

Musical Learning and Desistance from Crime:

The case of a 'Good Vibrations' Javanese Gamelan project with young offenders

This paper discusses new empirical evidence for a positive relationship between musical learning and desistance from crime. On investigating the learning processes occurring within a Javanese gamelan project in a Young Offenders Institution, parallels between musical learning processes and the development of certain attributes linked to desistance from crime emerged. The desistance paradigm centres on changing a criminal identity through the development of social and personal attributes, which resonates with recent research on the transformative effects of music and how musical identity can be changed positively through active and successful music-making.

The research was carried out in a UK Young Offenders Institution involving 19 young people between the ages of 18-24 over a period of eight weeks. Participant observation was used as the main research tool. This paper presents two participant stories to illustrate the personal development and the social development that can be gained as a result of the project. These are discussed in the context of successful musical learning and the suggestion is made that musical learning and developing the attributes essential for inspiring desistance from crime arise from shared learning processes.

Key words: young offenders, prison, musical learning, gamelan, social development, personal development

The Good Vibrations Javanese Gamelan Project

Good Vibrations is a charity that works with prisons, young offenders' institutions, secure hospitals and ex-offenders in the community to develop life and work skills (www.goodvibrations.org.uk). A Good Vibrations project typically lasts for one week, offering an intensive musical experience for between 15-20 people. During the project, participants engage in creative activities, through improvisation and composition, as well as performance activities related to learning traditional Javanese gamelan pieces and exploring dance, puppetry and wider Javanese culture. The Good Vibrations curriculum is carefully designed so that participants gradually build their music-making skills through the week, whilst fostering social development through team-building and group-work activities. A typical Good Vibrations module plan is shown in appendix I. As the week progresses, the module plan becomes more flexible to allow for choice as to what the participants work on and participants are fully involved in the decisions made during the week as to the content of the sessions.

A vital component of the project is the 'play through', or end of project performance, on the last day of the project. At this performance participants choose what they perform and are involved in making decisions as to the running order, introducing items and who takes on what role during each of the items. Some of the items are composed by the group, some of the items are improvised and some of the items are led by different members of the group. Usually, participants change instruments for each item, and they all contribute to decisions as to how these changes are

managed within the performance. Participants are often allowed to invite a friend to the performance and various prison staff, and sometimes external guests, are also invited. After the performance, the audience is encouraged to ask questions and for the participants share their experiences of the week.

Throughout the week, participants' work is audio recorded. The audio recordings are used for formative feedback and help to develop discussion skills and self- and peer-assessment skills. These discussions can be as important as the music-making and the Good Vibrations facilitator builds in discussion and negotiation as a part of the composition, improvisation and performance activities. Therefore, a Good Vibrations project offers musical learning that is embedded in a reflective cycle of improvise/compose, perform, reflect, refine. The final performance is also recorded and a professional CD is made for participants. Depending on the institution that the participants are in, they may be allowed to have this CD in their personal possession or it may be something that they take away with them when they leave the institution.

Positive Change

It can be said that a Good Vibrations project provides quality musical learning experiences for people within the Criminal Justice System. The description above could be applied to any school musical learning context, containing elements of good practice in the form of active music-making, audio recording and formative feedback (Ofsted, 2012). This good practice is fostered by the use of Javanese gamelan. Javanese gamelan is used as a medium because of its communal nature, inclusivity and because it can be played without any prior instrumental music experience (Eastburn, 2003). Furthermore, the relatively small amount of physical technique involved in playing the gamelan, at least initially, means that it is an accessible form of music making and allows participants to focus on the musical features rather than technical aspects of playing; this is vital when aiming to produce a quality musical performance in a relatively short space of time. This affordance of the instrument (*cf* Gibson – see Greeno, 1994), based on positive interaction, in turn helps to raise confidence (Henley, 2009). Moreover, previous research has shown that the music produced by the gamelan can have a calming effect and participants have reported lower anxiety levels during a Good Vibrations project week and as being more able to cope with the stresses of their lives, e.g., so much for some, that it helped stop them self-harm (Wilson and Logan, 2006). Further research has found that participants describe being lost in the music and being able to express themselves musically as well as through discussion, resulting in an ability to cope better with frustrations and anxieties; ultimately leading to positive change (Caulfield et al., 2010; Mendonça, 2010).

