

Music in prisons: an investigation of how participation in music whilst in prison can affect a person's life.

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Abstract: The role and importance of music in prisons has most often been documented and measured by investigating the effect that music programmes have through a combination of six different themes: wellbeing, personal development, relationships, therapy, education, and behaviour. The aim of this research project is to investigate how participation in music whilst in prison can affect a person's life, using data collected through interviews with four members of the Liberty Choir who have spent time in prison. Findings from the interviews reveal that three new lenses give a more rounded view of how participation in music whilst in prison can affect a person's life: Natural Phenomenon, Identity, and Awareness and Appreciation brought. I compare the themes from existing literature with these new lenses, in order to develop a model that more accurately represents the effect participation in music has on the life of a person who has been in prison.

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Please refer to the accompanying booklet “Supplementary Material” for the tables of data (Tables 1, 2, and 3).

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate how participation in music whilst in prison can affect a person's life. To achieve this, two areas are considered: first, the way that music in prisons is evaluated and in particular the themes that are in the relevant literature in order to evaluate music in prisons; and second, the way that music is experienced by people in prison, and the way that they speak about this experience after release from prison. Together, these areas will be informative in suggesting the relationship between participation in music and a person's life, during and after a prison sentence.

Why look beyond existing literature?

My first-hand experience of what people whom I met in prison have told me about how music in prisons can affect them suggested to me that the existing literature does not justly cover this, as will be discussed in the literature review below. I have been assisting the running of singing workshops in prisons for over two years, going into local prisons with a choir and running day-long workshops culminating in a concert. I have spoken extensively to people in different (all-male) prisons, about their experience of, and opinions on, music. The literature does not seem to acknowledge the aesthetic side of music making - an acknowledgement of music as an art.

Following an overview of how current literature relates music to the life of a person in prison, the methods that will be used in this study to suggest a new way of looking at music in prisons will be introduced. Through the findings, some of the effects of music that are not reflected in the current literature will be highlighted and I will conclude by suggesting new lenses of looking at the effect that participation in music whilst in prison may have, and how they may be informative for future study.

Music in prisons: roles and research

“There is a treasure, if only you can find it, at the heart of every man.” (Churchill, 1910)

In a speech in July 2015, Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Justice, defined what the purpose of a prison should be today: to punish those who break the law through the removal of liberty, to protect society, and to rehabilitate and prepare people for “outside life” (Gove, 2015, p.5). Gove discussed the need to reform prisons in order to better encourage rehabilitation, not only because of the overpopulation of prisons, but also in recognition of the “treasure” at the heart of man (Gove too quotes Churchill on this) (Gove, 2015, p.5). Although Gove discusses the importance of education to help achieve this, he fails to recognise in his speech the impact that the arts may have in the prison system, and in finding the “treasure...at the heart of every man”.

Arts were introduced into prisons early in the twentieth century. Developments by Sigmund Freud in psychoanalysis pointed professionals in the direction of art as a therapy for those in prison, and the popularity of these practices grew. However, in the 1960s they became less popular as prisons began to change their approaches to rehabilitation (Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012, p.260). Research at this point suggested that art programmes had limited use in the prison environment, particularly when considering their ability to reduce re-offending (recidivism). Since then, sparse research has continued in the field of arts in prisons, and the arts have struggled for funding and acknowledgement in the prison environment. The difficulty in pursuing research that supports the arts in prisons is not only in testing whether or not it has positive effects but also in testing the range of possible positive effects it could have. The politically desirable quality for a prison programme to be seen as necessary and worthy of funding has typically been for it to have rehabilitative effects that translate into statistics of reduced recidivism after the programme. A broader view is to prioritise what an arts project in prison can do to change a person, rather than how a project contributes to rehabilitation (Keehan, 2015). Engagement with the arts should be acknowledged for its ability to create “pathways for development and change” in a person, rather than its ability to reduce statistics of recidivism (Anderson, 2015, p.381).

Although research is sporadic and varied in approach, the overall aim of the existing studies is often very similar; to look at if (and how) music can be beneficial to those in

prison. Studies can roughly be split into those that are undertaken from a criminological perspective, and those that are based on a music psychology viewpoint. Criminological research in this field usually draws on themes of desistance from crime, rehabilitation, and wellbeing. The music psychology approach overlaps with and expands upon the theme of wellbeing most often, bringing in areas of education and therapy. It often draws parallels with research into community music making.

Whatever the approach of the study, evaluations of music in prisons most often use themes as a way to first measure and then compare data. The same six themes, if sometimes described in different ways, recur throughout the literature.

1. Educational: This is often seen on a practical level, through the effect music participation has on statistics of education participation (e.g. Anderson, 2015; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012, p.265). The theme can also be seen in literature that discusses music as the educational activity, and that bring in wider discussions of education in prisons (e.g. Cohen, 2012).
2. Therapeutic: Music as therapy is a common approach, as it is the most obvious reason to justify music in prisons. This is done by suggesting music to be a therapy to encourage changes in people. In *The Arts of Imprisonment*, three chapters discuss therapy as the overall aim of music in prisons, and look at various ways of achieving this (Gussak, 2012; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012; Digard & Liebling, 2012). Tuastad and O'Grady have a similar way of looking at participation in music, with the assumption that participation in music whilst inside prison – and post release – is therapeutic (Tuastad & O'Grady, 2012). Silber has a slightly different approach in discussing the 'incidental therapeutic affects' of participation in music whilst in prison, which suggests a different aim of the music programme (in this case the purpose of the music programme was educational) to those of other studies which explicitly state therapy as the aim of music programmes (Silber, 2005, p251).
3. Personal development: This theme is taken from one study in particular, a review of the programme *Arts in Correction* in Florida which aims to address the "personal development" needs of people in prison (Gussak, 2012, p.249). However, there are many studies that either phrase the same quality of personal development in a different way, or imply it through qualitative data; for example "Documenting Arts

Practitioners' Practice in Prisons: 'What Do You Do in There?'" looks at engagement in the arts to "create pathways for development and change" in a person in prison (Anderson, 2015, p.381).

