the correctional centre and skills and mechanisms to cope with life inside.

4.12 Reflection and remorse for past crimes

O'Donnell (2014) argues that inmates who can 'withstand the rigours of self-examination' will gain the 'fruits of introspection'. Indeed, for some of these women, yoga has allowed them to reflect on their past crimes.

One participant felt like the yoga programme, along with the restorative justice programme, helped her to recognise the impact of her crime. She explained that she feels a deep sense of remorse for her actions, saying '*I feel bad about the fact that I hurt her. It is not me and yoga helped to reflect on it.*' (P1). Others reported that the meditation practice helped them to come to terms with what they have done and take responsibility for their actions. As Participant 6 explained:

'I feel a lot of remorse for what I have done. I used to run away from taking responsibility [for the crime] before the yoga and restorative justice programme.'

Karup (2016) argues that the reworking of past narratives and taking responsibility for one's actions helps to pave the way towards transformation. Therefore, through the process of yoga and meditation, some of the participants were able to forgive themselves for the crimes that they had committed. For example, participant 9 felt like the simple act of participating in a yoga class made her feel like she could be forgiven for her past crimes '*because I was welcomed into that space, I wasn't chased away. I was allowed to be a yoga student.*'. Likewise, others reported that yoga helped them with a lot of resentment and self-judgement towards themselves explaining that '*yoga helped me to accept myself instead of constantly rejecting myself because I used to be my own worst enemy*' (P1).

Much like Karup's (2016) study, acknowledging their crimes and creating a positive sense of self, helped them to deal more effectively with negative feelings of shame and self-hatred: '*The meditation made me think about what happened*' (P6). For some participants, this process was not yet complete at the time of the interview, and they described that they still had a long journey ahead to '*come to grips*' with what they had done.

4.13 Personal development and self-discovery

The yoga programme provided the women the space to connect with

themselves on an authentic level. Much like Karup's (2016) study female offenders reported that the yoga programme helped them to find a new sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. For example, Participant 5 described how she had '*always hated myself. I didn't like myself. I have always had a low self-esteem. Yoga helped me to accept myself*' (P5).

For many of the participants, the yoga programme offered them the opportunity for self-transformation or what Karup (2016) describes as a 'personal process that starts within' and slowly develops. They described being placed on a journey that starts from the inside and extends to the outside. Participant 8 described her journey:

'It has made me a lot humbler. It gave me a lot more understanding and less judgment about people. Like, I used to be very arrogant. Who I was outside. Yoga has made me more compassionate. Especially when I was doing the yoga instructors course you had to deal with different people. How different the three of them were and how I had to get them to listen. How I had to deal with all the different personalities.'

The participants found new empathy, tolerance and compassion for others as they developed their emotional management skills through the programme. Focussing on introspection creates the space for personal development to 'naturally occur' as a result of self-enquiry (Karup, 2016).

The women also reported that the yoga classes created a safe space for them to express their feelings while still being in the process of '*self-discovery*'. Participant 9 felt like practising yoga in prison helped her to better understand herself and that it altered her experience of imprisonment:

'It has made me more open-minded, and just the fact that they did yoga in prison, gave me a different look at the prison. It is not just like the army, because if you had to compare it, it is a bit like that, but is not just like the army, I can also be spiritual.'

Interestingly, yoga in a prison environment gave the women hope and the motivation to '*grow*'. Similar to Rousseau et al.'s (2019) study, the yoga programme had a transformational impact and offered the inmates a deeper understanding of the true 'self' and their commitment to learning more about themselves.

4.14 The possibility of practicing yoga post-release

Voirst (2017) mentioned in his study that offenders who practised yoga post-released found it easier to integrate back into society. The majority of the participants in this study felt that yoga would help them considerably once they were released. This was mainly attributed to the fact that yoga gave them the tools to regulate their emotions. As Participant 1 explained: *'I think it will be a good calming mechanism.'* Regulating their emotions post-release ranked as high importance, especially when they face stressful situations and *'uncertainties'*. Participant 4 continued:

'I'll practice the stuff that I used to practice in the yoga classes, it will help me a lot for at least my body is like when I feel very tired and if it gets too noisy, I will go to a room and meditate and just release the stress.'

Others felt that yoga would help them if they were able to practice yoga with a group of ex-offenders, who could act as a support group and motivate them to further work on themselves. Participant 7 felt that yoga would be *'something to look forward to'* and would create a practice that would help her stay healthy, positive and productive. She explained: *'It will be good for my mind, body and spirit. Something that will help me stay productive. Between this and the church I think I need something like this.'*

Another inmate reported that it will help her to refrain from using drugs when she faces difficult situations or gets triggered by someone or something: *'I will practice yoga because it will help to keep my mind busy. It's going to help me with my cravings, especially the breathing and meditation.'* (P6). Meek (2012) and Meek et al. (2013) concluded that the skills offenders learn in a yoga programme allow them to regulate their emotions, and control anxiety and depression once released and help them reintegrate into society. Participant 4 also noted that the yoga programme would be beneficial to recently released offenders because it may help avoid recidivism. She explained:

'I also think that they should offer this programme outside, because once you are outside you just want to go back to the drugs.'

4.15 The collective yoga experience

The participants described the collective benefits of the yoga programme that were created by practising in a community. The women described how they were able to help and remind each other of the yoga tools that were available to them when they got triggered by other inmates found themselves lost “in a negative space” or found their newfound tools difficult to implement because they were overwhelmed by emotions. Participant 8 explained: *‘Then I get her to take a couple of deep breaths’*.

