Drama and Prison:

A study of drama-based methods used in the aid of rehabilitation of offenders and the effects on their well-being, mental health and society.

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to examine the benefits of using drama with offenders in prisons, people at risk of offending and in high-risk mental health units. At the centre of this project’s research is the work of two majorly successful theatre companies, Geese Theatre Company and Clean Break Theatre Company, who’s work with offenders and people at risk over the years has been proven to be life changing and transformative through their active, inventive methods and holistic approach to rehabilitation. Delving into the methodology used by drama practitioners such as Geese Theatre and Clean Break, several programmes and approaches will be explored, and their effects on the rehabilitation of offenders in prison and of those in high-risk mental health units will be investigated. These approaches will include, The Mask and One Step Removed (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002), Role theory and Role-play (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997) and The Recovery Model. (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001) Additionally, the effects of drama work with offenders will be examined in terms of its impact on the individual offender and society as a whole. At this dissertation’s conclusion, it will be determined how effective drama can be, identifying which methods and approaches are the most successful in the rehabilitation of offenders.
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Introduction

The prison system in England has continuously struggled over the years to control the overwhelming number of offenders re-entering their institutions after being released. Reducing crime is a huge priority as it can have a devastating impact on victims, their families, the community and society as a whole. Although work is being done in and out of prisons to reduce reoffending and to deter individuals from offending at all, prisons are not fully achieving their goal of deterrence, as many offenders are convicted of another crime shortly after their release. According to The Ministry of Justice in 2013, it was recorded that almost half of all offenders released from custody reoffended within a year. (Grayling, p.6, 2013) In terms of the outcomes caused by those who re-offend, the consequences can be severe. Those re-convicted in the two years following their release will receive three further convictions on average. All previously released offenders who choose to offend again have been held responsible for 1 million crimes a year in the last few years. (Social Exclusion Unit, p.5, 2002). Additionally, an unknown extra amount of re-offences will have been committed as not every crime is documented or criminal caught. The outcomes of reoffending have proven to be a drastic problem, affecting the safety of our society and putting pressure on our government for a need for change.

Researchers have cited many contributions for the reasons why offenders choose to commit crime. 15% of prisoners have reported being homeless before entering prison, and around a quarter are thought to suffer from anxiety and depression. (Grayling, p.6, 2013) Other reasons point to there being a lack of post-release support for offenders serving a short sentence. In the case of younger offenders, social exclusion in terms of child poverty, involvement in drug use, exclusion from school and inequality among peers are all common factors that can all lead to offending. Offenders are often very damaged and lost individuals who essentially need to be brought to justice while being rehabilitated in the right way in order for their successful re-integration into the community and for society to reap the benefits.
The purposes of the prison system are to achieve rehabilitation, deterrence, retribution and incapacitation. However, it is perhaps the case that the punishment purpose of prison has been focused upon more so than rehabilitation. As reoffending is still a huge issue in the penal system, prisons are not doing enough not only to reduce reoffending but also to enable prisoners to be released from their sentence having rediscovered themselves. It should be considered how to ‘stop prisons churning out dehumanised prisoners and make them instead places where they can recover their lost humanity.’ (Othmani and Bessis, p.103, 2008)

There are different approaches used to rehabilitate offenders. Approaches used with offenders should resolve the factors that contribute to them committing crime in the first place. These can include tackling issues from substance abuse to sex offences and mental health issues. Therefore, programmes and interventions have been designed in order to meet these problems. However, some approaches have been more successful than others. One approach is parole. During parole the offender is expected to fulfil certain conditions, such as refraining from drugs and obtaining employment. The goal of parole is to ensure an easier transition from incarceration to reintegration into society. Another approach is mandatory treatment programmes. For example, some crimes are drug related and fuelled by the offender’s own addiction, therefore the offender will be sentenced to take part in a programme in an attempt to battle these issues. Another approach is in-prison rehabilitation programmes. These are designed to help offenders with education, develop job skills, work on relationships or learn how to deal with challenges they may face once released. Finally, these programmes in the form of art therapies such as drama therapy are also commonly used approaches.

Rehabilitation programmes based on a cognitive-behavioural framework have been shown to be the most effective, a base from which drama therapy programmes create their methods. Drama-based methods which have been based on the CBT framework are The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002), Role Theory and Role-Play (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997) and The Recovery Model. (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001) These methods have been proven very successful.
Putting offenders back on the right track will not only help them pursue a more promising future, but also help the problem of overcrowding. Prisons are overcrowded and have been ‘every year since 1994’. (Prison Reform Trust, p.3, 2017) Overcrowding in prisons make it difficult for inmates to be managed, consequently this affects whether staff and activities are fully available to reduce reoffending. Overcrowding also leads to ‘the organizational effectiveness of prisons being seen in terms of control, rather than rehabilitation.’ (Craig, p.92, 2004) Because of this, in many cases prisoners’ individual needs are not met to the extent needed to benefit them and to ensure they are rehabilitated properly in preparation for re-entering society. With the added problem of there being fewer staff looking after more prisoners in the last seven years, (Prison Reform Trust, p.5, 2017) ways of organising how prisoners can constructively spend their time, such as through taking part in rehabilitative programmes are very much needed.