4. Relationships: Nearly every study looking at music in prisons at the very least acknowledges the importance or benefits of the social side of music, even if not focussing on this. Both of Cohen's studies use social competence as a measure of the influence of a music programme in a prison, and Silber discusses "social harmony" as a result of music (Cohen, 2009, 2012; Silber, 2005).
5. Wellbeing: Wellbeing is difficult to define as a direct result of participation in music. When included in literature, most often a number of other themes are measured or observed to come together and form a description of a person's wellbeing (as described on page 5) (e.g. Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012; Cohen, 2009).
6. Behaviour: Change in behaviour is sometimes measured as an effect of music projects in prisons, and is observed as a direct result from people participating in the project (Gussak, 2012; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012, p.265).

These examples are drawn from the main body of literature which looks at the effect of participation in music whilst in prisons. They represent the current way of thinking about the use of music in prisons, and a closer look at these studies highlights the relationship between the themes. They are not all on a comparable level, but feed into one another; for example, in an evaluation of the *Irene Taylor Trust*, Cox and Gelsthorpe use Education and Behaviour as part of a measure of a person's wellbeing (Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012, p.265). The relationship between the six themes is displayed in Figure 1. This figure was constructed as a result of my own interpretation of how the themes link. The column down the left of the figure summarises the main role of the four different levels of the diagram, and indicate how I came to place the themes.

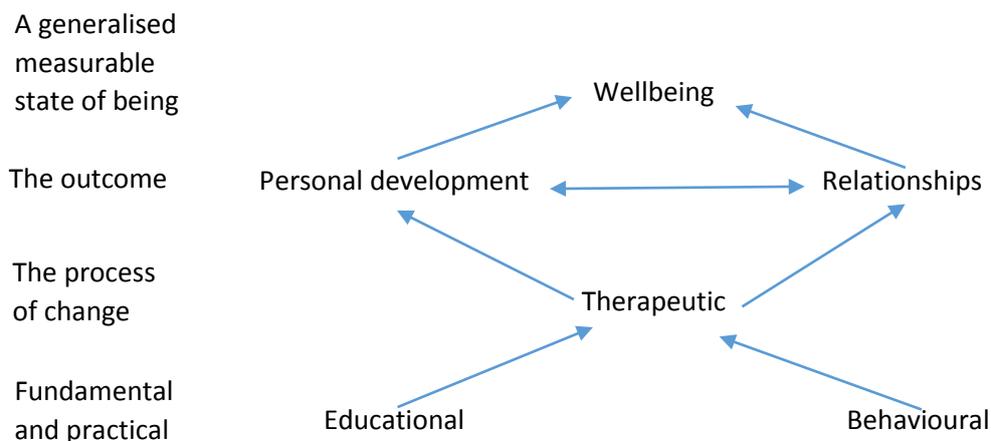


Figure 1: Literature themes for music in prisons

Educational and Behavioural (as described in Figure 1 above) have both been labelled as “Fundamental and practical”. This is because of the place they usually hold in a study, often being used as qualitative information; for example, the number of signups to education courses or the number of behavioural incidents in a period following a music project (e.g. Anderson, 2015). In situations in which educational or behavioural aspects seem less important, therapeutic ones seem more so (reflected in the direction of the arrows in Figure 1). Therapy is listed as “The process of change”, because projects that are described as therapeutic are most often looking for a change, which will often be in Relationships or Personal development – or both, as can be seen from the arrow connecting these two themes. Wellbeing represents “A generalised measurable state of being”, and is always measured through a number of different sub-categories, all of which are, like therapeutic change, rooted in Personal development and Relationships. For example, in Cohen’s 2009 study the Friedman Well-Being Scale is used, consisting of five sub-scales: emotional stability, sociability, joviality, self-esteem, and happiness (Cohen, 2009, p.55).

The themes in Figure 1 are often analysed as separate categories when looking at the use of music in prisons. In the present study I have chosen to focus mainly on literature from music in prisons, as it is most relevant and remains in line with the study's looking more generally at music, health, and wellbeing. However, it is not surprising that papers looking at music, health and wellbeing in other (not prison) contexts have come up with similar themes to measure. Raymond MacDonald summarises a view of music (MacDonald, 2013, p.2, Figure

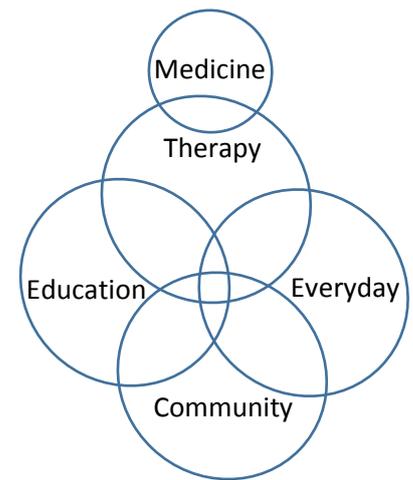


Figure 2: Music, health and wellbeing

1, displayed as Figure 2 here) which is closely aligned with the current music perspective of literature on music in prisons. The relationship between Figures 1 and 2 are clear. For example, there is the obvious inclusion of (and link between) Therapy in Education. Everyday can be considered as similar to Behavioural, and Community music often brings in themes of Relationships (which is obvious when considering the community element), Personal Development and overall Wellbeing. Music and medicine is not an area that comes into the relevant body of literature to this study, except that which is in overlap with Therapy.