The women reported that practising together created a sense of connection or even sisterhood, explaining that *‘when we were doing yoga once a week and even once a month, we got close with each other....’* (P9). This was attributed to feelings of ‘oneness’ and community that the yoga classes created. For example, participant 4 described her experience of the group yoga classes: *‘I love the fact that we exercised and had the opportunity to talk to each other.’*

Furthermore, the yoga classes offered an opportunity for bonding and self-expression. These experiences can be compared to Giera’s (2016) research, that yoga created a feeling of ‘collective energy’ that shifts the inmates’ consciousness from a negative to a positive state of mind (Collin, 2004). As Participant 7 explained: *‘While I was doing [yoga], I could feel the changes and the impact that it had on me.’*

While the majority of participants were able to identify the emotional, physical and spiritual benefits of the programme, some felt that it did not run long enough for them to fully experience all the benefits that it had to offer. The women wanted the programme back because they felt like it assisted them in meaningful ways to cope with life in prison and to foster hope. As participant 8 explained:

‘The programme just disappeared, they didn’t even let us know ... or came and told us that the programme stopped because of this or that. They just completely dropped it. Like here in prison, it seems like everything good and nice they take away from us and they don’t inform us. And it is a lot different for us women. The men have a lot more courses and things that they can do. The only programme for women, you get once a year is the nails. But the yoga was something that was ours.’

4.16 Conclusion

Based on the findings, most of the inmates felt that the Seva Unite programme (The Freedom Project) was very beneficial and had a positive impact on their lives, whether physical or emotional. Yoga acted as a powerful mechanism for introspection and personal development and allowed participants to become curious about their behaviour, body, life and mind. More importantly, yoga helped participants to cope with the pains of imprisonment, including health challenges, time and isolation. The yoga classes created a space of intimacy and allowed the women to connect with themselves and others on a deeper level. The yoga classes allowed the participants to become aware of the consistent effort and discipline it takes to heal on both a physical and psychological level and in essence to rehabilitate themselves.

The length and content of rehabilitation programmes are paramount when it comes to successful execution and changing female offenders' life trajectories. Participants complained about the abrupt termination of the yoga programme and missed the important role it played during their incarceration. It was also evident that the women felt like their needs were neglected within the correctional centre and that the yoga programme addressed their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Some participants also recommended that the yoga programme along with the restorative justice programme made a significant impact on their rehabilitation journey. Furthermore, female offenders also felt that the yoga programme should be offered outside the correctional centre, which would help them reintegrate back into society.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Scholars argue that practitioners and policymakers lack the most basic understanding when it comes to women-centred rehabilitation programmes, which results in the continuous neglect of women within the criminal justice system (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moulton, 2012; Dastile, 2014; Jefthas & Artz, 2007). Rehabilitation programmes are designed to reduce the rates of recidivism, but correctional centres frequently lack the necessary resources and funding to reconstruct and reform how to create and sustain gender-specific rehabilitation programmes (Artz, Moulton, Hoffman-Wanderer, Colpitts, Meer & Aschman, 2013).

The primary focus of this study was to explore female offenders' experience of the Seva Unite yoga programme (The Freedom Project) and to determine whether or not the programme helped to increase their emotional awareness and had the potential to alter their behavioural patterns. The findings show that the women experienced the class as a “safe space” and that it was the only place they could be vulnerable and express their emotions. Correctional centres can, therefore, be temporarily turned into "emotional zones" through an embodied yoga programme, allowing the harsh environment to serve as a site of emotional expression (Ricciardelli, Maier & Hannah Moffat, 2015) and allow prisoners to express their emotions in a different spatial and social context to cope with imprisonment (Caputo-Levine, 2013; Greer, 2002; Ricciardelli, Maier & Hannah Moffat 2015), despite fears exploitation by other offenders (Ricciardelli, Maier & Hannah Moffat, 2015).

The findings show that the women were able to take a sense of ownership when it came to both their physical and mental health and were able to incorporate what they have learned from the yoga programme into their daily lives. This in turn helped them to cope better with the challenges they face while incarcerated and to imagine a different future once released.

5.1 The incarceration experience

The participants' experience of prison conditions corresponds with local evidence to a certain extent. Similar to the findings of Artz et al. (2012) on women's pathway to crime, the majority of participants felt depressed and anxious and did not receive the necessary physical and mental health services, adequate nutrition and exercise that they required. Women in this study complained that constant conflict, bullying, violence and lack of contact with family members contributed to poor mental health (Nurse, Woodcock & Ormsby, 2003) and that conflict with other inmates was one of the biggest challenges they faced while incarcerated. The participants also highlighted the importance of having a relationship with family members, which was heavily influenced by inconsistencies in visiting regulations during Covid 19, and long distances to the prison which makes it difficult for family members to visit. These factors hurt their mental health.

Participants also reported that past victimisation (gangsterism, substance abuse and violence), negative relationships with officials and lack of proper rehabilitation programmes negatively influenced their mental health and ability to cope with prison life (Nieuwoudt & Bantjes, 2019). The data shows the need for more gender-specific rehabilitation programmes. Most of the women were involved in programmes such as education, skills-based, psychosocial and spiritual, there was a need for more empathetic and deliberate rehabilitation programmes. Similar to Qhogwana's (2017) study on female offenders' rehabilitation experience, participants reported that rehabilitation programmes offered by the correctional centre were ineffective and called for a gendered-centred approach. Participants agreed with scholars Wright et al. (2012) and Qhogwana (2017) that rehabilitation programmes should be more responsive to their experiences/emotions and that they needed deeper connections with psychologists, social workers and officials. The prison environment plays an important role when it comes to rehabilitating female offenders and helping them avoid further victimisation while incarcerated and after release. The findings throw into question the longer-term commitment to sustaining and improving rehabilitation programmes in South Africa's prisons.

Although this study didn't examine female offenders' pathway to crime it is evident that understanding their life trajectory plays an important role when it comes to responding and incorporating their unique pre-incarceration circumstances into

programmes inside prison. The women felt that the successful restorative justice programme focussed on the individual's unique situation and should be incorporated into the yoga programme's framework. Yoga programmes such as Seva Unite (The Freedom Project) are well suited in this regard as they combine the effects of yoga and restorative justice principles while allowing for self-empowerment, responsibility, atonement and personal development (Rucker, 2005)

5.2 The yoga programme experience

In alignment with the Rousseau et al, 2019 study, participants reported that yoga helped them to cope with being incarcerated. The yoga classes helped them to better regulate their emotions, sleeping patterns and day-to-day activities. It was evident that yoga helped the participants with their aggressive tendencies towards other inmates by shifting reactive tendencies to responsive behavioural patterns. Similar to the findings of Rousseau et al.'s (2019) research, data also indicated that female offenders were able to cope better with imprisonment due to lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

Correctional centres can at times be extremely slow, boring or extremely stressful and intense. Yoga helped the inmates to mitigate and distance themselves from 'institutional time'. Thus, yoga helped offenders to step into the present moment which could only be measured by rhythmic deep breathing. Participants also mentioned that yoga helped them to accept the unpredictability and confusion of being incarcerated.