In May 2013, The Ministry of Justice published a document that stated the utmost importance of rehabilitation in the prison system in the fight to reduce reoffending. ‘There was a strong view that we needed to draw on the local expertise of smaller organisations, particularly in the VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Expertise sector) by ensuring they could participate in bids to deliver services.’ (Grayling, p.7, 2013). The comments made in this report point directly to the need for rehabilitative services in the form of vocational and educational programmes, such as the drama-based programmes that leading theatre companies Geese Theatre Company and Clean Break Theatre Company carry out in prisons. The use of drama within prisons has long been thought of as providing a unique approach to rehabilitating offenders, and has become paramount as a means in attempting to create a path for them to re-enter society as valuable citizens. Using a drama-based approach with offenders has produced results which other forms of therapy or rehabilitation have rarely been able to achieve. Geese and Clean Break for example, have been hugely successful in the work they carry out, having a ‘significant advantage over discussion-based or instructional approaches’ (Baim, Brookes, & Mountford, p.XII, 2002) that are already carried out in prisons. They have created a noticeable change in offenders’ behaviour and massively contributed to changing lives in a positive way. The work of these companies, facilitating workshops and consultations in prisons, young offender institutions and in the community, support the government’s opinion that ‘better
aligning the prison system with rehabilitative services delivered in the community could support better outcomes.’ (Grayling, p.7, 2013). Their services have become more popular in recent years, as those with the power to control the prison system have sought out their help in the realisation that the rehabilitative function of prison can be significantly enhanced by the programmes that these practitioners provide.

In Chapter One, the work of two of the leading theatre companies who work with offenders and people at risk of offending will be explored: Geese Theatre Company and Clean Break Theatre Company. Specifically, the concept of The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) will be looked at and investigated in terms of how it is used constructively in one of Geese’s programmes, Journey Woman. An interview with Probation Officer Joan Barnfather will be included, linking her opinions on how Geese’s work in a sex offender unit was beneficial to the offenders involved. The concept of Role-Play and Role Theory (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997) will also be investigated and how these methods were relevant in relation to the participants involved in Clean Break’s programme, Miss Spent. Throughout this chapter, the effectiveness of the methods and interventions explored will be proven and also compared to arguably less effective methods that have been used with offenders.

Chapter Two will study how transformative drama can be in terms of benefitting the individual offender, as well as prisons themselves and society as a whole. The concepts of The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) and Role Theory (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997) will be looked at again, in the context of Geese’s 2009 programme, Inside Talk. These methods and their ability to produce strong rehabilitative outcomes will be evaluated. Examples of Clean Break’s work will be used to prove the positive impact drama can have on the individual’s well-being. Additionally to this, the government’s expectation for England’s prison system will be touched upon, proving how drama programmes with offenders can contribute to the achievement of an ideal prison system. Next, the theories of rehabilitation that have been considered over the decades will be delved into. For example, Robert Martinson’s ‘Nothing Works’ theory will be taken into consideration and contrasted with more modern attitudes about interventions in prison in order to prove the effectiveness of drama in this way. Through this, it will be demonstrated that the rehabilitative function of prison can be significantly enhanced by these types of interventions, thereby hugely benefitting offenders on an individual level and also contributing to our society.
Chapter Three investigates the impact drama can have on mental health. Focusing on the importance of drama’s contribution to some of the most difficult and often dangerous individuals, who are not only offenders but have serious mental health conditions also. Geese Theatre's 1991 programme Violent Illusion at Broadmoor Hospital will be explored, in order to prove how important the use of active methods used through the medium of drama can be to the recovery of these types of offenders. Geese’s concepts of The Mask and One Step Removed (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) will also be explored in relation to the progress of these individuals, showing how Geese’s methods are versatile in their ability to benefit both offenders of sound mind and those who are mentally ill. In addition, the drama-based programme mentioned in this chapter will be compared to a traditional programme unrelated to drama, their results with mentally ill offenders assessed. The 'Nature vs Nurture' standpoint (Clark, 2003) will then be investigated. The exploration into this theory will strengthen the view of the reliability of drama-based methods used by practitioners, as a comparison will be made into the different ways that those in charge of mentally ill offenders choose to treat them. Interviews conducted with Psychiatric Nurse Ellie Barnfather and Art Psychotherapist Valerie Hartland will then be discussed. Their experience of drama's impact on the patients they work with will be shared in support of The Recovery Model approach. (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001) Finally, the chapter will be concluded with the theory that criminality is in itself a mental illness.
Chapter One: ‘Geese Theatre Company and Clean Break Theatre company – an evaluation of their programmes within prisons.’

Geese Theatre Company and Clean Break Theatre company are two of the United Kingdom’s longest-established companies specialising in drama and theatre work within the criminal justice system, working with offenders and people at risk of offending. Geese was established in 1987 by Clark Baim. Over the years the company has worked with over 250,000 offenders in 150 custodial institutions, consistently working to reduce offending and facilitate choice and change amongst offenders. Clean Break was established in 1979 by Jenny Hicks and Jackie Holborough while they were inmates at HMP Askham Grange. The company was started as a feminist theatre company with the intentions of bringing the hidden stories of imprisoned women to an audience. Today in 2018, they remain an all-female company creating influential plays on the theme of crime and women, whilst being a support system that develops social, personal, creative and professional skills which can lead on to employment. These companies are prime examples of organisations that have made a huge difference to the lives of offenders and society, committed to putting together active programmes based on skill-orientated methods, that work towards achieving ‘lower crime, fewer victims and safer communities.’ (Grayling, p.5, 2013)