Positive change as a result of a Good Vibrations project has been seen to manifest itself in different ways. Wilson and Logan (2006) found that participants were empowered in their learning and sought out further education and training opportunities after a project ended. This was also found by Caulfield et al. (2010) who reported that participants were able to take more responsibility after participating in a project, going on to become 'Wing representatives' for example. The social impact of a project was recognised by Digard et al. (2007), who found that prison staff reported improved social skills in participants after participating in their project, something that has been further evidenced by subsequent research. Caulfield et al. (2010) attributed improved social skills to the emphasis on discussion and joint decision-making during a project week, suggesting that this

resulted in the participants developing ownership of their project. They also found that participants gained confidence in voicing their opinions in group discussions and they took this forward into their prison lives after their project ended. The creative nature of the musical activities of a Good Vibrations project has also been found to inspire ownership. Henley et al. (2012) suggest that the emphasis on improvisation and composition enabled participants to engage in their own music-making on their own terms, which in turn gave them pride in their learning and increased motivation to succeed. Moreover, it was a shared music-making experience – the nature of the musical content and choice of instruments meant that the outcome sounded musical; participants developed group ownership as well as personal ownership of the music, resulting in the building of a musical community during the project week.

Musical learning in the Criminal Justice System

Good Vibrations is not alone in providing musical experiences within the Criminal Justice System. Lee (2010), for example, provides an historical overview of music in prisons, demonstrating the wealth of musical activity in the form of choirs, bands and orchestras within US prisons since the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, in 1847, concerned about the harsh punitive regimes in the prison system, the New York Prison Association provided a list of questions that prisons had to answer in their annual reports. One of these questions was, *'Is there a prison choir?'* (Prison Association of New York, 1847). On studying the documents, it is clear that these mid-nineteenth century prison choirs were embedded into the religious life in US prisons, with annual reports providing examples of how prison choirs add to communal worship as an essential part of prison regimes (Prison Association of New York, 1865, for example). However, although the question related to prison choirs in the Prison Association of New York's report comes under the category of 'Education and Civil Conditions', there is evidence that music-making, and in particular singing, was also recognised as part of the therapeutic process in prisons during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century (Lee, 2010).

Recent years have seen a rise in research on music in prisons. Interest in music as an educational opportunity as well as a therapeutic activity has driven research focussing on the contextual issues related to music within prison life (Cohen, 2007b). In search of a pedagogy for choral singing within US prison contexts, Cohen (2007a) looked at the interactional aspects of choral singing in order to develop a process-orientated approach that fosters rehabilitative processes. The extra-musical benefits of choral singing and their impact on the social cohesion in an Israeli prison have been discussed by Silber (2005), and Cohen (2009) highlighted the impact of choral singing on wellbeing within prison environments. Research has reported that choral activities leading to performances and the production of CDs can also bring a connectedness with the 'outside' world that can help rehabilitation (Roma, 2010). Relatedly, within instrumental music programmes, similar extra-musical benefits have been found. Anderson and Overy (2010), for example, found that engagement in group musical activities within Scottish young offenders' institutions increased young people's engagement in other education programmes after the music project. Warfield (2010) found that an orchestral programme in a women's prison in Alaska enabled the participants to express themselves in new ways, contributing to meaningful experiences of music-making that help to redefine their self-perception and worthiness. This was also found by Mota (2012) in a women's prison in Portugal.

Arguing the potential for music projects to help develop a sense of self-worth and positive feelings towards society, Mota demonstrates that engagement in a music workshop helped the women to regenerate their relationship with social contexts outside of their own immediate environment.

The music-making activities in criminal justice settings described above have involved ensemble participation; however, positive benefits are not confined to ensemble work. Barrett and Baker (2012) investigated the potential of musical learning to develop learning identities in young people within juvenile detention centres in Australia, a project that involved individual music tuition. In line with other research, their findings suggest that engagement in musical learning led to both the development of musical and extra-musical outcomes. One of the musical outcomes of the project was the development of performance skills, and performing appears to be a vital common component in the fostering of new identities and new relationships with different social contexts in all of the research mentioned above.