The findings also show that the prison environment does not offer the necessary support for their commitment to a personal practice due to limited space and fear of judgment from other inmates. However, the participants found hidden reservoirs of self-discipline when it came to incorporating the techniques into their daily lives. This strong loyalty towards their practice was reflected by the majority of participants reporting doing breathing exercises and meditation in their cells.

Consistent with Bonura's (2007) study the majority of the participants reported feeling stronger, flexible and healthier after a yoga class, although this was not the case for all of the participants. For some, the physical practice was rather challenging and painful, mainly because they had been disconnected from their

bodies for most of their lives. Focusing on their bodies and incorporating the breathing taught by yoga helped them to turn their attention inwards, unfolding into an experience of deep engagement.

It has been suggested that yoga may be an effective adjunct intervention in the management of substance use among inmates (Brooks et al., 2021). Similar to these findings participants reported that yoga helped them with substance abuse (especially when it came to cigarettes and heroin) and self-control (Brooks et al., 2021). Other participants draw parallels between drug use and yoga, for example, some described the experience as a high in and of itself (Brooks et al., 2021). From this perspective, yoga can become a drug replacement therapy especially when it comes to the physical pains of addiction (Brooks et al., 2021). Furthermore, inmates also reported that yoga helped them to create a positive relationship with their bodies, especially after years of suffering from sexual and physical abuse (Brooks et al., 2021). It is important to note that correctional centres take away every sense of autonomy even over their bodies, thus, yoga helped them mitigate that feeling of disempowerment (Karup, 2016). The physical aspect of the practice also allowed the female offenders to become aware of the mind-body connection.

Participants indicated that the Seva Unite yoga programme (The Freedom Project) facilitated the following psychological outcomes: lower levels of stress and anxiety, reduced depression as well as reduction of aggressive tendencies. The literature points towards the relevance of positive psychological outcomes such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness and self-management (Bonura, 2007; Lundstorm et al., 2021). It was evident that for the majority of the participants, yoga offered them an opportunity to reflect on their mental health. This piece of mind was explained by the intense concentration or being 'in the zone' as they would refer to it, during the yoga classes. Participants also reported that meditation offered them an escape from their chaotic mind, while others said it allowed them to face their emotional turmoil rather than constantly trying to avoid it. Similar to the study of Vriost (2017), participants also reported that non-physical practices such as meditation and breathing exercises were more beneficial when dealing with negative emotions.

In sum, participants were able to gain a deeper understanding of the workings of their minds. This enabled the female offenders to better cope with being

incarcerated and to build stronger connections both inside and outside the correctional centre. Due to the fear of victimisation, inmates avoid openly showing their vulnerability, and as a result, many inmates end up suppressing their emotions to survive daily prison life (Harner et al., 2010; Rucker, 2005). In contrast, the yoga classes presented the inmates with a safe space to experience their emotions in a non-violent or self-destructive manner. The participants' improved relationships can be attributed to emotional regulation and the development of compassion both towards themselves and others. These changes in behavioural patterns are extremely beneficial for both inmates and officials, having a ripple effect on the prison environment. In essence, yoga allowed them to gain better insight into their suffering and emphasised their responsibility to take control of their emotions without suppressing them. This skill proved to be very beneficial in an environment where conflict, tension and superficial relationships seem to be the norm (Crewe, 2009).

The inmates enhanced the ability of emotional intelligence which they consciously practice while in a yoga class affected the way they thought about their offences. The participants reported that meditation and stillness helped them to reflect on the choices they have made in their lives and learn to take responsibility. In alignment with Karup's (2016) study, participants felt that it was important to take responsibility for their actions. The combination of the yoga classes and the restorative justice programme helped them to manage difficult emotions such as shame and guilt.

Through the practice of yoga, inmates were able to accept and forgive themselves for their past crimes. In some cases, this led to reconciliation and improved relationships with themselves and those around them. It was also this newfound sense of compassion and empathy that helped offenders to understand the impact of their crimes on the victims, their family members and the community. As Maruna et al. (2006) state, yoga can be viewed from the same perspective as other religious practices, because it incorporates shame management, forgiveness and coping strategies. Furthermore, participants also reported that they were able to forgive others and be less judgemental and more understanding of other's suffering. However, participants mentioned that it was the combination of the restorative

justice programme and the yoga classes that helped them to become more empathetic, compassionate and forgiving (Rucker, 2005).

Yoga philosophy is based on different approaches such as spiritual, therapeutic and developmental. Engebretson (2002) argues that yoga creates a balance between the mind, body and soul. Yoga can be perceived as a method or a tool towards finding harmony and peace, by connecting to the life force energy within oneself. Engeberston (2002) also argues that humans have a natural tendency towards transformation and self-awareness. A regular yoga practice allows the individual to connect with themselves on a deep spiritual level (Farhi, 2000; Ruiz, 2001).

In this study participants reported that yoga and meditation led them to become more introspective and even spiritual, allowing them to have a personal relationship with a higher consciousness. Notably, the participants' experience of the yoga programme was not dependent on the spiritual aspect of yoga, but they were more drawn to yoga due to the physical and psychological benefits. The majority of participants reported that yoga instilled in them a greater degree of purpose, meaning and self-knowledge. The participant's account of self-actualisation refers to Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) notion of 'flow' or full engagement. Thus, the synchronisation of movement and breath could act as a portal towards spiritual awareness.