In 2001, a 16-year-old young offender held at the Feltham young offenders’ institution in Middlesex spoke to The Guardian Newspaper about his experience of being incarcerated: ‘In here, nobody says what they really mean. It’s a frightening place, so you just pretend you’re a certain kind of person that you believe will keep you the safest. That makes you do it all the more when you get out, and so the cycle goes on.’ (The Guardian Newspaper, p.1, 2001) The defensive attitude that this young offender has described is one of the most common among the majority of offenders, and is at the core of the problem society faces when attempting to rehabilitate these individuals and mould them into better citizens. The defensiveness an offender feels they have to display to survive in an often intimidating environment such as prison, can lead to aggressiveness which can become ingrained in their personality. The offender then thinks that having an aggressive demeanour will help himself/herself
get something they want or protect them in a potentially difficult situation: ‘If she doesn’t give me the money, then I get rageful and she doesn’t want that. But I got to use the mask to get what I need’. (inmate, in Liebmann, p.96, 1996) The mask, is the name for this defence mechanism that the offender uses, the characteristics of this mask will often start to mould the offender’s underlying character and behaviour.

Geese’s understanding of the concept of The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) and the offender’s use of it as a defence mechanism and a method of social survival, has allowed them to create an approach which aims to unravel the negative effects it creates on the offenders personality. This therefore hinders destructive patterns of behaviour at the source and turns the mask around to use it in a positive light. Their unique approach aims to reflect the offender’s behaviour back to them, giving the offender insight and the opportunity to change. This approach is arguably responsible for the majority of Geese’s success in helping offenders turn their lives around, where other methods of intervention have failed to do the same as successfully. For example, in mandatory treatment programmes which offenders are sentenced to take part in, they are likely to resist and therefore not learn as quickly. Critics have highlighted that using more active methods such as the mask can have ‘more immediate impact for those involved as the characters and situations are created from the participants’ own culture and experiences, and that the use of these drama techniques does not rely on literacy skills.’ (Day, p.3, 2013)

An interview was conducted at Geese Theatre Company’s base in Birmingham in September 2017 with Louise Heywood, the Deputy Artistic Director of the company. She explained that ‘the stories we tell on stage should reflect our audience.’ (Heywood, 2017) The company create pieces of theatre with groups of people who have suffered with problems surrounding a certain issue, for example, child abuse. These issue targeted programmes are successful as they facilitate their work to what each group of people specifically needs, ‘therefore opening them up to the ideas of choice, responsibility and change.’ (Heywood, 2017) Geese’s one-week-long project *Journey Woman*, is a prime example of how powerful these sorts of interventions can be. The play was first performed in 2006. It is a play devised to initiate a rehabilitative group work programme for female inmates, with an alternative programme for male participants, *Journey Man*, developed in light of the
programme’s success. The storyline, focusing on a woman’s downward spiral and repeated return to imprisonment, is specifically tailored for offender audiences who could relate with the struggles of the protagonist and uses full-faced masks and an Aristotelian tragic structure. Feedback collected from the offender participants from HMP Foston who were involved in this project in 2007, indicated that Journey Woman enabled participants to develop an increasing motivation to change and to develop insight and skills needed to effectively engage with others. The success of this project was measured by diary entries completed by the participants throughout the process. Initially, participants fed back the difficulties they faced through having to open up and access their emotions, ‘I was petrified to start with because it was so intense.’ (Participant, Journey Woman, 2007) However, overall positive emotions were communicated and the most commonly discussed theme highlighted from the project was having the motivation to change. ‘The main epiphany is seeing my negative inner self as the destructive, cruel and inaccurate voice it is.’ (Participant, Journey Woman, 2007) This clear change in the participants and the insight they gained into their own behaviour through the project, was gained through the use of The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) and Role-Play. (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997)

One of the reasons that this intervention was clearly so effective with the offenders who participated in it, was that it catered for the majority of the offenders learning styles. In McGuire and Priestly’s 1995 seminal summary which stated the six key principles for the design of effective programmes for offenders, they commented that the ‘learning styles of most offenders require active, participatory methods of working’ (Rex, Bottoms and Gelsthorpe, p.8, 2001) drawn from behavioural or cognitive-behavioural based methods. Geese were able to facilitate this through their inventive methods such as The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002), which they developed originally from a cognitive-behavioural theory framework. Using the mask as a ‘practical tool for looking both at the social roles we play and the inner processes that support those roles’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.20, 2002), the participants were able to encounter their hidden thoughts and feelings which they had previously buried; through finding the connection between a characters inner process and how that process relates to the characters behaviour. Therefore opening up the opportunity to consider what needs to change in their own lives.
An interview with Probation Officer Joan Barnfather was conducted in April 2018. Barnfather came into contact with co-founder of Geese, Clark Baim, during her time working in a sex offender unit in 2002. She strengthened the view of the effectiveness of active interventions such as *Journey Woman*, commenting that ‘the work Clark Baim did with the offenders was really effective, they were completely engaged in it. They were noticeably more interested than I had ever seen them before and the intervention was much more exciting and dynamic than just sitting in a group and talking. They were challenged in such a different way. It was like magic.’ (Barnfather, J, 2018)

Clean Break Theatre Company has matched Geese Theatre Company in their achievements in the criminal justice system with offenders and those at risk of offending. The productions they put on provide opportunity for employment while their national outreach programme provides workshops, performances and discussions for prisons and probation services. The company’s women-only identity is crucial to the ethos and rationale of their programmes. Clean Break believe their approach of creating a women-only space can encourage ‘holistic support with a focus on learning, creativity and expression’. (Colvin and Richmond, p.2, 2017) The environment and atmosphere that therapeutic interventions are held in, are a contributing factor to how comfortable offenders feel. Equally to Clean Break’s view, the women taking part in Geese’s programme, *Journey Woman*, described the importance of learning in an environment which was ‘relaxed, non-judgemental and supportive.’ (Day, p.1, 2013) In these types of active programmes, participants are opening themselves up and learning out of their comfort zone by experiencing something physically rather than just listening or watching a presentation. Therefore, feeling safe in the environment they learn in is crucial.

