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Rhizomatic affective spaces and the therapeutic potential of music in prison: a qualitative meta-synthesis

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Abstract

Research literature supports that music programmes in prisons can have a therapeutic effect in prisoners' lives that could promote personal development and assist the process towards desistance. The authors use a meta-synthetic approach to examine 12 qualitative articles published worldwide to explore the therapeutic potential of such programmes. The findings suggest that music programmes in prison are perceived by participating prisoners as a liberating process which encourages participation and allows for non-coercive personal development. The therapeutic potential of music programmes is located in the combination of the benefits emanating from the effect and practice of music and the creation of mental, spatial and temporal zones of free expression and those that derive from the egalitarian and non-authoritative approach employed by the facilitators. These

findings are discussed along with aspects involved in the provision of offender treatment as well as factors that affect treatment response and engagement.

Keywords, music, prison, offender treatment, offender rehabilitation, meta-synthesis

Introduction

Research literature indicates that art programmes in prisons have educational, vocational, recreational and psychological benefits, yet such contributions do not constitute 'hard evidence', directly linked with reductions in recidivism. Although past literature reviews on the topic (Hughes, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Meekums & Daniel, 2011; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016; Djurichkovic, 2011) have noted several methodological limitations that do not allow for an accurate assessment of the effectiveness of such programmes, there have also been substantial debates underlining the danger of evaluating programmes based on binary questions such as 'whether something works or not', as quasi-experimental designs in criminological research only contribute to the 'nothing works debate' (Pawson & Tiley, 1994). The influence of positivism in criminological research and the model of desistance as a sudden and not a gradual process have often led to processes and mechanisms - the 'black box' of treatment research (Maruna & Lebel, 2010) - being overlooked.

The present paper acknowledges that art programmes might be more effective in their contribution towards 'secondary' desistance from crime, by allowing the conditions that enable the desistance process to be created (Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016). Relevant literature reviews have focussed on the overall effectiveness of art programmes in prisons (Hughes, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Meekums & Daniel, 2011; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016) and one specifically in visual arts programmes (Djurichkovic, 2011). The above studies follow a similar methodology conducting systematic, or less systematic, literature reviews of arts programmes with offender

populations. Both qualitative and quantitative studies are being assessed, while most authors note the abundance of anecdotal accounts by therapists and facilitators in comparison to experimental designs. The subjective nature of such accounts, often regarded as a drawback given their restricted value in the collection of data that constitute 'hard evidence', could be invaluable in studies which do not focus on 'whether programmes work or not' but how they do so, examining interaction, processes and personal experiences. Meekums notes (2010: 37):

'Narrative ways of knowing are legitimate and potentially more truthful alternatives to the dominant discourse of scientific positivism'. Based on relevant literature which highlights the therapeutic potential of arts, the aim of this paper is to examine the processes which take place within music programmes, to explore their potential in contributing towards positive change and inquire as to whether there are benefits of including such programmes within the prison system. The methodological limitations and the largely descriptive nature of the existing evaluations of music programmes in prison, issues which will be further addressed below, might constitute a significant restriction towards the identification of measurable effects. Yet, the richness, reflective and expressive nature of data included in evaluations reports, can be used in a constructive way that allows for the acquisition of information on group processes and dynamics contributing, in turn, to the examination of underlying mechanisms involved in programme delivery. In order to achieve this, we employ a meta-synthetic methodology which allows an in depth examination of subjective accounts and a synthetic process of data analysis that could reveal processes and ways such programmes might be having a positive effect.

The place of arts in prison within the criminal justice system

Most of the Offender Behaviour Programmes (OPBs) currently employed in prisons have been founded on a strong evidence-base in alignment with the ‘What works’ literature. The majority of OPBs use methods derived from cognitive social learning theory, aiming at behaviour modification guided by the belief that cognitive, emotional or mental deficits are the source of criminality (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985; Yochelson & Samenow, 1976, 1977). Within a broader framework of over-reliance on risk assessment models, such as the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model (RNR)ⁱ (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Ward, Vess, & Collie, 2006; Gannon & Ward, 2014) investment in treatment programmes is judged on the basis of their cost-effectiveness and the protection they offer to the public (Genders & Player, 2014). Guided by this approach criminogenic needs, patterns of social interaction strongly associated with the onset and maintenance of delinquency, and specifically the dynamic risk factors (footnote) are prioritised in offender rehabilitation (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). However, there has been considerable debate as to whether targeting criminogenic needs is an adequate form of intervention when it lacks a broader framework of human motivation (Ward & Stewart, 2003).

Currently Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) based approaches, emphasizing personal accountability and responsibility for criminal offences, outnumber all other therapeutic methods as they are considered the most effective in reducing offending behaviour, (Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007). The use of CBT as a treatment approach in prison settings has been heavily criticised as a coercive method of attributing responsibility (McKendry, 2006), preventing the creation of an agentic self (Fox, 1999), and

provoking narratives that are not freely created but are called to fit within provided ‘systemic’ parameters (Waldram, 2007).