From this perspective, participants were able to both endure and flourish within the correctional centre. Yoga helped offenders acknowledge the devastating nature of being incarcerated while teaching them to look inward to overcome adversity, trauma, fear and powerlessness. Garbarino (1999) argued that the need to find meaning and purpose is essential for creating a long-term commitment to transformation. Thus, participants reported that they would like to continue with their yoga practice once they are released. This attests to the fact that yoga gave them the tools to cope with the challenges of the outside world.

Participants who were able to come to terms with the offence they committed led to the desire to prevent reoffending. For many, a regular yoga class would help them form part of a community and create a supportive structure for themselves. Inmates also reported that yoga would help them to abstain from any substance

abuse, because it helped them with their cravings. Despite the limited research on the effect of yoga and reoffending, it is evident that it is an area worth exploring.

Yoga enables a form of mindfulness that ‘is not knowing about a habit; it is a direct experience of the habit itself. Intellectual understanding is like thinking about food, where awareness is tasting it’ (Nuernberger, 1996 as cited in Rucker, 2005). Thus, the power of yoga lies in the shift of perception to a more inquiring quality of one’s behaviour. The data therefore indicates that yoga can have a profound impact on an individual’s beliefs and values because it allows inmates to generate knowledge about themselves. Therefore, yoga has the potential to become a deeply personal process which starts by looking within and allowing the journey to naturally unfold.

5.3 Directions for Future Research

The findings suggest that yoga classes in correctional centres should also be practised regularly. While the women reported that they felt like the programme had a positive impact they felt that it would have been more effective if they were able to practice on a week-week basis. Therefore, further research is warranted on the effects of consistent yoga classes and its impact on female offenders’ behaviour.

Despite the limitations of the study, participants reported that the Seva Unite yoga programme (The Freedom Project) had a positive effect on both their physical and mental health. However, to test the validity of these findings, it would be valuable to evaluate the impact that yoga had on their lives once offenders are released from the correctional centre.

Inmates reported experiencing increased self-control which empowered them within the constrictive confines of the correctional centre. Their shift of perception to a more positive self-image plays an important role in their life trajectories. It is, therefore, important to further investigate the relationship between yoga, personal agency and recidivism.

It is worth noting that participants may not have been representative of the general population per se, but rather a specific ‘prisoner type’ (Crewe, 2009), to

whom yoga appeals to. This does not deny the significance of what has been reported here but may suggest that future research could further investigate what leads people to yoga. Motivations and goals for engaging with yoga are highly versatile, as demonstrated in this study. Lastly, further research is required on the integration of yoga and needs-based rehabilitation programmes like restorative justice.

5.6 Recommendations

Although the focus of the study was on female offenders' experience of a specific yoga programme, it was evident that the prison environment played an important role when it came to the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes including the 'Freedom Prison Project'. Few studies have been conducted on offenders' yoga experiences within a South African context. To my knowledge, this is the first study to discuss the effects of yoga on female prisoners. Therefore, this research offers valuable information for both researchers and practitioners.

Becoming aware of one's emotions and behaviour can be an overwhelming experience. Therefore, it would be recommended that yoga programmes should be combined with both talking therapies and restorative justice programmes. This will offer offenders additional support when they get triggered by traumatic events. Also, the correctional centre should consider bringing back a similar yoga programme that was offered by the Seva Unite organisation, allowing for a more holistic approach when it comes to rehabilitating offenders.

One of the founders of Seva Unite noted that they had to end the programme because of lack of funding and 'bureaucratic rigmarole'. The DCS should consider incorporating yoga into some of their core rehabilitation programmes or collaborate with NGOs like Seva Unite, working together to integrate the objectives of the yoga programme with other needs-based rehabilitation programmes.

The marginalisation of female offenders within correctional services can be perceived as exclusion from rehabilitation programmes which gives them the impression that they are not prioritised. It is also evident that the lack of gender-responsive rehabilitation programmes can be attributed to a lack of resources, funding, corruption and political bureaucracy within the criminal justice system. It is

therefore, of the utmost importance to turn to alternative methods of rehabilitation that are both effective and inexpensive.

The Seva Unite yoga programme (Freedom Project) also presented inmates with the opportunity to enrol in a 6-month 'teacher training' course, based on the findings female offenders felt like programmes that include 'former' inmates made the offenders feel better understood and the programme more relatable. Offenders can therefore start to offer classes to their fellow inmates under the supervision of correctional officials. Furthermore, with the help of a similar organization like 'Seva Unite', Correctional centres should consider incorporating yoga into vocational training as well. This will offer offenders the opportunity to become a yoga teacher and use that qualification to teach yoga to either their community or join an organization to assist in the yoga programmes in correctional centres post-release.

5.7 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to determine whether or not yoga could transform female offenders' behavioural patterns and help them cope with the pains of incarceration. While the design of the study makes it difficult to generalize to the wider offending population, the participants nonetheless offered evidence that yoga is a life-affirming experience with a range of transformational consequences.

There is a gap in the literature when it comes to the influence of cognitive thinking patterns and emotions on behaviour and personal agency. Thus, based on the results of the study yoga contributes to the development of such thoughts and behaviour. Having a sense of personal agency helps you to focus on internal factors instead of relying on external causes. Having strong internal resources helps the individual to better cope with pain and misfortune. It is exactly this sense of internal agency that participants experience while practising yoga.

Yoga also improved the participants' physical health and overall fitness (strength, joint and muscular pain), given their limited opportunities for physical activity, this was regarded as highly valuable. For many participants, the breathing incorporated with the movement helped them to stay present in the moment. The programme also helped them feel empowered, especially after they mastered a certain posture or yoga sequence. In light of limited healthcare resources and an

extremely unhealthy mostly addicted population within a correctional centre, yoga can be viewed as a valuable form of prevention to help with these issues.

Yoga generates a form of holistic curiosity and self-transformation. It was evident that for the majority of the participants, the classes helped them to better regulate their emotions and behavioural patterns. Thus, the emphasis on introspection creates not only a sense of empowerment but also allows the offenders to take responsibility for their own physical and mental health. Contrary to other correctional programmes that promote personal growth through direct intervention, yoga is non-invasive and allows the participant to develop their sense of personal truth.