Clean Break facilitated a programme called *Miss Spent* from the 12th to the 23rd April 2010, at the Josephine Butler Unit for under eighteen’s at HMP Downview in Surrey. The programme demonstrated the benefits of drama-based methods such as role-play (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997) can have on increasing personal skills, building on confidence and self-esteem, while empowering young women to consider the effects of their offending behaviour and to establish their personal strengths and weaknesses.
The majority of the young women taking part had not previously participated in a drama-based project before, however even though this type of intervention was unfamiliar it allowed an accessible method of learning for those involved. For example, for those who had low literacy levels and for kinaesthetic learners. Another benefit was ‘the use of drama games and exercises as metaphors for real life situations enabled the participants to remember the lessons learnt from the activity more easily.’ (Van Maanen, p.4, 2010)

The use of role-play was a key component in the Miss Spent programme in the development and rehabilitation of the young women involved. The Role Theory (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997) from which role-play was developed, has had its developments over the years but essentially is a ‘common-sense framework for becoming more consciously in control of our roles and our behaviour towards others.’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.20, 2002) The purpose of this drama-based method in the programme was to enable the women to consider their roles in society, to build up their repertoire of skills and in general to act as a rehearsal for life. ‘If the participant is motivated, they can use role-play to help develop the thinking skills, the interpersonal skills and the confidence to make the changes they want to make.’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.20, 2002) During role-play, a situation will be presented and the participant will be asked to use a particular skill to handle the situation. For example, the skill could be dealing with anxiety, communicating with a partner or applying for a job. The participant could either play themselves or someone else. The participant is asked to break down the skill in their own words, and then perform the skill in a live role-play. In the project the young women were presented with circumstances which the majority of them would most likely come across during their adult lives, with which they would have to develop a role in order to deal with. ‘Role Theory suggests that learning how to perform and adapt to different roles in life is an important life skill.’ (Landy, p.223, 1990) Many of these young women being under the age of eighteen and no longer in education due to their convictions, would have not completed their education and therefore would have a lack of guidance in terms of future employment. Using the method of role-playing they are able to practice the role of being an employee and therefore prepare themselves for future employment situations. In expanding their knowledge and experience of the different situations and roles they might come across in their lives, participants benefitted in a
way which they would not have done through more conventional therapeutic interventions offered to them such as parole in which they are expected to gain employment in return for their temporary release from prison. Role-play allows offenders to practice and learn the skills needed to be employed, whereas being on parole would neither prepare nor support them to the same level.

Through role-play, the participants in the Miss Spent programme engaged more positively in the areas of education, training and interest in potential employment after the programme. This was especially important in light of Dame Sally Coates’ review for The Ministry of Justice in 2016 on the importance of education as a key factor in rehabilitating offenders. ‘Education is one of the pillars of effective rehabilitation. Education should build social capital and improve the well-being of prisoners during their sentences.’ (Coates, p.3, 2016) Taking part in the Miss Spent programme allowed the women involved to build on their strengths and to use drama as a way to re-engage in education and to think about their future beyond prison, ‘the project made them aware that they had the skills and ability to make their ambitions a reality.’ (Van Maanen. p.8, 2010) The programme’s effect on the women’s ambitions and goals was an especially important factor of the program, as it was reported in 2016 that on release, ‘three fifths of prisoners have no identified employment or education or training outcome.’ (Coates, p.7, 2016) With no means to work after their release and earn an honest living, it is unsurprising that many prisoners feel the need to re-offend. Educating offenders in a way that is engaging to the individual is therefore hugely important in giving offenders the opportunity to do something constructive with their lives. The programme’s impact on the participants aims for the future clearly were successful from their verbal feedback, for example one participant commented, ‘thanks for showing me what I could do. Without the programme I wouldn’t have gained the confidence to do it.’ (Pamela, Participant in Miss Spent, 2010)

Increasing self-esteem was one of the programme’s main aims. Combatting a lack of positive emotions that the women may have had about themselves had great importance, especially as it is a long-standing opinion in the field of criminology that ‘negative self-image may in some way be bound up with the propensity to offend.’ (Holmes, Karp and Sprague, p.191, 1994) Moreover, having a lack of self-esteem can
also affect how one communicates with other people which can often result in conflict. Feedback from individuals participating in Miss Spent indicate the positive difference the programme has made to them as people, the lessons they have learned and the skills gained socially and in themselves. For example, one participant commented at the end of the programme that she ‘learnt about self-esteem and getting on with people.’ (Charmaine, Participant in Miss Spent, 2010)
Chapter Two: ‘The transformative power of drama – for the individual offender and society.’