Despite the importance of strong evidence accompanying the delivery of interventions, results on treatment effectiveness have often been marginal (e.g. Cann et al, 2003). It would be inaccurate to make the binary distinction and claim that some programmes ‘work’ or not in their entirety or to assume a reductionist approach whereby cognitive approaches are ineffective. Methodologically, it has often been argued that assumptions of change (here desistance) as a linear construct, as well as the expectations of a direct causality between treatment and change have led to the predominant use of pre-post measures in evaluation research which cannot always capture or take into account factors that significantly affect personal trajectories of change (Kougiali, Fasulo, Needs, Van Laar, 2017). For example, non-programmatic factors¹ (Palmer, 1995), or assumptions that all participants have the same readiness to change and/or will benefit equally by an intervention, treatment or programme (Friendship, Falshaw & Beech, 2003), have not been always considered. There is strong evidence that aspects of the therapeutic relationship and style can be of equal - if not of greatest importance - when compared to the content of programmes. Working alliance (McMurran, 2002), trust and ‘Rogerian’ relational qualities that favour acceptance and openness, for example, can be more effective when compared to authoritative and rigid approaches for individuals involved within the Criminal Justice System (Skeem et al., 2007).

Although art programmes can address risk and protective factors that have been established in the literature as contributing to the reduction of recidivism (Hughes, 2005), there has been limited support and funding for such programmes (Kornfeld, 1997). It can be argued that their distinctive element of ‘recreation’ as well as their contribution to individual

¹ Palmer (1995) lists the following as aspects of successful interventions: 1) staff characteristics: their specific approach, training 2) staff-client interaction as well as skills and ability to form a meaningful relationship, 3) offender characteristics, differences and personality, 4) individualised approach to treatment and 5) setting (community or prison)

expressions, which is essential to our humanity (Liebmann, 1994; Kornfeld, 1997) provide some of the reasons as to why arts in prison can be often overlooked as unnecessary or dismissed as the 'soft option' (The arts Alliance, n.d.). For example, accreditation of offender programmes - assessed on the basis "that these programmes are evidence-based and congruent with the 'What Works' literature" (Justice.gov.uk, 2015) - has not been granted to any arts programmes in the UKⁱⁱ. Paradigms of penal policies most often reflect political intentions: the provision of an alternative creative and expressive curriculum might not be preferred over programmes which address risk, harm reduction which manage rather than support offenders towards desistance (Clements, 2004).

Art programmes in prison

Art programmes in prison, including visual art, creative poetry, dance, drama and music are usually offered as part of educational courses delivered by voluntary sector organisations (National Criminal Justice Alliance, N.D.; The Prison Arts Coalition, N.D). Unlike OPBs, art programmes are not designed to target and alter a specific problematic behaviour, such as substance misuse, anger, poor problem-solving skills or violence. Their function is broader and multi-dimensional, constituting an alternative opportunity for participation in programmes- whether educational or not - that could promote personal development and assist the process towards desistance.

Participation in arts programmes has been found to contribute towards improvement in literacy, language and numeracy skills (Hughes, 2005; Miles and Clarke, 2006; Wilson and Logan, 2006; Johnson, 2008; McNeill, Anderson, Colvin, Overy, Sparks & Tett, 2011; Nugent & Loucks (2011), advancement in employability skills (McNeill *et al.* 2011; Ezell and Levy 2003; Harkins, Pritchard, Haskayne, Watson & Beech, 2011; Cox and Gelsthorpe 2008; De Viggiani, Macintosh and Lang 2010; Uggen, Wakefield and Western 2005) and the development of social

competence (Gussak 2004; Argue, Bennett and Gussak, 2009). Psychological benefits such as improvement of self-esteem, confidence and self-efficacy (Digard, Grafín von Sponeck, & Liebling, 2007; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008), cultivation of a sense of collaboration, breaking emotional barriers and mistrust, as well as decreases in levels of anxiety (De Viggiani, Macintosh & Lang, 2010), have also been noted.

Research literature (for detailed literature reviews see also Hughes 2005; Johnson 2008; Djurichkovich 2011, Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016), suggests that the effects of arts programmes can be both synchronic (at the time of imprisonment) as well as diachronic (developing over time) in terms of their contribution towards desistance. For example, arts can contribute towards the improvement of prison life (Silber, 2010; Menning, 2010), act as an escape route and a way to cope with the pains of imprisonment (Maruna, 2010) but also instil motivation towards ‘imagining and embarking on the desistance process’ (McNeill, Anderson, Colvin, Overy, Sparks & Tett, 2011). It has been a matter of debate whether such effects are measurable in terms of ‘hard’ evidence of reductions in recidivism. Instead, it has been suggested that such contributions take indirect forms that can be best conveyed through the concept of ‘secondary desistance’ (Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2012; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016). Yet, ‘secondary desistance’, the process during which the (ex) offender assumes the role or identity of a changed individual (Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell, Naples, 2004), becomes of primary or secondary conceptual and theoretical value depending on whether the process of abstaining from crime is understood as a linear and sudden or gradual one, as the ‘outcome’ of termination (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 11) or as a continuous self-reorganisation based on the assumption of new roles.

Music in prisons

Prison can be immensely stressful for prisoners, an issue partly related to the composition of the prison population who have often already had a troubled life prior to incarceration (Bensimon., Einat & Gilboa, 2013; Crewe, 2009). Strain can also be precipitated by the unprivileged, often strict, psychologically demanding and sometimes violent prison environment (Hulley, Liebling, & Crewe, 2011).