Programmes such as the Seva Unite programme (The Freedom Project) do not challenge traditional rehabilitation programmes and should rather be seen as supplementary. Due to its holistic nature, yoga is in essence the principles of restorative justice put into practice. The yoga programme allows for an open framework and freedom of self-exploration and is a more empathetic and compassionate approach when it comes to rehabilitation. It therefore meets the goals of being a more women-centred and holistic approach to prison reform.

Bibliography

Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 492–505.

Abbott, P., DiGiacomo, M., Magin, P., & Hu, W. (2018). A Scoping Review of Qualitative Research Methods Used with People in Prison. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1).

Ackermann, M. (2015). Women in detention in Africa: A review of the literature. *Agenda*, 29(4), 80-91

Agboola, C. A. (2014). *A qualitative analysis of women's experiences before, during and after imprisonment in South Africa* [PhD dissertation]. University of South Africa.

Auty, K., Cope A., and Liebling A., (2015), 'A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Yoga and Mindfulness Meditation in Prison: Effects on Psychological Well-Being and Behavioural Functioning.' *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 0306624X15602514

Artz L., Hoffman-Wanderer Y. & Moulton K. (2013) *Hard Time(s) Women's Pathways to Crime and Incarceration*, South Africa: UCT/European Union and the Office of the Presidency.

Artz, L., and Rotmann, B. (2015). Taking 'A Count ' of Women in Prison. *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, 29(4), 3-13.

Babbie, E. (2011). *Introduction to Social Research*. 5th Edit. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Belknap, J. (2007) *The Invisible Women: Gender, Crime, and Justice*. Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Bilderbeck, A. C., Farias, M., Brazil, I. A., Jakobowitz, S., & Wikholm, C. (2013). Participation in a 10-week course of yoga improves behavioural control and decreases psychological distress in a prison population. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 47(10), 1438–1445.

- Blanchette, K., & Brown, S. L. (2006). *The assessment and treatment of women offenders: An integrative perspective*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Bloom, B., Owen, B., & Covington, S. (2004). Women offenders and the gendered effects of public policy 1. *Review of policy research*, 21(1), 31-48.
- Bonura, K. B. (2011). The Psychological Benefits of Yoga Practice for Older Adults: Evidence and Guidelines. *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, 21(1), 129–142.
- Bosworth, M., Campbell, D., Demby, B., Ferranti, S.M & Santos, M. (2005). Doing Prison Research: Views from Inside. *Sage Journals: Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(2), 249-264.
- Brooks, J., Lawlor, S., Turetzkin, S., Goodnight, C. W., & Galantino, M. L. (2020). Yoga for Substance Use Disorder in Women: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, 31(1).
- Bowling, A. (2002). *Research methods in health and health services* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Butzer, B., Ahmed, K., & Khalsa, S. B. S. (2016). Yoga enhances positive psychological states in young adult musicians. *Applied psychophysiology and biofeedback*, 41, 191-202.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis*. American Psychological Association.
- Byrne, M.K & Howells, K. (2002). The Psychological Needs of Women Prisoners: Implications for Rehabilitation and Management. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law Journal*, 9(1), 34–43.
- Caputo-Levine, D. D. (2012). The yard face: The contributions of inmate interpersonal violence to the carceral habitus. *Ethnography*, 14(2), 165–185.
- Carlen, P. (2012). Women's imprisonment: An introduction to the Bangkok rules. *Crítica Penal y Poder*, (3).
- Carlen, P., & Worrall, A. (2004). *Analysing Women's Imprisonment* (1st ed.).
- Chen, M. K., & Shapiro, J. M. (2007). Do Harsher Prison Conditions Reduce Recidivism? A Discontinuity-based Approach. *American Law and Economics Review*, 9(1), 1–29.

- Collins, R. (2004), *Interaction ritual chains*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Copes, H., Hochstetler, A., & Brown, A. (2012). Inmates' Perceptions of the Benefits and Harm of Prison Interviews. *Field Methods*, 25(2), 182–196.
- Corbetta, P. (2003). *Social research: Theory, methods and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998. Government Gazette. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Cowen, V. S., & Adams, T. B. (2005). Physical and perceptual benefits of yoga asana practice: Results of a pilot study. *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 9(3), 211-219.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE publications.
- Crewe, B. (2009). *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation, and Social Life in an English Prison*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1991). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Dastile, N. P., & Agozino, B. (2019). Decolonising incarcerated women's identities. *South African Crime Quarterly*, 68(1), 21-32.
- Denzin, N. K. (1984). *On understanding emotion*. Transaction Publishers.
- Department of Correctional Services. (2005). White paper on corrections in South Africa.
- Department of Correctional Services (2014) Annual Report 2013/2014, Department of Correctional Services, Vote 21, Pretoria: Department of Correctional Services.
- Derezotes, D. (2000) 'Evaluation of yoga and meditation training with adolescent sex offenders' *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 17(2), 97–113.
- Derlic, D. (2020). A Systematic Review of Literature: Alternative Offender Rehabilitation—Prison Yoga, Mindfulness, and Meditation. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 26(4), 361–375.