In the last few years, there has been evidence of a decline in reoffending rates. In July 2016, reoffending statistics were published. According to Russell Webster in 2016, overall findings state that from October 2013 to September 2014, 496,000 offenders were released from custody. 128,000 of these offenders committed a proven re-offence within 1 year. This proves that the overall reoffending rate was at 25.7%. This being a decrease of 0.7% percentage points compared to the previous 12 months and a decrease of 2.7% percentage points since 2003. Although reoffending remains a drastic problem in our society, these statistics do show an improvement in the number of offenders that lead to committing re-offences. This chapter will seek to explore how the use of drama programmes in prisons can have an effect on this and therefore benefit our society. Additionally, how the use of these methods and programmes achieve results for the prisons and for the well-being of the individual offenders themselves.

In maximum security prisons inmates are not being given the opportunity to improve themselves. For example, prisoners contained in these types of institutions have been reported to being subjected to ‘nearly complete isolation and deprivation of sensory stimuli.’ (Kurki and Morris, p.385, 2001) In conditions such as these, it is unsurprising that offenders find it difficult to see a positive future. It is for situations such as these that the use of drama in prisons can provide a source of inspiration, hope and creativity. The well-known play by Timberlake Wertenbaker, ‘Our Country’s Good’ which is based on a true story, expresses themes which reflect exactly why drama is so important. The story focuses on a group of convicts journeying to a colony in Australia who put on a play. Despite being uncivilised, living in squalor and subjugated with no hope or future, these characters are reformed and humanised by their involvement in the play. The themes from this play reinforce the view that when given the opportunity for redemption and through the transformative effect of taking part in a drama production, offenders can ‘create pathways from incarceration to community reintegration.’ (Craig, Dixon and Gannon, p.31, 2013) Furthermore,
anything that can successfully re-integrate these individuals into society has major social benefits including cost effectiveness, a decline in re-conviction rates and raising community awareness of the criminal justice system.

Key parts of a rehabilitative process involve people being allowed the opportunity to express feelings in a way that is helpful to them. Research of the prison population have suggested that the number of prisoners ‘with communication disorders is higher than that of the overall population.’ (Bryan, Freer & Furlong, p.505, 2007) Geese carried out an *Inside Talk* programme in 2009 which combats these types of problems. The programme used metaphors such as The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) to expand on offenders listening and speaking skills, as well as using experimental exercises and practice role-plays. When this programme was assessed through a process of interviews significant changes were seen in offenders in terms of improved confidence, self-efficacy, dealing with authority and occupational skills. All factors that are of importance for contributing members of society to have. When interviewed, one participant commented on her huge increase in confidence over the three weeks. Another commented that ‘It made me see the effect of my actions on my future, whether they be good or bad actions.’ (Participant, *Inside Talk*, 2009). The results achieved through the programme were evaluated to have an impact on the participants immediately after completion, proving that programmes such as these can produce strong rehabilitative outcomes for participants.

The *Inside Talk* programme also proved to enhance participants level of self-efficacy. Having a strong sense of self-efficacy can help offenders face difficulties of resettlement into the community, therefore this programme catered very well to the needs of those taking part. Geese also used the Role Theory (Moreno, 1993 and Blatner, 1997) in this programme. The theory suggests that by allowing an individual to practice situations where they might take on different roles can be beneficial in strengthening their ability to take on roles they might come across in the future.

Prisons across the United Kingdom provide accredited programmes designed to address individual’s problems and needs, however these programmes often require a higher level of intelligence and skills than those who would want to participate in them. 35% of offenders have shown to perform at academic levels below that of a typical 11-year-old child. (Davis et al, p.3, 2004) This creates a huge difficulty for
those attempting to rehabilitate these individuals. However, a drama-based approach offers an accessible pathway to rehabilitation for offenders; one that less resembles that of a formal education and that approaches activities and workshops in a way that does not rely on literacy and expression skills, but ‘allows for self-reflection and practice of newly learned skills.’ (Baim, Brookes, & Mountford, p.24, 2002) It would be extremely straightforward for everyone involved in the rehabilitation of prisoners, if there was one method which worked for everyone. However, the key to successful rehabilitation is the focus on the individual, the identification of his/her particular issues and taking part in a programme that aims to target them. Offenders will have varying problems therefore the targeting of each course to a certain group who have a similar history of offending, ‘careful selection of a marginalised ‘target’ is likely to yield immediate results in terms of instant impact upon the psyches of each participant’. (Etherton and Prentki, p.139, 2006)

The role of theatre practitioners facilitating workshops in prisons, should be to ‘provide effective rehabilitation to those who need it most, during that crucial transition from custody to community’. (Padfield and Bild, p.15, 2015) The impact of drama-based programmes on participants can lead to improvement in levels of social well-being, benefitting the offender inside and outside of prison. For example, participants from programmes facilitated by Clean Break have progressed through the course taken having ‘raised their aspirations and planned their futures beyond Clean Break – onto higher education, employment or volunteering.’ (Colvin and Richmond, p.6, 2017) Thus providing social benefits by helping these individuals gain the sufficient confidence and self-esteem to make a future for themselves and therefore also contributing to the running of society. Clean Break state that they establish a relationship with the women they work with ‘based on trust and care’ (Colvin and Richmond, p.6, 2017) also offering them the opportunity to return if they need further support.

