Horticulture, hypermasculinity and mental wellbeing: the connections in a male prison context.

Flo Seymour – NIHR CLAHRC NWC PhD Student
School of Community Health and Midwifery
Aims & Objectives

‘To identify and explore the influences and impacts of a GOOP horticulture project upon hypermasculine norms and the mental wellbeing of male prisoners within a North West prison.’

1. To examine prisoner and staff views and perspectives on the role and impacts of GOOP.
2. To increase understanding of how a GOOP project within a selected male prison impacts on the development of a therapeutic and rehabilitative culture.
3. To illuminate the relationships and interconnections between horticulture, hypermasculinity, and male prisoners’ mental wellbeing.
Horticulture
• Greener on the Outside: For Prisons (GOOP)
• Outdoor benefits
  • Biophilia

Hypermasculinity
• Suppression of emotions, violent behaviours and creation of a persona

Mental Wellbeing
• 102 self-inflicted deaths in custody this year.
• Prisoners 10x more likely to suffer than general public
Exploratory Study at HMP Preston

• 3 week study
• 18 prisoners
• 3 staff members
• Consent forms
• Anonymity
• Pseudonyms
## Methods

**Active Participant Observation**
- Regular visits for rapport building
- 4 types: passive, moderate, active & complete (Spradley, 1980)
- Join in with activities
- Prevents disruption of normal, daily routine.

**Guided Conversations**
- Supplement to observations
- Link between observation and interviews
- Comments/anecdotes followed up later with questions
- Limits deception and facilitates rapport building (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007)

**In-depth Interviews**
- Individual with 3 prisoners
- Question/prompts derived from observation and guided conversations
  - Semi-structured
Findings

Working routine/rehabilitation...

“gives you a purpose innit. It’s like being at work like at an actual job on the outside. Feels like you’re not even in jail cause you wanna come to work.”

“They’re all jealous of this project yeah! All wanna get on here... I’d work weekends if I could, honestly”

“I’ve learnt loads on here.... If I’m in for 2 years, I wanna benefit from it in some way”

“learnt about names of plants, how to reuse wood and that and then maths and English helps people too”
Green environment vs the prison wings...

“feel a bit healthier and that, bit of colour in my skin again!”

“takes your mind of stuff for a bit...there’s no one tryna be the best out here like on wings... no like chaos and drama”

“when I’m back on the wings it’s just... hell”

Counselling setting

“I’ve finally seen a counsellor in here after 6 months of waiting... it’s helped a bit so far but I think they should do it down here, it’s so much calmer”

Relationship with staff...

“the teachers on here are sick yeah proper chilled and like wanna help you and that”

“they proper love their job you know and that helps us”
Relationship with staff...
“the teachers on here are sick yeah proper chilled and like wanna help you and that”
“they proper love their job you know and that helps us”

Mix of prisoners...
“can talk about your worries more on here... it’s an unwritten rule that it won’t all get taken back to the wings”
“I like helping the young’uns and that, they need some guidance like I did once”
“yeah the cons are alright you know, bit scary on the wings if you’ve got like a 40 year old murderer but they’re sound on here”
Awareness of masculinity/persona...

“I’ve got my own little, like, persona. I like to be a bit of a joker you know and just be a people pleaser.”

“you wanna be known in here but not too well known, you get me?”

“I just stay quiet and keep my head down. Do my time and never come back”

“I prefer woodwork cause it’s physical... flowers is something your wife would do at home...it’s a bit more feminine to mess with flowers...the lads see it as a bit girly but they’re all jealous”
Conclusion

- GOOP is an overall positive setting for prisoners at HMP Preston
- Low levels of violence and aggressive behaviours
- Awareness of masculine expectations/pressures
- A calm environment in comparison to the prison wings
- Positive relationships between staff and prisoners
- Skill development
- Enhances mental wellbeing
Next steps...

• Mphil – PhD Transfer Report
• Rapport building at HMP Preston – April 2017
• Main research period: May – August 2017
• Analyse findings – MaxQDA
• ‘writing up phase’
• Publications/conferences
• December 2018 - finish!
Any questions/advice?!
References