- Dissel, A. (2008) "Rehabilitation and reintegration in African Prisons", in Jeremy Sarkin (ed), *Human Rights in African Prisons*, Human Sciences Research Council, Cape Town, 155-177.
- Dixey, R., Nyambe, S., Foster, S., Woodall, J., & Baybutt, M. (2015). Health-promoting prisons—An impossibility for women prisoners in Africa? *Agenda*, 29(4), 95-102.
- Douglas, N., Plugge, E., & Fitzpatrick, R. (2009). The impact of imprisonment on health: what do women prisoners say?. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 63(9), 749-754.
- Eggleston, B., Middlestadt, S., Lindeman, A., McCormick, B., & Koceja, D. (2011). Attending Yoga Classes: Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior. *International Journal of Health, Wellness & Society*, 1(1).
- Engebretson, J., (2002). Culture and complementary therapies. *Complementary Therapies in Nursing & Midwifery* (8), 177–184.
- Farhi, D., (2000). *Yoga Mind, Body & Spirit: A Return to Wholeness*. Henry Holt & Company, New York.
- Federation of South African Women (1989) *Women in prison*. Federation of South African Women, South Africa.
- Flick, U. (2013). *The Sage Handbook of qualitative data analysis. Mapping the Field*.
- Garbarino, J. (1999). *Lost boys: Why our sons turn violent and how we can save them*. New York: The Free Press.
- Greer, K. (2002). Walking an emotional tightrope: Managing emotions in a women's prison. *Symbolic Interaction*, 25(1), 117-139.
- Griera, M., (2016) 'Yoga in Penitentiary Settings: Transcendence, Spirituality, and Self-Improvement', *Human Studies*, 1–24.
- Griera M., and Clot-Garrell A., (2015), 'Doing Yoga Behind Bars: A Sociological Study of the Growth of Holistic Spirituality in Penitentiary Institutions' in Becci I. and Roy O., *Religious Diversity in European Prisons Challenges and Implications for Rehabilitation*, Springer: London.

- Harner, H., Hanlon, A.L., & Garfinkel, M. (2010). 'Effect of Iyengar Yoga on Mental Health of Incarcerated Women: A Feasibility Study' *59(6) Nursing Research*, 389–399.
- Harner, H. M., & Riley, S. (2012). Factors Contributing to Poor Physical Health in Incarcerated Women. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 24(2), 788-801.
- Hesselink, A., & Dastile, P. (2015). A criminological assessment on South African women who murdered their intimate male partners. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 25(4), 335–344.
- Hogan, J., Dolan, P., Donnelly, P. (2009) 'Introduction', in J. Hogan, P. Dolan and P. Donnelly (eds) *Approaches to Qualitative Research: theory and its Practical Application*, pp. 1-18.
- Huynh, K. H., Hall, B., Hurst, M. A., & Bikos, L. H. (2014). Evaluation of the Positive Re-Entry in Corrections Program. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 59(9), 1006–1023.
- Ivtzan, I., & Papantoniou, A. (2014). Yoga meets positive psychology: Examining the integration of hedonic (gratitude) and eudaimonic (meaning) wellbeing in relation to the extent of yoga practice. *Journal of bodywork and movement therapies*, 18(2), 183-189.
- James, D. J., & Glaze, E. (2006). Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates. Available at: <http://bjs.ojp/usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/mhppji.pdf>
- Jang, S. J., Johnson, B. R., Anderson, M. L., & Booyens, K. (2021). The effect of religion on emotional well-being among offenders in correctional centres of South Africa: Explanations and gender differences. *Justice Quarterly*, 38(6), 1154-1181.
- Jefthas, D., & Artz, L. (2007). Youth violence: A gendered perspective. In P. Burton (Ed.), *Someone stole my smile: An exploration into the causes of youth violence in South Africa* (pp. 37-56). Cape Town, South Africa: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
- Jewkes, Y. (2014). An Introduction to “Doing Prison Research Differently.” *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(4), 387–391.

- Karup, A. (2016, September). *The Meaning and Effects of Yoga in Prison* (Dissertation). University of Cambridge. <https://www.theppt.org.uk>
- Kraftsow, G. (1999). *Yoga for wellness*. New York: Penguin Compass.
- Kerekes, N., Fielding, C., & Apelqvist, S. (2017). Yoga in Correctional Settings: A Randomized Controlled Study. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 8.
- Liebling A., (2014) 'Moral and philosophical problems of long-term imprisonment' *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 27, 258-269.
- Lozoff, B. (2015). *We're All Doing Time: A Guide for Getting Free*.
- Lundstrom, T. H., Rocheleau, C. A., Guerra, D. F., & Erickson, C. A. (2021). Participation in a Yoga Study Decreases Stress and Depression Scores for Incarcerated Women. *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, 31(1).
- Luyt, W. F. M., & Du Preez, N. (2010). A case study of female incarceration in South Africa. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, 23(3), 88-114.
- Maruna, S., Wilson, L., & Curran, K. (2006). 'Why God Is Often Found Behind Bars: Prison Conversions and the Crisis of Self-Narrative', *Research in Human Development*, 3(2-3), 161–184.
- Maxwell, J. A., & Mittapalli, K. (2010). Realism as a stance for mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioural research* (2nd ed., pp. 145-167). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Meek, R., & Lewis, G. (2013). The Impact of a Sports Initiative for Young Men in Prison. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 38(2), 95–123.
- Messina, N., Burdon, W., Hagopian, G., & Pendergast, M. (2006). Predictors of prison therapeutic communities' treatment outcomes: A comparison of men and women participants.
- Messina, N., & Grella, C. (2006). Childhood trauma and women's health outcomes in a California Prison. *Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 31(1), 7-28.
- Muirhead, J. and Fortune, C. (2016). Yoga in prisons: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 28(1), 57–63.

Muntingh, L. (2006). Offender rehabilitation and reintegration: taking the White Paper forward. Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative Research Paper (10). Nicro: Cape Town.

Nieuwoudt, P., & Bantjes, J. (2019). Health professionals talk about the challenges of suicide prevention in two correctional centres in South Africa. *South African journal of psychology*, 49(1), 70-82.

Nurse, J., Woodcock, P., & Ormsby, J. (2003). Influence of environmental factors on mental health within prisons: focus group study. *Bmj*, 327(7413), 480.

O'Donnell, I. (2014). *Prisoners, Solitude, and Time*. Oxford University Press.

Qhogwana, S. A. (2017). "We are Human too": A narrative analysis of rehabilitation experiences by women classified as maximum security offenders in the Johannesburg Correctional Centre (Dissertation). University of South Africa.

Patenaude, A.L. (2004). No Promises, but I'm Willing to Listen and Tell What I Hear: Conducting Qualitative Research among Prison Inmates and Staff. *The Prison Journal*, 84(4), 69-91.