It is clear how a company such as Clean Break has benefitted those they work with, creating positive long-term effects. In a case study of the journey of a participant who took part in one of Clean Break’s programmes, examples of this are distinct. ‘The participant had a history of substance and alcohol misuse. She was suffering from anxiety and panic attacks on a regular basis, coupled with poor self-esteem and lack
of confidence.’ (Colvin and Richmond, p.7, 2017) Once completing the course at Clean Break, through the process of interacting with others her ‘communication skills and self-confidence grew tremendously.’ (Colvin and Richmond, p.7, 2017) The participant fed back that the course allowed her to recover from her addiction. The participant’s prospects also became more hopeful as she went on tour with Clean Break to universities to perform in a play. She was also reported to not be involved in any further reoffending since 2011, while having counselling support for her mental health. Overall the participant commented that she has ‘learnt healthy boundaries here. There are women here that I really love and are close friends – I trust people more.’ (Michelle, Participant, 2014)

Clean Break not only aids the positive development of the individual but contributes to a healthy economic society too. There is often a difficulty in following up with some of the women who have taken part in Clean Break’s courses once they are over. Therefore in identifying the economic benefits of the programmes, (such as whether women are in education or employment, gained a qualification or whether they have yet reoffended) can only be charted in conjunction with those they were able to contact for information. In May 2011, they managed to contact 20 out of 31 women. Clean Break estimated that without their services, over half of these women would have gone on to reoffend. Through further research they also estimated that ‘five women not reoffending saves the criminal justice system £427,258 over one year.’ Furthermore, two women attaining degree-level qualifications ‘results in total economic benefit of £36,204 over ten years. This is made up of net earnings of £24,619 to the individual and income tax and National Insurance of £11,585 to the state.’ (Johnson, Keen and Pritchard, p.18, 2013)

Working creatively with offenders in prisons has been shown to bring about constructive change. However, some would still raise the question as to whether ‘drama can contribute significantly to that process of change.’ (Etherton and Prentki, p.139, 2006) Drama-based programmes have been proven through a reduction in reoffending rates and through a process of feedback to create a positive change ‘on an institutional as well as individual level.’ (Keehan, p.391, 2015) HM Inspectorate of Prisons state that there are certain expectations prisons need to meet. These expectations consist of ensuring the safety of prisoners, that they are treated with
respect, that they engage in purposeful activity and supporting their rehabilitation needs throughout their sentence. A series of drama-based programmes should contribute to the achievement of all these expectations. In terms of evaluating the effects that the use of drama practice can have on the institution itself, there has been evidence in support of an argument that drama in prisons can reduce disciplinary problems and violence in prisons. In 1992, there was a reported 71-81% reduction of rule-breaking activities amongst prisoners taking part in a drama-based programme in AIC California. (Hughes, p.38, 2017) Similarly, prison officers overseeing a drama project at HMP Albany in 1994 commented on the ‘noted improvements in prisoners attitudes to work including an increased ability to occupy themselves and improved relationships between prisoners and staff, therefore reducing the need for external control.’ (Hughes, p.39, 2017) The importance of keeping prisons as safe as possible is imperative as it is well known they can be hostile, dangerous environments. If drama-based programmes are creating positive effects in this way, the weight of their worth in the prison system is clear.

Drama projects in prisons haven’t been without criticism. There have been some concerns raised by critics. Michael Balfour’s 2004 study of theatre in prison points out that the purpose of carrying out theatre in prison could be simply ‘a means by which to fulfil institutional objectives’ (Keehan, p.391, 2015) without regard to the impact on the individuals concerned. The author also suggests that applied theatre work ‘serves the performance of punishment’. (Keehan, p.391, 2015) However, although there have been mixed reviews on this type of work, assessment into long-term and short-term impacts have demonstrated theatre work in prisons to be very effective. Practitioners of drama such as those from Geese and Clean Break have been recognised to facilitate the support of ‘communities, groups and individuals.’ (Etherton and Prentki, p.139, 2006)

Rehabilitation of offenders is seen in modern society to be ‘a central goal of the correctional system.’ (Heubner, p.1, 2014) However, this development in the popularity of using rehabilitative methods has taken time to progress in the penal system. In the 1970’s Robert Martinson introduced his theory that ‘nothing works’ in terms of reforming convicts. His 1974 study compared and scrutinised the effects of various programmes where different kinds of rehabilitative treatment were used on
offenders. He concluded that ‘with few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism.’ (Martinson, p.25, 1974) Although not being without its substantial evidence, this study became less popular throughout the years as it extensively focused on the opinion that there is little hope for those contained in corrections. The study was found to therefore be ‘undermining efforts at knowledge construction.’ (Cullen and Gendreau, p.313, 2001) Modern opinions have since moved further towards a more hopeful ideology in terms of rehabilitating offenders. Understanding that offenders are often people whose lives have been unfortunate in terms of a lack of education, involvement with drugs, a lack of guidance and financial struggles among other issues, has led to more positive thinking for these individuals. Those who believe in the rehabilitation of offenders are not ignoring the fact they also need to be brought to justice, which is also an important part of reform and in Martinson’s view, offenders are difficult to change. Nonetheless, the positive results for offenders on an individual level and for society as a whole that theatre companies such as Geese and Clean Break have produced, have fuelled current more optimistic attitudes towards rehabilitation. They have proved that with the right approach offenders should be given the same chance as everyone else to create meaningful lives.

The approach that Geese and Clean Break have to rehabilitation were undoubtedly influenced by previous studies that evaluate the components of effective treatment with offenders. A study written in 1990 suggested that the delivery of appropriate correctional service to each individual offender would work effectively in terms of rehabilitation. The study claimed that the ‘targeting of criminogenic needs and use of styles and modes of treatment (cognitive and behavioural)’ (Andrews et al, p.369, 1990) would be effective when matched with specific client needs and learning styles. This re-enforces Geese and Clean Break’s ideology of a focus on the individual and the deep-rooted issues behind their offending behaviour reaping positive results.