Equally relevant to music in prisons but not acknowledged in existing studies on the subject is the area of music and meaning. Music and meaning has been explored in different ways throughout the ages; from the ancient Greeks' two-sided view of music as a human activity to effect emotions, and music as an embodiment of natural laws of numbers, to the modern-day view that intertwines music's meaning with its social and cultural context (Cross & Tolbert, 2009, p. 26; Cross & Tolbert, 2009, p. 28). The chapter, "Music and Meaning" in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* defines meaning as referring to something beyond itself, and there is no doubt that music is viewed in this way by many (Cross & Tolbert, 2009, p. 24). However, different theories of exactly what the meaning is in music vary greatly according to the field of thought that the theory is coming from (Cross & Tolbert, 2009, p. 32). Further to this, the independent theories are not applicable outside their original school of thought (Cross & Tolbert, 2009, p. 32). As the present study is not intended to sit in one particular school of thought, there is no one theory of meaning in

music that it will conform to (e.g. sociological, anthropological, ethnomusicological etc.). Instead I hope that the meaning of music to individuals will emerge through the data itself, with my analysis of these meanings uninfluenced by the many fields of thought – an approach influenced by Glaser and Strauss’s grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1968).

Aim and approach

The aim of this research project is to investigate how participation in music whilst in prison can affect a person’s life. This will be achieved by looking at how accurately the themes and relationships summarised in Figure 1 represent how people are affected by participation in music whilst in prison. I will use qualitative data to explore how these existing themes directly relate to the life of people who have participated in music whilst in prison. The study will have data from four interviews at its core, and will use an approach similar to adaptive theory (Layder, 1998). The findings do not aim to offer a definitive interpretation of how participation in music whilst in prison effects a person, but to give direction in developing a theory that, it is hoped, will inform policy in this area.

Method

Participants and setting

In this qualitative study, interviews were chosen above questionnaires.¹ Participants were drawn from a community choir that rehearses weekly in South and West London, The Liberty Choir. The choir also runs eight-week programmes in the men’s prison HMP Wandsworth, taking a group of 12-20 singers from the community choir into the prison once a week for a two-hour rehearsal, culminating in a concert. The choir works with around 20 self-selected residents of the *Trinity* wing of the prison, a wing intended for men in the final three months of their sentence (although three months is often not the reality, with many

¹ Asking someone to fill out a questionnaire, particularly when we have not met in person, would be unlikely to yield as much data as a person talking about their experience; it runs the risk of misinterpretation. An interview also allows for an element of flexibility, enabling the interviewer (myself) to skip questions if they have already been answered or ask a question again in different wording if the question has not been fully understood.

people staying for longer).² The leaders of the choir (MJ Paranzino and Ginny Dougary) encourage the prison residents to continue singing in the choir post release by coming along to one of the two Liberty Choirs that run in London, in which they will be familiar with the music and some of the people.

I chose to work with the Liberty Choir as it allows me to interview participants who have been in prison, and have been involved in music – in one way or another – whilst in prison and post release. The choir's programmes in prison have been running since April 2014 (Thorne, 2015, p.1), and at the time of the formation of my relationship with The Liberty Choir, 12 men who had participated in the choir whilst in prison had been released, according to the choir's director. Four of these men continued to sing with The Liberty Choir's community choirs, and these are the four men that it was possible to arrange for me to meet and interview. All arrangements were made through one of the choir directors, and the first contact that I had with the interviewees was on the day of the interviews. Ethical approval for the project was given by the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.

Interview procedure and analysis

The four people who were asked all agreed to be interviewed, and interviews were held at the rehearsal venue of the Liberty Choir, before two of the weekly rehearsals of the community choirs. A director of the Liberty Choir sat in on all of the interviews and recorded them. The interviews were informal, with 14 prompting questions (which can be found in the Appendix) to guide the areas of discussion, but leaving the direction of the interview open to the participant as much as possible. Consequently, some questions were not asked in every interview, as participants had already elaborated on them without prompt. In order to clarify and further prompt if there had been any uncertainty for the participant, there were sets of sub-questions for some of the broader questions (also shown in the Appendix). Each interview lasted between 28 and 48 minutes, depending on the length of discussions and the available time (which varied). I recorded each interview, which meant that I did not

² A longer stay can be due to a change in the decision that the person should be released from prison, or the logistics of releasing a person taking longer than estimated.

have to take any notes during the interviews, thereby preventing the situation from seeming uncomfortably formal for the participant.

I transcribed the interviews and then pulled out all statements that were relevant data (i.e. the statements that answered the questions that were asked). The statements are not looking at specific events (e.g. the instrument someone played when growing up or the songs they sang whilst in prison) but the participant's view and opinion on music at different points in their life. These statements are sometimes direct quotations and at other times rephrased for reasons of clarity or to shorten the statement to the main point it is making. If quotation marks are used, the statement can be assumed to be in its original quoted form. To initially digest the data, I created Table 1. This has the interview questions down the left-hand column, and themes created by myself along the top row. Table 2 kept the same left-hand column as Table 1, but categorised the statements according to themes from the literature, shown along the top row of the table. Table 3 used the same left-hand column as Tables 1 and 2, but used five new categories along the top row which looked at the data from a new viewpoint, taking into account how the interviewee has chosen to talk about music. Please see the Findings section for more information on the tables, and their themes and categories. The tables can be found in the accompanying booklet to this dissertation, "Supplementary material".

After using the tables to highlight which statements are not accounted for by the themes of previous literature, I drew up three new lenses; ways of viewing the data that give a more rounded understanding of how participation in music can affect a person's life. I looked at how these three lenses relate to existing themes in literature, using the ideas of adaptive theory to put the themes in conversation with my three new lenses (Layder, 1998).

Methodological considerations and limitations

Throughout the research, my priority was the wellbeing and protection of the participants, which The Liberty Choir supported and in many ways carried out on my behalf. Although this may have limited areas of data collection, it was most often done with my knowledge and after careful consideration, and therefore accounted for where possible.