The majority of prisoners come from highly disadvantaged backgrounds (Walsh, 2006). Many are economically deprived or homeless, undereducated or illiterate, chronically underemployed or unemployed, physically and/or mentally unwell and addicted to drugs and/or alcohol (Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Dallaire, 2007; Farrington, 2000; Farrington et al., 2006). In addition, upon their admission to prison, many face an anomic, violent, aggressive, crowded, depersonalizing, dehumanizing, and noisy community (Crewe, 2011; Haney, 2006; Lawrence & Andrews, 2004), as well as various structural deprivations of freedom and autonomy (Marshall, Marshall, Serran, & O'Brien, 2009; Tangney, 2011). Continuous, often demeaning, trials and adversities can test their tolerance of pain, self-confidence, mental resilience, alertness, and social intelligence (Holman & Zeidenberg, 2006; Jewkes, 2005; Schnittker & John, 2007). For such reasons, a number of studies have shown that prisoners suffer from higher levels of mental and emotional distress (e.g. low self-esteem, depression, stress, fear, anxiety, anger, uncertainty and hopelessness regarding their own self and future) in comparison with the general population (Mills & Kroner, 2005; Samsha, 2005), leading them to act in ways that make them seem less manageable and a greater risk to themselves and others (Grisso, 2008). These behaviours include, amongst others, increased drug abuse, self-harm, and suicide attempts (Liebling, 2007; Palmer & Connelly, 2005).

Understanding prisoners' psychological and emotional distress is of paramount concern to where service provision and prison administration are concerned (Buckaloo, Krug & Nelson, 2009). Consequently, correctional services on both sides of the Atlantic have proposed various coping measures to combat the high levels of stress, anxiety and depression in prison (Howells, Heseltine, Sarre, Davey & Day, 2004; Lielbing & Maruna, 2005), heighten the awareness of the outcomes that these emotions can generate (Howells, Watt, Hall & Baldwin, 1997), and increase the skills of and support for the imprisoned population (Friedmann, Melnick, Jiang & Hamilton, 2008). Those coping measures include physical fitness (Hilyer & Mitchell, 1979), recreational activities (Baron & Richardson, 1994), educational programs (Garland, 1996) and playing music (Daveson & Edwards, 2001; Hoskyns, 1995).

Art and music-based activities, such as improvisation, allow prisoners to express themselves freely rather than follow strict rules, which can generate a sense of autonomy and responsibility and therefore allow for personal growth and development (Chen et al., 2014; Mossler, 2011). The positive impact of playing music on the welfare, mental and emotional state of various non-incarcerated populations such as clinical and elderly populations (Gardiner, Furois, Tansley & Morgan, 2000; Labbe, Schmidt, Babin & Pharr, 2007) has been well established, however the effects of playing music in secure settings on prisoners' quality of life has been studied scarcely (Gold et al. 2014).

Rationale for this study

METHOD

The meta-synthetic methodology employed in this paper follows Noblit & Hare's meta-ethnographic approach (1988), a methodology which is also applicable to qualitative work beyond ethnography (Britten, Campbell, Pope, Donovan, Morgan & Pill, 2002; Campbell,

Pound, Pope, Britten, Pill, Morgan & Donovan, 2003). Meta-synthetic value does not lie in the mere summary of findings but in the opportunities it provides for the development of theories and methods with a potential for reflection which go beyond (meta) the stage of synthesis (Bondas & Hall, 2007). Sharing epistemological commonalities with critical realism and interpretivism, the strength of meta-synthesis is situated in the fact that comparing, contrasting and synthesising a larger number of studies can grant access to an underlying reality which is not apparent in the examination of individual articles (Heyman, 2009). Sandelowski & Barroso note:

“Meta-syntheses are integrations that are more than the sum of parts, in that they offer novel interpretations of findings. These interpretations will not be found in any one research report but, rather, are inferences derived from taking all of the reports in a sample as a whole.” (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003 as quoted in Thorne, Jensen, Kearney, Noblit & Sandelowski, 2004:1358).

The process followed in the present study was based on Noblit & Hare’s iterative research process and consisted in the following steps: 1) identification of the specific area of study, 2) deciding which study fulfils the inclusion criteria and determine what is relevant, 3) reading the studies in order to locate potential themes, 4) determining how the studies are related, 5) translating/comparing studies/themes with each other, 6) synthesising translations/findings and 7) expressing/reporting findings.

Search strategy

This paper was not intended as an exhaustive review of all literature on arts programmes, as this has been the objective of previous work on the subject (Hughes, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Meekums & Daniel, 2011; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016; Djurichkovic, 2011). We have chosen to assess the therapeutic potential of music in prisons, based on the evidence indicating the potential of such programmes.

In order to examine the therapeutic benefits of music stripped from the influence of any structured treatment approach, studies that were examining music therapy were excluded. Instead, we focused on studies that were evaluating music programmes in prisons and included teaching of at least one musical instrument. Arts and music as a general concept include numerous styles and forms of expressions which influence the ethos and content of programmes. For this reason, and in order to eliminate various ‘methodological noises’, apart from excluding therapy focussed interventions, we focussed on pure instrumental music playing. The study included all topic-specific English research literature published until 2016. We searched standard bibliographical databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, PsychINFO, Web of Knowledge, EBSCO. Keywords such as ‘music + prison’, ‘music+offenders’ or words isolating specific musical instruments such as ‘drums+prison’, ‘gamelan+prison’ were used in order to perform a thorough search of the databases. In order to locate the full number of studies that have been conducted so far, the search was expanded and we hand-searched book chapters and journals, examined references in detail, and located unofficial records as well as grey literature.

Quality assessment

The potential of qualitative research to inform policy and practice by answering questions that can be mostly examined qualitatively, such as investigating the ‘how’ programmes work (Campbell et al., 2003; Davies, 1999; Newman, Thompson, Roberts, 2006; Popay, Roberts, Sowden, Petticrew, Arai, Rodgers & Duffy, 2006) has been well established. However, there has been a significant debate surrounding the challenge of synthesising qualitative literature, as it is an often more complex and demanding task than attempting to include exclusively Randomised Controlled Trials (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Apart from the methodological variation, including studies that have employed different approaches might present a risk of including and interpreting work of differing quality which might distort the findings of a review (Dixon-Woods & Fitzpatrick, 2001; Dixon-Woods, Shaw, Agarwal & Smith, 2004).