Additionally, a study by the governing board of the National Research Council of the National Academies in 2008 concluded that cognitive-behavioural treatment programmes ‘reduce recidivism significantly.’ (National Research Council, p.2, 2008) The frame-work of CBT aims to understand the ways in which attitudes and beliefs affect behaviour. ‘Much of the focus on CBT as it applies to offenders is on
addressing habitual thinking and feeling cycles which prove self-defeating and which lead to offending behaviour.’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.19, 2002)

The ways in which reform has sought to be achieved in prison has changed over time. The early uses of punishment in the form of silence, labour and isolation used in the nineteenth century have moved on. More recently vocational, educational and psychologically based programmes have achieved significant results in the rehabilitation of offenders as individuals, while saving money and contributing to society as a whole.
Chapter 3: ‘Drama and Mental Health’

Within the realm of people in society who offend and are incarcerated due to their actions, there is a group of people with additional problems other than the crimes they have committed. Offenders with mental health and psychological conditions who are detained in high and medium risk mental health care units, present an additional amount of responsibility to the government and society. This responsibility involves finding the balance in rehabilitating these individuals as offenders, while looking after them as patients. The mentally disordered offender ‘is a borderline figure – between mental disorder and criminality, criminality and social problem, petty nuisance and social casualty.’ (Carnwell and Buchanan, p. 210, 2005) This type of offender is possibly one of the most difficult to rehabilitate, as their issues are deeper rooted in terms of ill mental health in addition to their offending past. However, mentally ill offenders can often benefit significantly from drama.

Mental health units contain some of the most-high risk and difficult to help patients, whose lives from the surface do not seem to have much hope for the future. However, the use of a drama-based approach has been widely recognised as being just as successful in the rehabilitation of offenders in prison as with patients in mental health units. Geese Theatre Company have carried out several rehabilitative programmes within the mental health sector, creating a safe and supportive environment for individuals to explore their identity, contemplate the roles they may play in society and the effect of their behaviour on themselves and others. The company use the Recovery Model approach (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001) in the majority of their work in this field. This approach is built on the goal of staying in control of life. Rather than focusing on symptoms and illness the approach ‘focuses on building resilience of people with mental illness and supporting those in emotional distress.’ (Jacob, p.117, 2015) Although dealing with and rehabilitating mentally ill offenders has been viewed as a challenge of a different calibre to offenders of sound mind, drama practitioners who have demonstrated compassion towards these individuals and helped them work through their problems through focusing on their strengths have produced considerable results.
Geese carried out a programme called *Violent Illusion* at Broadmoor Hospital in 1991, a maximum-security hospital containing some of the most dangerous mentally-ill patients in the country. The programme created significant results with patients who had a history of major violence. Among those taking part in their programme were those who had been involved in rape, murder, general assault and child abuse. The week-long programme aimed to combat feelings of aggression and anger, as these issues were key problems for the particular group of patients taking part. Throughout the programme the company used the concept of The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) and mime to ‘portray characters caught in a cycle of aggression and violence.’ (Kliman, p.1, 1998) These masked characters were presented in a variety of scenarios that the patients could relate to. Geese also used the concept of One Step Removed (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.30, 2002) in this programme. The meaning of this concept being that the content the participants watched in these masked presentations, would not be ‘a direct recreation of the life events of anyone present.’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.30, 2002) Giving the participants a degree of distance from the scenarios being presented to them, would allow them to acknowledge their connections to the material without letting personal emotions take over - which could cause them to become defensive and thereby cloud their judgement.

A study was carried out of this programme, measuring the changes in levels of anger of participants. Results were evaluated by use of self-report questionnaires both before and after the programme, as well as three months after. It was reported that ‘levels of anger significantly reduced from before to after the theatre week, this improvement was maintained at three-month follow up.’ (Reiss et al, p.395, 1996) Five participants also made a declaration at the programme’s conclusion ‘outlining what they’d learnt about themselves during the week and describing how that would enable them to deal with potentially aggressive situations in the future.’ (Kliman, p.1, 1998) The programme leaders tested the participants’ progress in terms of anger management through role-playing exercises where aggression was purposely provoked and established that patients ‘had learnt how to respond without succumbing to violence.’ (Kliman, p.1, 1998) The fact that participants felt positive enough about their progress from this programme that they felt the need to make a
declaration, reflects the extent to which the drama-based methods used made a difference.

When comparing a drama-based programme which involves ‘learning by doing in a uniquely powerful way’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.12, 2002) with a traditional anger management programme for individuals in a high-security mental health unit, the outcomes of the more traditional approach are not always as effective. In July 2013, results were published from a study carried out measuring the outcomes of an anger management intervention using an approach unrelated to drama, with eighty-six patients completing a 20-session programme. Although participants were reported to have reduced feelings of anger and some reduction in incidents of physical aggression ‘incidents of verbal aggression were observed to increase for graduates of the programme.’ (Wilson et al, p.356, 2013) This increase in verbal aggression suggests that this approach was unable to benefit its participants to the extent that a drama-based programme would have and reflects how drama can be more helpful, especially in the ability to verbally express oneself. Furthermore, discussion-based approaches used in mandatory treatment programmes are often futile attempts to rehabilitate as many patients find it difficult to talk about their problems when asked. ‘There’s no point in trying to make people talk if they don’t want to, drama is therefore a good way of expressing oneself.’ (Barnfather, E. 2018)