The emphasis on performance as a catalyst for both preservation and development of social identity is also prevalent in the history of gamelans within prisons. Kartomi's (2002) account of the Gamelan Digul, now residing in Monash University, demonstrates how the gamelan was built from recycled materials found within the Indonesian prison-camp Boven Digul, located in New Guinea, in the 1920s. Kartomi demonstrates how political prisoners retained their sense of cultural identity through illicit gamelan performances. Furthermore, Hersri and Foulcher (1995) explain how political prisoners were able to maintain their artistic identity within the prison context through *wayang* (Javanese shadow puppetry). The instruments used were constructed mainly out of plastic buckets and the *wayang* was performed by the *dalang* (shadow puppet master) standing in his cell and calling on instrumentalists and singers in individual cells to play together as one.

The two themes of performance and identity are common throughout the literature. Whether performance has enabled people to renew their relationship with society outside of the criminal justice system or whether the performance has driven the learning, which has resulted in positive change, the evidence seems strong for musical activities within criminal justice settings making a contribution to therapeutic and rehabilitative regimes. In terms of how these regimes contribute to reducing re-offending, the UK government has acknowledged that rehabilitating and preparing offenders to re-enter society is '*critical in providing them with an alternative to crime.*' (DfES/PLSU, 2003; 3) Therefore, if musical activities contribute to therapeutic and rehabilitative regimes through helping offenders to develop, maintain and sustain positive identities, and the research consistently points to many positive extra-musical outcomes that contribute to raised self-perception and renewed relationships with society, what is the distinctive role of musical learning in reducing re-offending?

Desistance from crime

Theoretical understandings of the process of rehabilitating offenders to desist from crime have developed over the last forty years or so. McWilliams (1987) demonstrated how regimes moved towards a more pragmatic approach by offering practical help to offenders to reduce and ultimately desist from reoffending. The transition to desistance-based regimes has involved a move from a treatment-based paradigm (where offenders are '*diagnosed*' and then '*treated*' by professionals in

order to 'cure' them from offending) to a non-treatment based paradigm. Unlike a medical approach that sees crime as a disease that can be cured, a non-treatment paradigm emphasises the need for help through a shared offender-probation officer approach (McNeill, 2006). However, Burnett and Maruna (2004) argue that rehabilitation approaches within a non-treatment paradigm do not significantly reduce reoffending. According to McNeill (2006), this can be attributed to neglect of crime victims and the separation of the psychological and emotional help that offenders need in order to reduce re-offending. Moreover, reducing re-offending should also address the re-socialisation of offenders, and developing interventions that work to do this should be the focus of rehabilitation (McNeill, 2004). Crucial to this is the recognition of the *process* involved in rehabilitating offenders to reduce re-offending (Maruna, 2000). This process is understood to be the desistance process.

Alongside developing theoretical understandings of the process of desistance, there is a growing body of empirical evidence supporting effective interventions in criminal justice systems (Farrall and Maruna, 2004). In recent years, these two have combined and desistance research has begun to focus on how effective interventions support the desistance process. Within this, a body of research is emerging that focuses specifically on arts interventions and their potential for supporting transformative processes (Clennon, 2013; McNeill et al., 2011; Tett et al., 2012). Acknowledging the role that learning plays in identity change, McNeill et al. (2011) draw together the research on arts interventions within criminal justice settings and desistance theory to present six central themes within desistance theory (with examples) that are key to the effectiveness of interventions in their contribution to the desistance process.