The methodological quality of the papers located for the purposes of the present study varied considerably. The search revealed an almost complete absence of peer-reviewed articles which were outnumbered by independent programme evaluations. The evaluations suffered from methodological inconsistencies ranging from weak research designs, poor or non-existent analyses, often leading to dubious findings- especially in the case of organisations that were self-evaluating their own programmes.

For the reasons above, the methodological quality of each paper was assessed separately using criteria based on CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) as well as the criteria outlined by Popay et al. (2006) (the full proforma is available from the corresponding author). Both tools were created for the purpose of assessing the quality of qualitative research by addressing several areas such as research design, analysis, appropriate samples and generalisability. Each paper was assessed by two members of the research team while consensus was discussed following independent rating. The initial search revealed 31 results and the number of studies that fulfilled both the inclusion as well as the quality criteria was reduced to 12 after the quality assessment process (see Table 1 for a full list of included studies).

The studies analysed in this paper were predominantly programme evaluations, conducted within various prison establishments and a single follow-up study conducted in the community. Their methodology was either mixed or qualitative, with rich reflective and ethnographic material, which offered a detailed account of the processes that took place within the music groups. In cases of mixed methodology and for the purposes of this study, only the qualitative part of the studies was analysed.

Analysis

Quality assessment as well as data analysis was initially conducted independently and was later compared, discussed and reflected upon within the research group.

We conducted a thematic analysis of all the articles which was assisted by the use of Nvivo 10 software. The analysis was conducted in a way that exceeded the collection and summation of common themes across the studies, but rather implemented a ‘reciprocal’ translation. According to Noblit & Hare, the understanding of two studies is enhanced when these are compared and translated, as they are not examined merely as two independent or disjointed units but are better understood ‘in terms of each other’, contributing to a common - dialectical - understanding of the area (1998:47). Apart from the themes which were already identified by the authors of each paper, considerable attention was given to the data and participants’ quotes, as they highlighted underlying mechanisms and processes that took place in every case.

Findings

The findings indicated that although music appeared to have positive psychological effects, the overall therapeutic benefits of the programmes did not originate from music alone. Music acted as a channel through which participants felt more capable of forming trusting relationships with the facilitators and with members of the group. This was initially facilitated and further sustained by the collaborative culture inherent in the taught music genres which shaped the instructors’ approach. Elements of trust, safety, the non-authoritative nature of the programmes as well as their significant differences from other programmes delivered in prison settings, were highlighted by prisoners.

The analysis, translation and synthesis of the included studies resulted in two themes which support the therapeutic potential of music programmes in prison: 1) the therapeutic effects of music and 2) therapeutic processes within groups.

1. Therapeutic effects of music

The therapeutic effects of music, as mentioned throughout the reviewed studies consisted in the beneficial effects of music alone (1.1) as well as when music was referred to as performance and activity (1.2).

1.1. Rhizomatic affective spaces

The most frequently mentioned direct and identifiable effect of music was the fact that after its introduction, it became essential in surviving the pains of imprisonment and giving meaning to a bleak and mundane daily routine:

In terms of living – surviving the prison experience – music has been absolutely essential. I could not have done it without music. I mean, I would have just shrivelled up and died, I think'
(De Viggiani, Macintosh & Lang, 2010: 63)

The above quote illustrates graphically how the prison experience and existence within prison was perceived before music was introduced to the prisoner's life. The verb 'shriveled' depicts a gradually narrowing existence, losing vigour and vitality, being steadily reduced to a metaphorical, perhaps, psychological or spiritual death. Music, in this case, was 'essential' in dealing with the debilitating effects of the prison experience.

Similarly, in the quote below, a prisoner uses a spatial metaphor to describe how music interrupted the 'horror' of prison and enabled the passage from a state of being physically confined and emotionally unable to advance ('trapped') towards a psychological elevation ('lifts you') accompanied with progression and adoption of a more hopeful perspective:

'It was an incredible break from such a horror. Being trapped in here with no way of moving on. It lifts you and gives you perspective.' (Henley, 2012:35)

Although the mechanism through which music contributes to the alleviation of stress and pain is not always clear, it has been argued that music can function as a distraction, enabling individuals to focus on something soothing, positive and pleasant, enabling an 'escape into their own world' (Staum & Bottoms, 2000; White, 2001). The metaphors used by the participants indicate that music might be operating in a way that disrupts the prison experience and creates affective spaces where prisoners can escape to and use as a way to cope and regain hope before returning to their everyday routine. Being distinct from the ordinary reality yet highly connected and informing the emotional experience of being in prison, the characteristics of such spaces are analogous to the concept of the 'rhizome' developed by Deleuze and Guattari whereby:

'The rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, even nonsign states (...). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21).

Music, in this context, activates rhizomatic affective spaces in prison which would function as expressions of transcendent ends experienced both as detachable - whereby prisoners can mentally escape- but also connectable in the way they positively altered and made the prison experience more tolerable:

"when I play the drums, it is like I am dreaming, floating away". (Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008)

Music enables the experience of 'transcendence' to rhizomatic spaces where mental reality appears to be spatially but also temporally nullifying, thus reducing the time actively

spent 'in prison'. Consecutively, the lack of music as a disruption of the daily routine appears to extend the passage of time:

Unless you play, it's impossible to understand what it means – that sense of freedom you experience – It doesn't make any difference where I am at the time ... When I came back to prison and they wouldn't let me have my guitar for a month, it was a nightmare. A month felt like a year. (De Viggiani, Mackintosh & Lang, 2010:64)

The term rhizomatic (or rhizomatic growth) in research, learning or experience means non-hierarchical, multiple, complex and non-linear, with ceaseless and shifting connections, attractions, meanings and influences. This reflects the kinds of processes described by participants in arts and other (for example literature-based) growth-oriented programmes, as well as the kinds of goals such programmes embody. They are both stretching and remedial, or healing.