Due to restrictions imposed by the National Offender Management Service I (as an Undergraduate student) was not able to interview anyone serving time in prison, preventing the exploration of the perceived effect of music on a person's life whilst in prison by people currently in prison, except in retrospect. As I wished to interview people who had been in prison, working with The Liberty Choir seemed the best way to do this. There were, however, limitations imposed by working through the Liberty Choir. Firstly, working with the choir restricted the range of participants; all had been in the same prison, all had been given the same opportunities to do music there (although some spoke of other prisons they had been in), all were focussing on one musical experience (The Liberty Choir), and all were interested in participating in music whilst in prison and outside.

Participant selection was out of my control, and restricted to the four people that were out of prison and still in touch with the choir. This excluded anyone who may have sung in the choir, weekly or just once, whilst in prison and chosen not to participate after release. Interviews with these people would almost certainly give different results. All of the participants were males of non-white British ethnicity, aged between 35 and 50. This sample is by no means large enough or varied enough to develop a theory; however this does not prevent the data from being informative in the development of direction for a theory. The interviews themselves must be considered as putting limitations on the data. Meeting the participants for only the limited time period of the interviews and in the presence of a choir director may also have affected the content of the interview. Prison can be a sensitive subject for many; therefore, to have a stranger question you on topics relating to your time in prison could make someone feel uncomfortable. I aimed to prevent this as much as possible through the sole focus of the interview being the music itself, with no questions prompting for any personal information relating to prison outside of music participation. I informed the participants that this would be the sole focus. The questions were kept as open as possible; however, prompts could not be avoided so as to ensure discussion, and the direction of the prompts which guided discussion were decided by me. Although I aimed for the prompts to open up discussions around music in a person's life at a particular time – and so leave out any hints on *how* a participant chooses to discuss the music at that point – the prompts were guided by my interests.

There were also benefits to this Purposive Sampling method that I was limited to using. Having a small number of interviewees meant that it was helpful to have some common elements, as the data is then more easily compared and themes pulled out. Knowing that the people being interviewed had been or were still involved in The Liberty Choir meant that the data collected was relevant to the study.

Findings

Participants

The context of the data gives a better understanding of the data itself and the conclusions drawn. This particularly means a person's ability to express, as language can have subtle differences in meaning and can be used in different ways. Below is a brief description of each of the characters of the participants, and information from their interviews that may give a useful context. For the purpose of this study, pseudonyms have been used; these were chosen by the participants.

Interview 1: Nathan

Nathan had no formal training in music, and The Liberty Choir appears to have been his first experience of music participation. He continued singing in the choir post release, although he now lives too far away to sing regularly. He returns when they need him for concerts etc. He is a relaxed and confident character who is verbally eloquent. He speaks of music in a very reflective manner and would call himself an artist, as he also is an able drawer.

Interview 2: Christoph

Christoph had experience singing in church and playing the bugle whist growing up, although he never read music. He sang in the Liberty Choir whilst serving time in HMP Wandsworth. At some point after this he also served time in a different prison, in which he and a friend set up a choir of prison residents for Christmas 2014. He used his experiences

from The Liberty Choir, as well as some of the music, to help do this. He spoke less reflectively about what music has been like in his life, but more practically about his experiences.

Interview 3: Ricardo

Ricardo took part in a lot of music when growing up. He wrote and produced music, gaining a name for himself after one song became particularly popular in his favoured genre of music. Whilst in prison he broadcast with the prison radio station, and also worked with the National Prison Radio, broadcasting some of his own music. He did not sing in the Liberty Choir whilst in prison – the radio took up too much of his time – but he did interview them and broadcast their music. He began singing with the choir post release and continues to do so, as well as perusing his passion for making music as a career. Ricardo is knowledgeable about music and the effects it has on people.

Interview 4: Alex

Alex grew up with no formal training in music, but singing in church and in his community. Before coming to HMP Wandsworth Alex was in a different prison in which there were musical opportunities that he took part in, such as the production of an opera with a visiting company, and a workshop with a symphony orchestra. He began singing with The Liberty Choir in HMP Wandsworth and continues to do so post release now. Alex is passionate about singing and the importance of it in everyday life, and recognises the effect that it has on himself and others.

Taken together, these descriptions show that the content and quantity of statements from each interviewee varied greatly. This is why it was not appropriate for the number of statements from each person to be considered as significant. It also demonstrates why it was not necessarily helpful to use direct quotations, as this can separate the content of quotations more than their context intended.

Table 1

Table 1 (see Supplementary Material) was a starting point for displaying the data in order for it to be analysed. The themes along the top row were chosen by me, a process in which my priority was to ensure that all of the statements from the interviews could be included. As a result, the themes are very general and contain a fair amount of overlap. For example, People and Personal are often subjective to distinguish between, as well as Educational and Art. This emphasises that the purpose of the themes was to display data, not to learn from the different groupings.

Below are the seven categories, with a brief description of how I decided upon each:

1. People: Anything connecting people to music, from reasons for doing music, to the practice of making music, to the result of making music. This grew out of statements such as “the people first and foremost” (Nathan, when discussing what is enjoyable about music).
2. Communication: Anything linking music with a way of communicating, from music as a “universal language” (Ricardo) to the “messages in songs” (Alex).
3. Practical: The practical reasons for making music, ways of making music, and circumstances of making music. From “listening” and “making” distinctions (Ricardo) to the relevance of music to everyday life (Nathan and Alex).
4. Educational: Any approach that views music as a learning process or an academic interest. From enjoying different sounds (Alex) to gaining knowledge (Christoph).
5. Help: Any discussion of music as an aid in life – emotionally, practically and in personal development.
6. Personal: A reflection on the personal level at which music interacts with people, from understanding oneself (Alex) to expressing oneself (Ricardo).
7. Art: Any discussion of music that acknowledges its value, purpose, or reason to be in the larger scheme of life.