Petè, S. (2008). A brief history of human rights in the correctional centres of Africa. In Sarkin, J. (ed.). *Human Rights in African Correctional Centres*. Cape Town, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council.

Prisoners in 2005 | Bureau of Justice Statistics. (n.d.-b). Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/prisoners-2005#additional-details-0>

Ricciardelli, R., Maier, K., & Hannah-Moffat, K. (2015). Strategic masculinities: Vulnerabilities, risk and the production of prison masculinities. *Theoretical Criminology*, 19(4), 491–513.

Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage Publications: 1-188.

Ruiz, F., (2001). Don't know much about philosophy? (Series Don't know much philosophy?). *Yoga Journal* 159, 143–146

Ruiz, F. P. (2001). Krishnamacharya's Legacy. *Yoga Journal*, 160, 97-101.

- Rocha, K., Ribeiro, A., Rocha, K., Sousa, M., Albuquerque, F., Ribeiro, S. and Silva, R. (2012). Improvement in physiological and psychological parameters after 6 months of yoga practice. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 21(1), 843–850.
- Rocheleau, A. M. (2013). An empirical exploration of the “pains of imprisonment” and the level of prison misconduct and violence. *Criminal justice review*, 38(3), 354-374.
- Ronel, N., & Segev, D. (2013). Positive Criminology in Practice. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 58(11), 1389–1407.
- Rousseau, D., & Horton, C. (2019). Exploring the Benefit of Yoga Programs in Carceral Settings. *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, 30(1), 111–115.
- Rucker, L. (2015). Yoga and Restorative Justice in Prison: An Experience of “Response- Ability to Harm”. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 8(1), 107–120.
- Schlosser, J. A. (2008). Issues in Interviewing Inmates. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14(8), 1500-1525.
- Seligman, M. E. (2012). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Simon and Schuster.
- Sepulveda, M. (2012). Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sorbello, L., Eccleston, L., Ward, T., & Jones, R. (2002). Treatment needs of female offenders: A review. *Australian Psychologist*, 37(3), 198-205.
- Steyn, F. & Booyens, K. (2017). A Profile of Incarcerated Female Offenders: Implications for Rehabilitation Policy and Practice. *Acta Criminologica: Southern African Journal of Criminology*. Special edition: Corrections: Sites of harm reduction, rehabilitation and professionalism, 30(4), 33-54.
- Steyn, F. & Hall, B. (2015). Depression, Anxiety and Stress among Incarcerated Female Offenders. *Acta Criminologica: Special Edition* (1), 82-100.
- Sykes, G., (1958) *The Society of Captives, A Study of Maximum Security Prison*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

- United Nations, 2010. United Nations Resolution 2010/16, Annex: United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), Preliminary Observations.
- Viorst, M. (2017). Former Inmates Perceptions of the Prison Yoga Project. Undergraduate Honors Theses. University of Colorado, Boulder.
- Vivekananda, R. (2005). Practical Yoga Psychology (0 ed.). Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India.
- Van Hout, MC and Wessels, J (2021) *Human rights and the invisible nature of incarcerated women in post-apartheid South Africa: Prison system progress in adopting the Bangkok Rules*. International Journal of Prisoner Health.
- Taylor, M. J. (2003). Yoga therapeutics: An ancient, dynamic systems theory. *Techniques in Orthopaedics*, 18(1), 115-125.
- Ward, T. (2010). Is offender rehabilitation a form of punishment? *The British Journal of Forensic Practice*, 12(4), 4–13.
- Ward, T., Mann, R. E., & Gannon, T. A. (2007). The good lives model of offender rehabilitation: Clinical implications. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12(1), 87–107.
- Watt, D. (2015). On Becoming a Qualitative Researcher: The Value of Reflexivity. *The Qualitative Report*.
- Williams, F.P & McShane, M.D. (2014). *Criminological Theory*. Pearson New International Edition, (6th ed), 148-163.
- Williams, B., and Abralde R., (2007) ‘Growing Older: Challenges of Prison and Reentry for the Aging Population’ in *Public Health Behind Bars*, edited by Robert B. Greifinger MD, 56–72.
- Wimberly, A. and Engstrom, M. (2017). Stress, substance use, and yoga in the context of community Re-entry following incarceration. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 24(1), 96-103.
- Wittekind, Katie, "The Bottom Two Percent: Using Positive Psychology to Create Change Among Convicts" (2018). Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) Capstone Projects, 143.

Wormith, J. S., Althouse, R., Simpson, M., Reitzel, L. R., Fagan, T. J., & Morgan, R. D. (2007). The Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34(7), 879–892.

Wright, E. M., DeHart, D. D., Koons-Witt, B. A., & Crittenden, C. A. (2013). ‘Buffers’ against crime? Exploring the roles and limitations of positive relationships among women in prison. *Punishment & Society*, 15(1), 71-95.

Wright, H. R., & Høyen, M. (Eds.). (2020). *Discourses We Live By*. *Open Book Publishers*.

Wulf-Ludden, T. (2013). Interpersonal relationships among inmates and prison violence. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 36(1), 116–136.

Appendix A: Consent form



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Consent to take part in research

I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies:

	Yes	No
I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.		
My questions about the study have been answered satisfactorily and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.		
I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason for my withdrawal, and that I may decline to answer any questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.		
I agree to maintain confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the group session.		
I agree to my interview being audio-recorded (voice recorded).		
I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated with confidentiality.		
I understand that my identity will remain anonymous. (This will be done by changing your name and disguising any details of your interview)		
I also understand that by participating I will not gain any direct benefit from the study.		
I understand that my response will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will only be available to the researcher, supervisor and external examiner.		

Consent to Participate

I acknowledge that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above.

Name:	Signature:	Date:
--------------	-------------------	--------------

Appendix B: Information sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics clearance reference number:

Title of research project: An exploration of female offenders' yoga experience within Worcester correctional centre.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Karla van Rooyen and I am doing research in the Department of Public Law towards a Master's degree at the University of Cape Town. This study investigates female offenders' experience of the Seva Unite Yoga programme. As part of this study you will be asked to participate in a group interview and answer open ended questions. This interview will take roughly 60 minutes followed by a 40-minute yoga class.