A participant from HMP Wandsworth, quoted in Cox & Gelsthorpe (2008), explains how music allows prisoners to release emotions that are usually either being 'bottled up' and kept hidden both from peers and staff or expressed in negative forms:

"It helps people relax. Takes the stress out of their mind. Lets them release their emotions. Especially in here where it's all bottled up. I'm sure there would be less fights because when you come out you feel calm. You've mellowed out and you don't want to get into trouble" (820: 31).

The notion of escape through music was expressed in similar quotes either in terms of a positive psychological transference or, more actively, as a means through which prisoners could express their feelings and alleviate the stress caused by an overwhelming captive experience. In such cases, music itself but also the social environment in which it was practiced was experienced as a separate social sphere, an outlet in which emotional distress could be channeled and alleviated.

Agentic individualism versus passive criminality

As opposed to programmes based on teacher-centered approaches, practicing music and being creative had noticeable effects on self-perception and individual identity.

In the vast majority of the studies, participants referred to other programmes offered in prison highlighting both the fact that these were not tailored to their needs and mentioning issues such as the difficulty of engaging and the passive role of participating prisoners:

'They would rather try and teach mathematics to people who don't want to learn, put them on a course that they won't attend – which is a total waste of money. You've got a teacher sitting there with two people instead of ten! Whereas, if you put guitar lessons on, you might get ten people to attend.' (De Viggiani, Mackintosh & Lang, 2010:58)

The prisoner above addresses several issues such as programmes not tailored to participants' characteristics, low attendance and interest levels as well as the difficulty of encouraging prisoners to engage with traditional educational programmes (see also Belzer, 2004; Maclachlan, Hall, Tett, Crowther and Edwards, 2008; Tett, Anderson, McNeill, Overy, & Sparks, 2012). Programmes offered in prison were often criticised for encouraging passive participation, sustaining the 'criminal' label and undermining individual competence, skills and potential for personal growth. Music programmes appeared to differ in the way they cultivated and supported a responsible, proactive self, capable of achieving and developing:

'Generally in prison, you are treated as an idiot. The courses are pitched to the very lowest level the prison authorities perceive. I'm on a course at the moment – a transition course – I sit there thinking, 'For God's sake, say something meaningful!', whereas this course really challenges you and makes you think – It's made me have to take some risks by taking part and to act in an adult way.' (De Viggiani, Mackintosh & Lang, 2010:57)

Considering that prison is a ‘marginal situation’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) whereby the normality of everyday life is disrupted, it can be argued that demarcation of one’s self-perception and identity from the one assumed by penal practices constitutes a complex endeavour. Deficit focussed approaches that utilise the ‘criminal identity’ often do so in order to instil responsibility for past actions, yet it is unlikely that such labels contribute to personal development or facilitate the process of desistance. On the other hand, expectations of a better future self can instil greater self-belief, and self-confidence, as well as the adoption of the behavioural and practical ways to achieve these (Maruna et al., 2004).

The program helped me to think of myself as a musician and artisan . . . it also helped me to begin feeling normal again. The system just beats you down; the humiliation of being a convict is indescribable. ‘Arts in Corrections’ was like a breath of normalcy and it helped me to regain my self-respect (Brewster, 2010:38)

Labelling practices were contested by participants in the majority of the studies, while many noted that participation in music programmes contributed to the restoration of a sense of normality and assisted in envisioning a different, proactive and future-focused version of self.

2. Therapeutic processes within music groups

The therapeutic processes reported in the studies analysed in this paper should be considered alongside the effects music had on prisoners. The recreational element of music acted as an incentive for initial participation but the perception of music programmes as ‘emotional zones’ (Crewe, Warr, Bennett & Smith, 2013) where free expression was permitted, set the foundations for the development of a safe environment. The absence of any obligation for participation as well as the approach employed by the instructors resulted in programmes which could be characterised as having a ‘more rehabilitative rather deterrent’ nature (Maruna, 2010: 4).

2.1. Group climate and therapeutic alliance

It is important to note here that the smooth progress of a group cannot be predicted accurately as it is heavily dependent on the dynamic interaction between the participating members and the facilitator. Hill & Harris (2011: 16) note: "any 'factor' or 'process' that arises in a group has the power to be positive (and therefore therapeutic and curative) or negative (and therefore counter-therapeutic)." Initial disruptions were frequently reported and occurred until the groups negotiated a common code of communication. The resolution of the participants' initial ambivalence appeared to be achieved through the approach employed by the instructors and, perhaps, the comparison with the most often encountered punitive tactics.

Group climate and, specifically, the instructors' approach were consistently reported as being non-directive, non-authoritative, non-judgmental, encouraging creativity rather than employing a unidirectional teacher-centered approach. The absence of imposition, the active engagement of the prisoners and the non-didactic style of the instructors, led to the cultivation of a 'team spirit', while prisoners commented that "*it rarely felt like you were being taught (Digard, von Sponeck & Liebling, 2007:3)*". It is worth mentioning here that the prevalent culture in certain kinds of music playing, such as gamelan, is communal and egalitarian. Such culture attributes no leading role to the instructor, cooperation is emphasised and every player is of equal importance (Eastburn, 2003).