Table 2

Table 2 (see Supplementary Material) aimed to be independent of Table 1; instead it relates to current literature. As was shown in the Introduction, the literature surrounding music in prisons makes use of six prominent themes, often using multiple themes in one study either independently or to inform one another. Table 2 uses the same left-hand rows as Table 1 (the different areas of the interviews) but sets the six themes from the literature as titles for the columns. The six themes can be drawn out of the data from the interviews, some more easily than others. This validates the data collected in the interviews, as well as confirming the relevance of all of the themes in the topic of the influence from participation in music whilst in prison. Below are the six themes from literature and an explanation of their presence in the data of this study.

1. Educational: In literature, participation in (non-music) education is often used as a measure of the success of a prison programme. Participation in educational activities did not come into any of the interviews, for the obvious reason that it was not linked to the questions. In all previous studies this was a measured factor through statistics of education, not through interviewing. What I have instead included under Education is when music is referred to as an educational activity in itself.

E.g. "It [singing in prison] makes you a bit more knowledgeable as well, I mean obviously you're learning new stuff" – Christoph

2. Behaviour: Similarly to Education, this is less something that could come up in an interview and more relevant for observation of a music project; but it is by no means irrelevant to the data collected in this study. The main way it came into interviews was through music as a way to control a person's behaviour.

E.g. "I definitely think it is an outlet in a way" – Ricardo

3. Therapeutic: The language used often displayed the links that people felt between music and therapy, and every interview had references to how music helped in many different ways. The theme of Therapy in the interviews was very much in line with existing literature's idea of therapy as a process to change, for music was often referred to as helping to achieve something.

E.g. “Singing helps, big time. More than any therapeutic stuff I’ve done in my life” – Alex

4. Personal development: As was the case with literature, it is difficult to pull out what comes under the theme of Personal development, as it is so intertwined with other themes. For the purpose of this study, Personal development will be defined as the outcome of participation in music which effects on a personal level, rather than a social level. This distinction was often not made explicitly by the interviewees, but had to be pulled out of the interviews. Furthermore, social and personal developments were often spoken into the same statement, and certainly inform one another. I separated these points where possible and appropriate.

E.g. “Somehow it just gives you that strength to, you know, find that way to keep going on and, you know, make the change what’s necessary to make” – Alex

5. Relationships: This was one of the most frequently occurring themes, which tallies with the literature but also with the nature of the project: The Liberty Choir involves mixing singers from inside and outside the prison, and building relationships is key to the success of the music workshops. This came through in the interviews, as every participant spoke of the social side of singing together:

E.g. “Singing in a choir is obviously different [to singing by yourself], because you can find that, that, that [*sic*] kind of state of harmony with other people, where you have an unstated but very clear aim to create something together” – Nathan

6. Wellbeing: This is the most difficult element to identify within the data of this study, as the overriding theme of wellbeing is never explicitly mentioned; it is certainly not associated with a specific use of language (like therapy) or content (like relationships), but has to be inferred from statements alluding to this overriding theme. However, this is also the case in existing literature which measures other factors such as emotional stability, sociability, joviality, self-esteem, and happiness (Cohen, 2009, p.55).

E.g. “It helps them [people in prison] with their confidence, it just gives them something. Because some people are very low, I mean people who are in prison,

they tend to be very low on self-esteem, so it gives them a bit of confidence, even to perform something.” – Christoph

The data collected supports Figure 1, which showed the relations between these themes from literature. Reading previous literature, one could assume that these six themes are the sum effects of participation in music whilst in prison. Whilst the findings in the study support the notion that these themes are important, they also suggest that these themes do not represent an exhaustive account of relevant areas affected by participation in music whilst in prison. This is most noticeable in that Table 2 does not account for all of the statements that came out of the interviews (all of which are included in Table 1), suggesting that previous literature (and therefore Figure 1) does not account for all of the ways in which music affects a person’s life. Statements missed out of Table 2 that are not directly relating to the six themes from the literature include:

“[Singing is] relevant to everyday life”

“Beyond what we understand or feel”

“Express beauty of people in general of life”

“Being something of an artist I really appreciate the art in it”

“I’ve spent a lot of time recently looking at food, and watching documentaries about food and our relationship with food, and I think music’s one of those fundamental things. You don’t know what came first, man and fire or man and music. Probably man and music.” -
Nathan

The statements that are not included most often do not refer to extra musical-effects, but directly address the music itself. Statements such as Nathan’s above reveal a lot about the place of music in a person’s life and therefore can inform us of the effect that music has on their life.

Table 3

Table 3 (see Supplementary Material) includes data from Table 1, irrespective of what was or wasn't included on Table 2. Instead of having themes as the columns, I had categories which more directly relate music to a person's life:

1. How you view music. E.g. "universal language" (Ricardo), "Alive in people" (Nathan)
2. Where music fits into your life. E.g. "shows people I'm an artist" (Ricardo), "sometimes I just burst into song in life" (Alex)
3. What music has given you. E.g. "interface to become friends with people" (Nathan), "Anger management" (Alex)
4. Why you do music. E.g. "love and passion [for music]" (Ricardo), "Gives you strength to keep going" (Alex)
5. The value/purpose of music. E.g. "you see people as children before they became whoever they became" (Nathan). "Art, in music, you know. The beauty of people in general of life, and the, you know, ways how we can express it." (Alex)

Table 3 includes many more of the original statements (from Table 1), than Table 2 (the literature themes). This can be seen by the labelling of each statement on Table 3, showing if the statements were included in Table 2 (and so are covered by existing literature or not), and showing which theme they came under if so. In order to better account for the statements not included in Table 2 but included in Table 3, I drew up a list of those statements, and created three new lenses to view this data through, which would better inform us of how music relates to a person's life, through the statements from the interviews. These were:

1. Natural Phenomenon: making music as a natural process for people to be involved in and, therefore, music as natural to all people. E.g. "You don't know what came first, man and fire or man and music" (Nathan)
2. Identity: Making music as a part of or informing a person's identity. E.g. "shows people I'm an artist" (Ricardo)
3. Awareness/Appreciation: The awareness and appreciation that music can give you for things outside of your own immediate life. E.g. "It's just – I can't put it into words

– it’s like, it’s unreal. It’s, it’s like something beyond what we can understand and feel” (Alex)

These lenses are far from clear cut, and the statements do not always sit confidently within one, but often fall under two or even all three. Figure 3 displays the three lenses, and all of the statements which informed the decision to use these three lenses (in other words, the statements that were not included in Table 2).

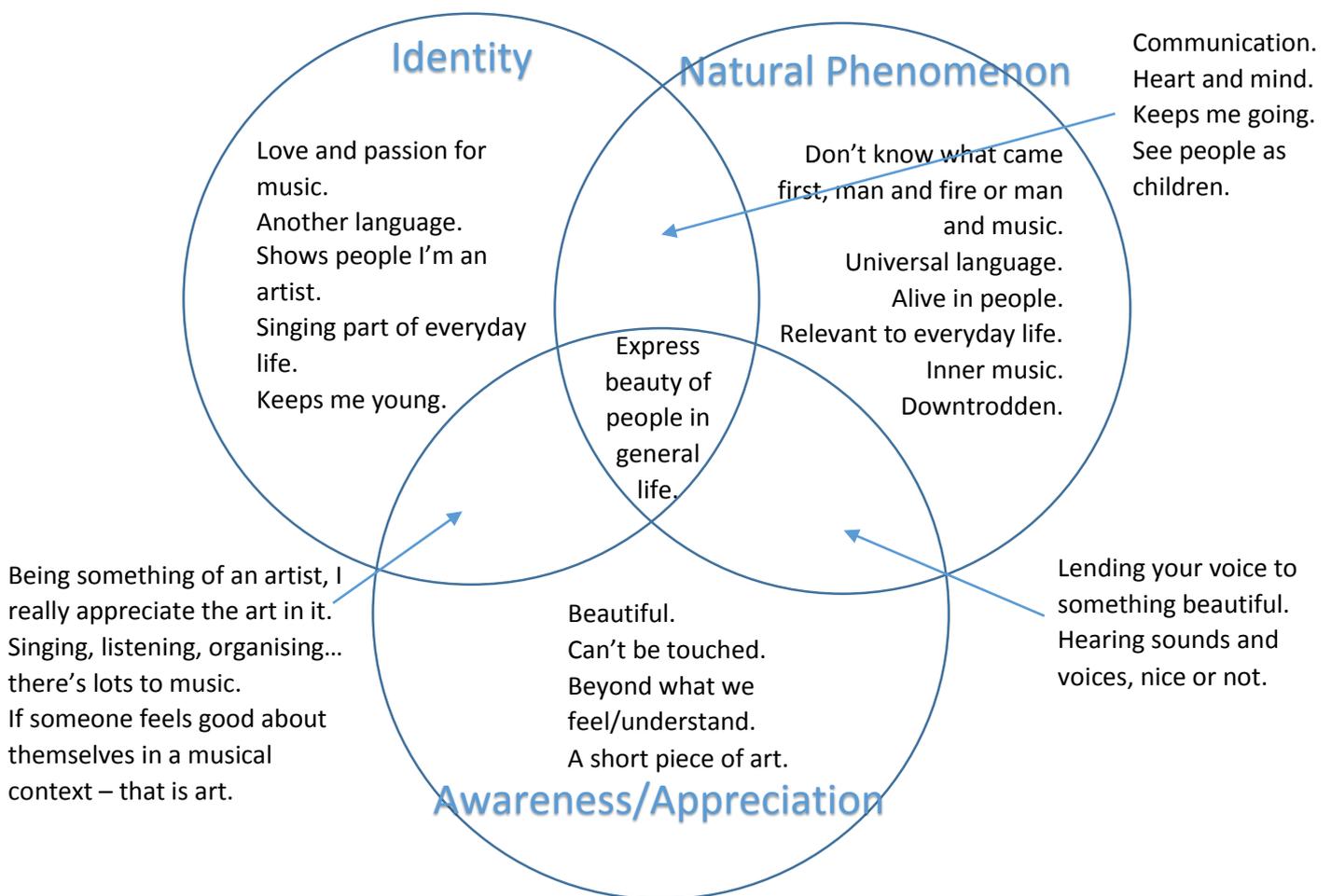


Figure 3: New lenses

These three new lenses are not only intertwined with one another but also with the themes from existing literature previously discussed. The lenses that have come out of this data all give perspective on ways a person's life has been effected by music. In a similar way that Figure 1 displayed the links between themes in literature, so can diagrams be used to display the links between these new lenses and the literature themes.

Natural Phenomenon

Participation in music can show a person that music is natural to humans. It's not simply a pastime or a tool to achieve, but a natural way to express and communicate, and something to find enjoyment in purely for what it is. The statements in this study that support music as Natural Phenomenon are:

Don't know what came first, man and fire or man and music.

Universal language.

Alive in people.

Relevant to everyday life.

Inner music.

Downtrodden.

These statements all seemed to link music to life and human nature, and not as a learned or forced activity; hence, they contributed to the creation of a Natural Phenomenon lens. The statements also have clear links with previous literature, as can be seen from Figure 4 and the statements that support the figure, which come from Table 2 and so link with themes drawn directly from existing literature.