Understanding the nature of offenders and why they commit offences is a complicated area of study and one in which experts have different opinions. However, understanding the reasons behind the actions of mentally ill offenders is on a different level. The ‘Nature vs Nurture’ standpoint (Clark, 2003) offers two opposing explanations for the actions of someone that is mentally ill. The ‘nature’ view offers a biophysical explanation, which suggests that mental illness is due to chemical imbalance. The ‘nurture’ view suggests that ‘psychological, social, cultural, environmental, biological, and experience-based problems are the root of mental illness.’ (Raingruber, 104, 2003). Drama practitioners are amongst the people who work with mentally ill offenders who choose to take the ‘nurture’ viewpoint into consideration. Looking to the root of patients’ problems in terms of these different factors allows patients the opportunity for a deeper insight into their own behaviour, as the patient is being treated in a way that considers all the different areas that affect
their mental health and well-being. This is not to dismiss the use of medication with seriously ill patients who are a danger to themselves and others, as the importance of medication in terms of the recovery of these individuals is often pivotal. However, looking at recovery in a holistic sense using an approach such as the Recovery Model (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001), which drama practitioners such as Geese and Clean Break base their work on, has had significant and profound results. Finding ways to help and rehabilitate vulnerable and often dangerous individuals such as those in mental health units demands careful consideration, perhaps even more so than those held in prison.

In May 2018, interviews with Art Psychotherapist Valerie Hartland and Psychiatric Nurse Ellie Barnfather were conducted. Hartland and Barnfather both work with mentally ill patients at Maudsley Hospital in South London and overlook drama work being carried out in the wards. They both strengthened the view that The Recovery Model (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001) when used in the context of drama can be effective by focusing on factors such as ‘hope, healing, empowerment and connection’ (Jacobson and Greeley, p.482, 2001) and how the individual can build on these factors to work towards a healthier state of mind, instead of overly analysing their illness alone. Hartland commented on the importance of treating the individual despite many of the patients having the same diagnosis. ‘My job is to help them think and have a conversation with them, to think together about making sense of their distress and understanding together what is happening for them.’ (Hartland, 2018) Hartland’s description of working with ‘a metaphor’ in her drama work, has similarities to Geese’s approach of The Mask. (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) ‘Using drama has a hugely positive impact as it enables them to express and verbalise or use the metaphor to express painful experiences or feelings in a safe way that they may not be ready to talk directly about yet.’ (Hartland, 2018) Her support of the use of a metaphor to help patients talk about difficult experiences and process painful emotions, highlights that methods of this kind are highly valuable to vulnerable individuals such as mentally disordered offenders.

There is a notion that in some cases mental illness is a matter of judgement rather than fact. The point of view that criminal behaviour is itself evidence of a kind of mental illness, (as proved in this chapter that the two are often closely related), emphasises
the need for careful selection of rehabilitative methods to help and possibly diffuse crime.
Conclusion

The use of drama-based methods as a form of rehabilitation for offenders has been assessed and proven to provide ways for inmates to re-learn how to become contributing, valued members of society while understanding how to change the negative aspects of themselves that led to their offending behaviour. The work of Geese Theatre Company and Clean Break Theatre Company has been integral in turning around the lives of multitudes of offenders and those at risk of offending and opening these individuals up to the reality that they have the power to change their lives for the better.

As evaluated, Geese and Clean Break have equally contributed to successfully rehabilitating offenders. Geese’s use of The Mask (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) as a tool to look at social situations and to discover more about the inner processes is an extremely inventive method. In the words of Deputy Artistic Director of the company, Louise Heywood, ‘We can use the mask to look at how internal processes work, how thoughts and feelings connect and how they provoke behaviour. By talking through their feelings through the use of the mask the participants are able to analyse their own behaviour.’ (Heywood, 2017) In conjunction with the mask, One Step Removed (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) is a concept that allows the participants to comment truthfully on a situation without it being too closely related to their own lives, allowing for unbiased evaluation of what is right and wrong. The use of Role-Theory and Role-Play (Moreno, 1993, and Blatner, 1997) as used by Geese and Clean Break, is just as effective. By using this theory offenders can widen their knowledge of how to acquire different roles in life. Furthermore, ‘much of human interaction can be understood by considering the roles and scripts we perform as we go about our daily lives.’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, p.20, 2002) Finally, The Recovery Model (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001) when used with offenders in mental health units has also proved to be extremely valuable. By looking at recovery of these individuals in terms of internal conditions such as ‘hope, healing, empowerment and connection’ (Jacobson and Greenley, p.482, 2001); while considering external conditions such as a positive culture of healing, has allowed for a more holistic approach to rehabilitation without focusing on the illness alone.
The use of these methods in prisons and mental health settings clearly outshine other forms of rehabilitation such as parole and mandatory in-prison treatment programmes. Drama gives individuals a means to want to learn and reform themselves instead of being required to do so by the authorities. Drama allows them to learn on their terms through methods that give them a new lease of life. With regard to which methods culminate the most successfully, they have created equally transformative results with offenders and mentally ill offenders alike. Overall, although drama hasn’t been without its criticism, these drama-based methods have contributed massively to the well-being, education and mental health of offenders and to society as a whole. Drama’s use in the criminal justice system is only growing in popularity and is likely to be a life altering force for decades to come.

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