The non-authoritative and democratic approach enabled the development of a working alliance between the prisoners and the instructors, allowed for members of the group to bond and set the basis for the creation of a safe environment where prisoners could express their feelings freely:

'The tutor cultivated a very healthy climate of mutual respect, consideration and fairness, in which I felt totally comfortable and at ease in every respect in every session, to participate as much or as little as I wanted.' (Maruna, 2010: 10).

Trust, honesty, respect and safety were not established immediately, as expected in any form of group work and especially one that takes place in secure settings. The participants, initially cautious, went through several stages before groups could work effectively together. During the initial group sessions participants appeared to be transferring their own behaviour to the group, often by being controlling, disruptive or subduing. In several cases some members wondered if they were ‘allowed to say how they felt’, but the gradual recognition of the music group as a safe environment helped both reticent and more boisterous personalities to take risks (Digard et al., 2007). Such risks were perceived in terms of emotional expression, whereby participants who did not feel particularly comfortable in expressing their feelings, were vulnerable, or had experiences of past abuse, managed to take a step forward and trust the other members. Performing in front of an audience was also identified as a form of vulnerability often entailing expectations of being criticised or even rejected, especially for participants with low confidence. Taking risks, being vulnerable in front of others and overcoming these feelings led, in turn, to a sense of pride and achievement. This served as a confidence booster and allowed participants to feel accepted and able to express their vulnerabilities. As one of the participants in Digard et al, 2007 notes:

‘just being ourselves really (...) everyone puts up a shield, don’t they, and I think that shield was let down by every single one of us’.

Within a climate that favoured open expression of feelings prisoners sought group membership, engaged actively, worked together and contributed equally in the music outcomes. Being part of the “we”, as opposed to the more frequently met “them and us” attributions in prison, prisoners often described the ability to express ideas and interact on equal terms as a representation of a form of freedom, rarely experienced but highly valued in prison settings. As noted in Maruna (2010):

A good social network arose out of the music – mutually supportive in [the] prison setting.”

“It got people working as one, which is usually very difficult to do in prison.”

The different life experiences of the group members, the variation in the levels of music knowledge, yet the collective effort to perform music as a group, created a sense of mutual support and ‘togetherness’. The effort to perform, gradually created strong bonds between the members of the group, as well as strong friendships between individuals who would not have chosen to collaborate, or even interact with each other.

2.2. Identity and future self

The way individuals perceive, discuss and position themselves has been suggested as being an important element in desistance from crime (Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph 2002; Maruna, 2001). Individual concepts about future selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the projection of hopes, fears, and aspirations of how one might become in the future but also what one wishes or is afraid of becoming might indicate changes in self-perception but can equally initiate action towards achieving a desired or avoiding an unwanted version of one’s self.

Although in most of the studies analysed in this paper relevant quotes appeared under assessments linked with employability skills, there were obvious differentiations in self-perceptions that could indicate subtle, or more significant, identity changes. A prisoner in Brewster’s (2010) study envisioned himself ‘as a musician and artisan’ and similarly the participant below presents a projected hypothetical (when/if) version of himself as a college applicant giving evidence (show/it shows) on his past experience and competencies both in education and in personal development:

I think when I get out if I go to college and show that I've been doing music in here it shows that I'm able to get my head down and work. I'm not just going to work. I'm doing education as well. So, it shows that I'm willing to work and I'm trying to better myself.' (Anderson & Overy, 2010:56)

Active learning, creativity and the sense of achievement were presented as contradictory to participants' self-concept as cultivated so far within prison and were often mentioned along with new self-evaluations and explanations of past behaviours:

'In prison you feel worthless, so act ignorant and defensive, but when doing something useful, you feel valued, so act differently.' (Maruna, 2010:19)

When you start to achieve in something, you start saying to yourself, 'carry on achieving and achieving and achieving'. (De Viggiani et al., 2010:68)

In view of negative self-perceptions expressed throughout the reviewed papers, often facilitated by the negative prison climate, experience and treatment, it is worth noting references to agency and autonomy. Such references often had a comparative note, contrasting an old, perhaps 'lost self' with a new version of one who is 'a person' and 'an individual' rather than a prisoner or a criminal:

"It gave me a chance to be an individual.." (819:22)

"It's like, for a couple of hours you're not in prison. You might have turned up at a village hall somewhere out in the community. For that small space of time, you are treated like a person rather than a prisoner."

Charmaz (1983:170) defines self-concept as the 'organisation of attributes that have become consistent over time'. Maintaining organisation of the self requires 'empirical validation in daily life' (Ibid). It has been argued that prison can undermine autonomy and self-initiative, especially amongst those who have been imprisoned for long periods of time or who have been

frequently placed in solitary confinement, often leading to beliefs that life is controlled by 'powerful others (Haney, 2003; Taylor, 1961; Scraton, 2016). Feelings of 'worthlessness' and 'uselessness' as quoted above, could consolidate a negative and non-proactive view of self and facilitate withdrawal from the prison world or from activities. On the contrary, positive outcomes in secure settings are linked to a social climate of high support, opportunities for the exercise of autonomy, an ordered environment and the absence of obtrusive staff control (Timko & Moos, 1998, Einat, 2004, Liebling, 2007).

Discussion

The analysis conducted for the purposes of the present paper suggests that music programmes in prison are perceived by participating prisoners as a liberating process which encourages participation and allows for non-coercive personal development. Such programmes are not presented as an attempt by the 'system' to induce or force personal change but as something that is offered as an opportunity, distinct from traditional forms of treatment or education.