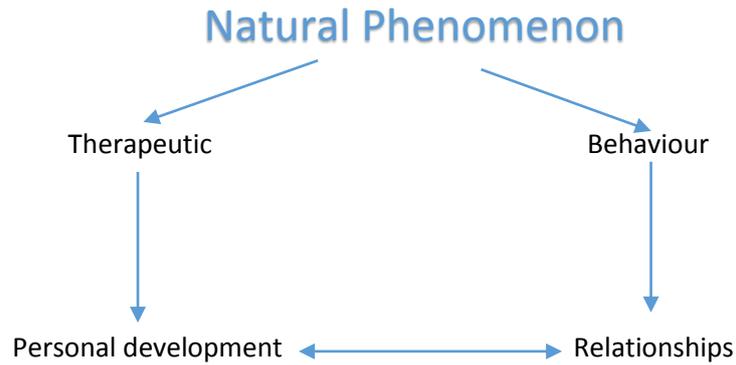


Figure 4: Natural Phenomenon

Participation in music can be seen as a natural and healthy behaviour. It is then through a person's behaviour that their relationships can be effected: music can present people as themselves and can be a natural way to help build relationships. To look now to the other side of Figure 4, if music is considered natural to people then participation in music gives a normal and down-to-earth feeling to a person, which can be deemed therapeutic. This feeling of normality can affect people on a personal level, giving a natural way of being that can extend to everyday life. Personal development and relationships then feed into one another, as both happen simultaneously as a result of participation in music and the realisation of its natural place in the lives of people.

Identity

Participation in music can become a part of, or inform part of a person's identity. Statements that are suggestive of this affect, and that are not included in Table 2, are as follows:

- Love and passion for music.
- Another language.
- Shows people I'm an artist.
- Singing part of everyday life.
- Keeps me young.

All of the above statements can be seen to link music to who a person says they are. For example, by saying that music is “another language” it is suggested that participation in music gives someone freedom within this new language, providing new forms of expression and communication with others and themselves. Language is often viewed as a part of a person’s identity. Identity surprisingly does not come into the literature that discusses the effect participation in music whilst in prison has; however, there are very clear links showing ways that existing themes can inform a person’s identity. Figure 5 demonstrates this.

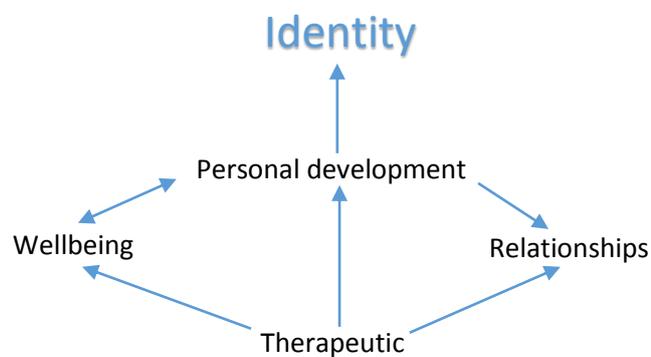


Figure 5: Identity

Change in perceived identity ultimately will come from personal development, as music can give a better understanding of who someone is and who they can be. Personal development to inform one’s identity is influenced by the therapeutic effect of music, and the changes in wellbeing of a person (usually as a result of the therapeutic effect). But the diagram works in the other direction too, as the effect that music has on identity and personal development will also have an effect on the wellbeing of a person, as music can give a better understanding of a person’s identity, resulting in security and confidence. Relationships also benefit from personal development, as music can express identity to others and assist the formation and improvement of relationships.

Awareness and Appreciation

Awareness and appreciation of the world around you can come through participation in music, particularly through the appreciation of the beauty and art of music, as it shows a new side to human capability. Statements that are suggestive of this effect, and are not included in Table 2, are as follows:

Beautiful.

Can't be touched.

Beyond what we feel/understand.

A short piece of art.

This lens was more difficult to create and is more difficult to define than the previous two, as it cannot be directly drawn from statements in the interviews. What can be drawn from the interviews, as the above statements show, are references to the beauty of music itself. This awareness and appreciation can be inferred from other statements such as “beyond what we feel or understand”. What was important in the creation of this lens was the personal element of meeting and talking to the interviewees. It was this knowledge that prompted the use of the lens Awareness and Appreciation, and the statements that confirm its relevance. The new lens also tallied with existing themes well, as is displayed through Figure 6.

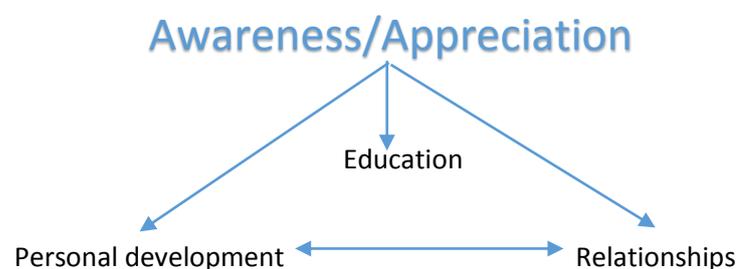


Figure 6: Awareness/Appreciation

Music can provide a life education, encouraging a person to have the ability of perspective and to view life from outside their own eyes as music so often requires one to do. Music can give a new perspective for people to view not only their own lives (enabling personal development), but the lives of others. Music making with others can present a collective awareness and appreciation for a joint goal, which can connect people to one another.

The Figures for Natural Phenomenon, Identity and Awareness/Appreciation demonstrate how the new lenses are supported by existing literature. In this context we might recall the Venn diagram (Figure 3) displaying the overlap between the three areas, in which we can see clearly why it is difficult to pry apart the ways participation in music can affect a person's life.