If you have concerns about the research, its risks and benefits or about your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Law Faculty Research Ethics Committee Administrator, Mrs Lamize Viljoen, at 021 650 3080 or at lamize.viljoen@uct.ac.za. Alternatively, you may write to the Law Faculty Research Ethics Committee Administrator, Room 6.28 Kramer Law Building, Law Faculty, UCT, Private Bag, Rondebosch 7701.

Appendix C: Letter of approval from the DCS



correctional services

Department:
Correctional Services
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X136, PRETORIA, 0001 Poyntons Building, C/O WF Nkomo and Sophie De Bruyn Street, PRETORIA
Tel (012) 307 2770, Fax 086 539 2693

Dear Miss Karla Van Rooyen

RE: AN EXPLORATION OF FEMALE'S YOGA EXPERIENCE WITHIN WORSTER CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

It is with pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services on the above topic has been approved.

Your attention is drawn to the following:

- This ethical approval is valid from **05 November 2020 to 05 November 2021**
- The Area Commissioner where the research will be conducted will be informed of your proposed research project.
- You are requested to contact him before the commencement of your research
- It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your interviewing times.
- Your identity document/passport and this approval letter should be in your possession when visiting regional offices/correctional centres.
- You are required to use the terminology used in the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (February 2005) and Correctional Services Act (No.111 of 1998) e.g. "Offenders" not "Prisoners" and "Correctional Centres" not "Prisons".
- You are not allowed to use photographic or video equipment during your visits, however the audio recorder is allowed.
- You are required to submit your final report to the Department for approval by the Commissioner of Correctional Services before publication (including presentation at workshops, conferences, seminars, etc) of the report.
- Comply with Covid 19 safety and hygiene procedures during data collection processes
- Ensure that all participants have been duly screened for Covid19 according to DCS screening protocols

Should you have any enquiries regarding this process, please contact the REC Administration for assistance at telephone number (012) 307 2895/94.

Thank you for your application and interest to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services.

Yours faithfully

Signed by candidate

ND MBULI
DC: POLICY COORDINATION & RESEARCH
DATE: 05/11/2020

Appendix D: Letter of approval from UCT



Faculty of Law: Research Ethics Committee

Private Bag X3 ▪ Rondebosch ▪ 7701 ▪ South Africa
 Room 6.29 ▪ Kramer Building ▪ Middle Campus
 Tel: +27 021 650 3080 Fax: +27 021 650 5660
 E-mail: lamize.viljoen@uct.ac.za Internet: www.law.uct.ac.za

Certificate of Approval for Ethical Clearance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/SUPERVISOR: KELLEY MOULT	ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER: L0137-2019
STUDENT: KARLA VAN ROOYEN – VRYKAR009	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 14-JULY-2020
FACULTY: LAW	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 13-JULY-2021
DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC LAW	
PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of female offenders' yoga experience within Worcester correctional centre.	
PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: Masters Degree in Criminology, Law, and Society (Mphil): The project aims to explore female offenders' experiences of a yoga programme (Freedom Behind Bars) that is offered at Worcester correctional centre.	
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.	
<p>Modifications To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a formal "Request for a Modification" to the REC Administrative Office. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.</p> <p>Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You are responsible for submitting this by at least 2 months prior to the expiry date of clearance date issued.</p> <p>Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please formally notify the REC: Law as well as your supervisor where applicable.</p>	
Certification	
This certifies that the University of Cape Town Law Faculty's Research Ethics Committee has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Cape Town Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Signed by candidate</div>	
<hr style="width: 20%; margin: auto;"/> Mrs Monique Carels REC: LEAD REVIEWER	

Appendix F: Questionnaire



Research Proposal

An exploration of female offenders' yoga experience within Worcester correctional centre.

Questionnaire:

Individual Interviews

Prison Experience:

- How would you describe life in prison? Starting with day to day experiences?
 - Probe: Relationship with inmates, wardens and family
 - Probe: Overcrowding in cells, movement during the day
 - Probe: Rehabilitation (Tell me about your experience of rehabilitation programmes in the correctional centre?)

Yoga Experiences:

- What got you interested in the yoga programme in the first place?
- What were your perception of yoga before you participated in your first class?
- How does yoga help you cope with your day to day experiences in prison?
- Do you have a personal yoga practice? If so, where and when do you practice?

Internal Process:

- How has the yoga programme helped you with prison?
 - Probe: Physical benefits (flexibility, pain relief, immune system, weight loss, diabetes, and substance abuse)
 - Probe: Mindfulness and Awareness (stress relief, anxiety, depression, and trauma)
 - Probe: Emotional regulation (dealing with emotions)
- What motivates you to participate in the yoga programme or to practice it on your own?
- Has yoga helped you in how you think about your past crimes?

Personal Transformation and Development:

- Were there any significant turning points in your yoga experience?
 - Probe: how has this influenced the way you live your life? (eg relationships, conversations, postures, insight and realisation prompted by something linked to yoga or meditation)



- Has yoga influenced who you are as a person? (e.g. self-understanding)
(How do you perceive yourself?)
 - Probe: Relationship
 - Probe: Goals and Motivation
 - Probe: Spiritual Connection
- Does yoga influence the way you see or relate to your body?
- How will yoga help you once you are released from prison?

Group interviews

- Does yoga affect your behaviour?
 - Does yoga/meditation help you de-stress in particular and if so, how and when?
 - Have you become more focused or deliberate in interactions?
- How has yoga affected the way you interact with others or had an effect on your relationships?
- How do other prisoners relate to your yoga practice? (is it respected/stigmatized)
- Have there been any physical, mental or emotional barriers that make practising more difficult? (Any challenges to the practice of yoga)
- How would you explain to another inmate why she should enrol in the programme?
- Is there anything that you would recommend to improve the experience of the yoga programme? (Hours, weekly visits)
- What did you enjoy most about the yoga programme?
- Just tell me the first thing that comes into your head: What does yoga give you in three words? (E.g. reward, self-responsibility and hope)