The therapeutic potential of music programmes is located in the combination of the benefits emanating from the effect and practice of music and the creation of mental, spatial and temporal zones of free expression and those that derive from the egalitarian and non-authoritative approach employed by the facilitators. These findings are important when considering several aspects of the provision of offender treatment, such as the significance of 'safe spaces' for personal development, the contextual factors affecting treatment response and engagement, as well as the importance of non-programmatic factors.

The findings indicate that active and voluntary participation of prisoners in music programmes in prison is related to feelings of satisfaction, achievement and empowerment.

Frankel (2000) argued that two inherent aspirations of all individuals are to find a meaning for their lives and to fulfil their hidden potential through, among other things, achievements that are experienced as meaningful and satisfactory. Such experiences are therapeutically validated in cases where individuals emerge from their own egocentricity and invest energy and efforts in targets considered exalted and positive (Frankel, 1963). In other words, the unrestricted, favourable and non-authoritative approach employed by the facilitators combined with the prisoners' investment of energy and effort in positive and challenging prosocial activities, assists the latter in finding existential meaning to their lives. Hence, it can be suggested that there would be considerable value in the expansion and support of music programmes within prison settings as these can actively include prisoners and allow them to engage in meaningful personal challenges.

When discussing processes involved in most form of human experience, we recognise the dynamic interaction of spatial, temporal and (inter)personal factors in their fluid intersection, which depends on the interplay of contextual and personal factors. In an effort to improve treatment provision and services there is often a danger of isolating or attempting to intervene by targeting solely either individual (e.g. personality traits and behaviour) or environmental (e.g. peers and family) elements of human experience. However, there is an interdependence of psychological and spatial dimensions or 'something psychological in the spatial and vice versa' (McGrath, Reavey, Brown, 2008) and our analysis identified two levels of interconnectedness between the 'spatial' and the 'therapeutic'. Previous research has suggested the existence of 'emotion zones' in prisons whereby emotional display may vary (Crewe et al., 2013) and has observed that prisoners' agency can be found in their ability to "make their own spaces, material and imagined" (Sibley and van Hoven 2009: 205). Our findings suggest that music can facilitate the emergence of *rhizomatic affective spaces* which can disrupt, temporally and spatially the pains of imprisonment. The non-authoritative and egalitarian approach employed by the

instructors, central in some forms of music cultures, enabled the development of *socially safe spaces* within music groups and promoted autonomy and the conceptualisation of an agentic self.

There are numerous obstacles in offender engagement within group programmes that have been well established in the literature. Recent research suggests that greater treatment gains can be achieved through non-confrontational approaches and active participation (Entwistle and Smith, 2002; Hurry, Brazier & Wilson, 2009; Crowther, Maclachlan and Tett, 2010; Holdsworth, Bowen, Brown & Howat, 2014). The findings of this study suggest that when individuals perceive themselves as the subjects of others' efforts to alter and 'correct' them, they are automatically positioned in the role of the receiver, which prevents any invocation of agency. It has been well argued in literature concerning therapeutic programmes that contextual factors, or 'conditions', have received far less attention when compared to therapeutic techniques (Hazler & Barwick, 2001; Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004). In this paper, we argue for the importance of such contextual and non-programmatic factors (Palmer, 1995) towards positive psychological but also educational programme outcomes. The practical implementation of a climate of active participation which could reduce the power differential between practitioners and prisoners and promote agency resonates with Freire's democratic pedagogical approach whereby the (1) teacher acts as facilitator, (2) musical knowledge is perceived as creative self-expression, (3) the classroom is community and (4) performance is action (see Shieh, 2010).

An additional significant outcome of this study relates to the positive and constructive effect of the role of the facilitator on the relationship between practitioners and prisoners. In contrast to most relationships between prisoners and prison staff, which are often characterized by authority, suspicion and lack of trust (Crewe 2005; Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004), the interaction between facilitators and prisoners is based on an a priori delegation of authority. Moreover, due to the unrestricted, favourable and non-authoritative approach employed by the facilitators, the prisoners' active participation (e.g. playing music, raising comments, encouraging

and assisting their counterparts) in the programme is considered essential to its success. It therefore seems that a relationship characterized by reciprocity, trust, professional appreciation, equality and a high level of democratization, undermines the traditional balance of power between staff and prisoners and reduces the social distance between them. This reflects some desirable trends in the fields of penology and prison management (Liebling and Price 2001; Tait, 2012) which pertain to the direct connection between leading the prison administration through an intelligent use of soft power (Crewe 2011), reducing negative and stereotypical perceptions and the feelings of hostility, anger, and frustration on the part of the prisoners while promoting trust and respect between prisoners and staff (Hulley, Liebling, and Crewe 2011). It is therefore recommended that correctional facilities increase the number of arts programmes in general - and music programmes in particular - requiring cooperation between prisoners and staff. Such policy would potentially contribute to both group members to adopting expressions of mutual respect, concern, equality, appreciation and trust.

In this paper we highlight the therapeutic effects of music as a coping mechanism and suggest that democratic and inclusive approaches as well as active participation in music could be used as a way to increase offenders' engagement with OPBs, but more important as a means of self-development. Music and, in turn, artistic programmes, despite their potential contribution toward desistance do not have a prominent place in prison, perhaps because the recreational element does not align with current risk management and 'public acceptability' approaches to prison regimes. However, programmes that break the 'us and them' barrier, and create safe spaces of emotional expression, should be 'judged on their own terms' (Phillips, 1996), and should be used alongside and to complement the existing service provision within secure settings.