Conclusion

The effect that participation in music whilst in prison can have on a person's life can be understood through the following three lenses:

1. Natural Phenomenon: The realisation that music is natural in a person's life and can therefore bring a sense of wholeness and new meaning to an everyday existence.
2. Identity: Music can inform or become a part of a person's identity. This new identity is often creative, changing, and has a positive outlook. Music can also change the identity labels given to others, and so break down boundaries between people.
3. Awareness/Appreciation: Music gives an awareness and appreciation outside of what one's own eyes can see. This allows for new levels of appreciation and exploration of ideas that everyday life may not facilitate.

By viewing participation in music in prisons through these three lenses, it can be seen that providing opportunities to engage in music in prison can result in a positive effect on a person's life, and, furthermore, can be very relevant to the life of a person in prison. One statement from the interviews jumps out in support of this interpretation of the interview data:

“If you give people these tools and these opportunities, you don’t really know what they’re going to do. And also, I think maybe more importantly, it’s not what they do necessarily when they’re with you, but it’s what they carry with them when you’re apart, because you only spend very little time together, you know, really, you know, once every week. But it’s alive in people.” – Nathan

This statement draws on all three elements of how participation in music affects a person’s life. It suggests that music is “alive in people”; not only that it is a part of people (so therefore natural to people) but that it’s an *active* part of people, that can be acted upon and shared. It also shows music to be something that “they carry with them”; music can become a part of someone’s identity, not a rehearsal that happens once a week but a constant part of life that they begin to identify with. Finally, it suggests that music gives people “tools” and “opportunities” that they carry with themselves even when “apart”. This shows that music provides a level of appreciation but also exploration of ideas outside of rehearsals, giving an awareness and appreciation of the versatility of music.

There are many examples that could be drawn from all four interviews in support of the three concluding perspectives, showing how participation in music affects a person’s life: from Nathan’s statement above to Christoph’s motivation and experience in setting up his own choir in a different prison, from Ricardo’s search for music in order to get through his time in prison, to Alex’s singing on tubes and buses in everyday life. All of these examples can come back to the three concluding lenses of this research. Themes from previous data can be shown to feed into the three lenses, as was displayed in the diagrams of Natural Phenomenon, Identity, and Awareness/Appreciation (Figures 4, 5 and 6).

What this tells us

This interpretation of the interview data suggests a new way to look at the influence music can have on the life of someone who is in prison. It suggests a positive influence on a person’s life, leading to the proposition that music should be encouraged and supported in a prison environment. To return to the speech made by Gove in July 2015, Gove would like all

prisons to teach people in prison the “skills and the habits which will prepare them for outside life” (Gove, 2015, p.5). The conclusions drawn from this data certainly show music to be capable of fulfilling this role (and more) in a person’s life. Statements from the data strongly support the notion that music provides *life* skills and *life* habits that not only prepare a person for “outside life”, but inform a person’s inside life, during and after a prison sentence. By considering the effects that participation in music has through the three lenses of Natural Phenomenon, Identity, and Awareness/Appreciation, we can begin to see and understand these positive and lasting effects on a person’s life. Yet this research does not just suggest what music does to people, but how people see and characterise music, and how this relates to their life. The three new lenses begin to shed light on the important question of *why* music might have such roles in peoples live. This is a richer finding than the initial goal, and an equally important outcome to that of the question of *how* does participation in music affect a person.

Implications for future research and beyond

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect that participation in music can have on the life of a person who is in prison. The findings have suggested new broad areas for theoretically informed exploration in future research. Necessary for the continuation of this research and the development of a theory is the collection of data within a prison (not just with people who have been in prison in the past), and a larger and more varied sample of participants. Research like this could lead to further exploration of the three concluding lenses of this study, as well as suggest ways for developing the theory. These broader lenses of analysis can provide researchers with ways of seeing, questioning and investigating that show connections between existing themes in literature as well as points where they diverge. In an age when prison numbers are rising, the prison system is struggling to cope, and the government are at a loss as to how to turn it around, research like this is crucial.

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Appendix

Interview prompts

Can you tell me what you enjoy about music, [and about being in the choir]?

When you were growing up did you enjoy music? What kinds of things did you enjoy about it?

When you were growing up did you participate in any musical activities?

- Yes:
 - What did you participate in?
 - Why did you participate?
 - What did you enjoy about it?
 - How do you feel your participation in music affected you, if at all? E.g. did it ever make you think differently, or feel differently or act differently?
- No:
 - Were you given the opportunity to? – If so why didn't you?

Whilst in prison, were there any opportunities to take part in musical activities? (Liberty choir, but what else? E.g. in educational setting, in a workshop)

- What?
- (ask about the setting – in education, in the chapel...)

Whilst in prison, did you participate in any of these musical activities?

- Yes:
 - What did you participate in?
 - Why did you participate?
 - What did you enjoy about it?
- No: (N/A – all participants sang in the liberty choir)

How do you feel your participation in music affected you while you were in prison (if at all)?
E.g. did it ever make you think differently, or feel differently or act differently?

Now that you are out of prison, can you tell me about why you continue singing in the choir and what you enjoy about it?

Now that you are out of prison, do you participate in any musical activities?

- Yes:
 - What do you participate in?
 - Why do you participate?
 - What do you enjoy about it?
- No: Why? (e.g. choice or lack of opportunity)

The Liberty Choir

Can you describe the kind of music you make together in the Liberty choir? What do you enjoy about the music you make together?

What is your favourite piece of music you have sung in the Liberty Choir? Why?

What's your most memorable good experience with the Liberty Choir? Why, what was it about that experience?

Has participation in music had an effect on your life, and if so how? E.g. on the way you think, the way you feel, the way you act?

Why do you think we have music? Why do you think people choose to spend time and money making and listening to music? So in other words what do you think the role of music is?

[If not touched on] What about the 'art' (artistic, creative) side of music? Do you think that's important to people? Why?