Finally, it can be argued that qualitative work on systematic reviews is a method that should be also 'judged in its own terms' (ibid), as the epistemological aims and outcomes are

substantially and qualitatively different from methods which are evaluating whether something 'is' effective or not. Meta-synthetic methodologies firstly allow researchers to access key information, such as contextual factors, processes and subjective experiences –the 'how' of whether programmes work - and enable the synthesis of information, found in sources such as grey literature or programme evaluation, which can produce valuable knowledge which is non accessible or dismissed in other methodologies.

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Study	setting	Participants	Type of programme	Design/ Method	Method of Analysis
Digard, Von Sponeck & Liebling, 2005	Contracted prison	Self-harming female prisoners	Percussion music programme (Gamelan)	Participant observation, interviews and questionnaires	Content Analysis
Maruna, 2010	12 different prisons	87 male prisoners participating in the programme	Programme using music teaching, rehearsing, recording, performance, improvisation and composition	Written feedback from participants, observation notes, focus-group interviews	Thematic content analysis
Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008	8 male prison establishments	71 Participating male prisoners of varying sentence length (remand,	Intense programme for small groups of prisoners, focused on creating music	Field observation, focus groups, prisoner & staff questionnaires, interviews, analysis of disciplinary and related prison records	Initiation of various descriptive statistics and frequencies using an SPSS software; execution of several statistical tests using non-parametric models (the study does not mention the type of tests)

		short, mid and long term sentences, vulnerable prisoners). 49 of the men were followed up.			
De Vigi ani, MacKintosh & Lang, 2010	6 prison establishments, one of which was a closed female prison	80 participants with a focus on older prisoners	Music education programme, developed specifically to address the needs of older prisoners	Field notes, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus-group interviews	Transcribed verbatim of audio-recordings were anonymized and coded
Ander son & Overy , 2010	Young Offenders Institution	14 young offenders	Programme focused on music education /creating music	Structured interviews, profiling data (behavior incidents and engagement), emotion scale, locus of control of behavior scale, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and dyslexia adult screening test	Not mentioned
Brews ter, 2010	Ex-offenders/	Ex-offenders,	Music & Guitar program	In-depth interviews	Content analysis

	research was conducted outside the prison	former participants of the music programme	mes		
Henley, 2012	Young Offenders Institution	19 male participants	Percussion music programme (Gamelan)	Field notes, semi-structured interviews, questionnaire, and focus groups	N/O
Henley, Caulfield, Wilson & Wilkinson, 2013	Various male prison establishments, one female and a follow up of ex-offenders who had participated in the programme	Former participants (7), new cohort of participants (8), ex-offenders in the community (7), female participants (10)	Percussion music programme (Gamelan)	Participatory Action research. Interviews with participants, prison staff, analysis of disciplinary and other records in order to assess behavior change, 'emotion scale'	Thematic analysis
Twani, 2011	Male prison establishments	153 participants	Music programme	Field reports, DVD recordings, photographs, evaluation reports, and	Thematic content analysis (data categorization and analytic reflection).

	hment	(both staff and prisoners)	including education on how to play instruments and choir singing	journal entries.	
Bilby, Caulfield & Ridley, 2013	4 criminal justice settings: high security male prison, young offenders in the community, resettlement (open) prison, closed female prison	11 male prisoners from a high security prison, 7 males in the community, from an open prison, eight adult females within a women's prison, four young people who were subject	Music and deejaying project for young offenders, art classes for personality disorders and offenders in high security prison, a creative writing project from a female closed prison, a project for creating music	Interviews and participants' written work and evaluations	Thematic content analysis

		t to comm unity senten ces or bail condit ions			
Caulfield, Wilson & Wilkinson, 2009	Therapeutic prison & community	26 men and women who had previously participated in the programme	Percussion music programme (Gamelan)	interviews, adjudication reports and OASys records, and interviews with prison staff, emotion scale, face to face or telephone interviews with released participants	Not mentioned
Winder, Sperling, Elliott, Lieveley, Faulkner & Blagden, 2015	One UK sex offender prison	51 participants (the quantitative part of the study) 5 participants (qualitative part of the study)	Good vibrations workshops - Percussion music programme (Gamelan)	(Quantitative part) - Dissemination of: (a) The Corrections Victoria Treatment Readiness Scale (CVTRS) (b) The University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) (Qualitative part) –semi-structured interviews	(Quantitative part) - Data were inputted into Excel and imported into SPSSv22 for analysis. A series of 2 X 2 Mixed ANOVAS. (Qualitative part) – Thematic analysis

ⁱ The Risk-Need-Responsivity Model (RNR) is applied in prison programmes worldwide. The basic principle behind it is risk reduction and management, and its popularity is based on the fact that it is a cost-effective method that can be applied to large groups of prisoners. The risk principle addresses the fact that offender treatments should be offered according to risk; high risk offenders should receive the most intensive treatment available, compared with offenders identified as low risk. The need principle states that effective therapies must primarily address offenders' criminogenic needs. Lastly, the responsivity principle addresses the need for offender treatment therapies to match an offender's learning abilities (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Ward, Vess, & Collie, 2006, Gannon & Ward, 2014).

ⁱⁱ The 'Unlocking potential: a Review of education in prison' review report, published on 18 May 2016 highlights the need for a reform in educational practices in prisons, suggests a more individually tailored approach: 'The current mechanism for funding prison education should be revised so that Governors and/or providers can design a curriculum that meets the individual needs and Personal Learning Plan of each prisoner for whom they are responsible', granting greater autonomy to prison governors over how they run their establishments.

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