Firstly, Weaver and McNeill (2010) explored issues relating to *identity and diversity* within probation practice. They highlighted the role that changing identity has in the desistance process, but argue that developing a new social identity is a complex process and that often when offenders desire to create a new social identity, they lack the resources needed to do so. Therefore, interventions that enable and support offenders in the development of their identity would contribute greatly to the desistance process. The second theme surrounds *motivation and hope*. Burnett and Maruna (2004) argued that hope is a major contributing factor in desistance and something that has been missing in prison regimes. As also found in the Good Vibrations research (Henley et al., 2012), Farrall and Calverley (2005) demonstrated that the concept of 'feeling normal' is an important part of the change processes in offender self-concept. They argued that the hope created by this feeling is '*an important resource for those at the beginning of the desistance process to draw on*' (Burnett and Maruna, 2004; 112). It provides an opportunity to see what is possible in the future, which in turn provides motivation for change away from a criminal identity. The third theme relates to the relationships between *professionals and personal supporters*. Burnett and McNeill (2005) demonstrated that the relationship between an offender and probation officer is key in the transition towards desistance. Furthermore, this relationship forms the context for the development of a new social identity (Weaver and McNeill, 2010) and should be placed at the centre of effective offender supervision (McNeill, 2009). However, this should also be coupled with recognition of the importance of personal support from people outside of the criminal justice setting (McNeill et al., 2011). The fourth theme concerns the *development of personal as well as social strengths*. Maruna and LeBel (2002) examined the process of 're-entry' and they put forward an argument suggesting that the development of both personal and social strengths is critical in effective re-entry into

society. LeBel et al. (2008) built on this, calling for subjective changes as well as social changes to be acknowledged in the desistance process. Recognising the difficulties in untangling whether subject changes come before social changes or vice versa, they put forward a subjective-social model for return into society. The final two themes relate specifically to *interventions*. If interventions are going to effectively support the desistance process, they must encourage *respect and self-determination* (McNeill, 2006). Furthermore, as much as interventions need to be based on human capital in the form of developing new skills, they also need to be based on the *development of social capital* to facilitate the development of positive relationships with communities (Bottoms et al., 2004; McNeill and Maruna, 2007).

These six central themes echo the themes that emerge from the literature surrounding musical learning in criminal justice systems. The development and maintenance of identity, motivation and hope, relationships with professionals and peers, the development of personal as well as social strengths, respect and self-determination and renewed relationships with communities can all be found in the other literature discussed above. McCulloch and McNeill (2008) explained that desistance

'resides somewhere in the interfaces between developing personal maturity, changing social bonds associated with certain life transitions, and the individual subjective narrative constructions which offenders build around these key events and changes.' (p.158)

Performing is a theme that runs through the research and these performances, along with the musical activities that lead up to them, have been found to be key events in the lives of the participants. Therefore, questions arise as to *how* these themes within desistance and musical learning are connected, *in what way* does musical learning support the desistance process and *how* do offenders construct individual narratives surrounding these key musical events. The research report that follows sought to address these questions.

Researching in a Young Offenders Institute

The research took place at a young offenders' institution between December 2011 and February 2012. The Good Vibrations project took place during December 2011 and although the actual numbers in each session fluctuated due to pre-arranged appointments and other internal meetings, a total 19 participants participated in the project. All participants fell into the Good Vibrations target group, as follows:

- Young men with open ACCT books¹ and/or;
- on violence reduction programmes and/or;
- otherwise vulnerable/hard to reach/reluctant to engage.

¹ The Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) system helps to identify and monitor those at risk of self-harm and suicide in prisons. An open ACCT book is part of a care plan that provides support for prisoners at risk of harming themselves.

The project group contained a number of very vulnerable young people. Some participants had not been off their Wing for a long period of time. Some were certified self-harmers, whilst other participants were on medication, or suffered from mental illness and many suffered from insomnia. Working with such a vulnerable group of people demands particular sensitivity and it was paramount that the participants were the priority of the project week at all times. Therefore, the research design needed to reflect this.

With the focus of the research being on investigating how musical learning and the desistance process might be related and how offenders construct personal narratives, the research design also needed to enable a full exploration of the learning processes within the project so as to develop an understanding of how the key themes within desistance theory manifested within the musical learning. Therefore, a qualitative approach was taken where the researcher was able to immerse herself within the research context, participating fully in the Good Vibrations project. This enabled data to be collected via participant observation during the project week, which facilitated the investigation of how the musical learning process and desistance process might be linked. In order to investigate the personal narratives that may have been constructed as a result of the project week, six-week follow up interviews took place. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so as to explore provisional themes that arose from the participant observation, but also to allow the interviewee to reflect on their own experiences and bring themes into the interview that might reveal how these personal narratives have been constructed.

Alongside these data sets, access was also provided to Good Vibrations' internal evaluation data. This internal evaluation data comprised pre- and post-project questionnaires and a post-project focus group conducted by a member of Good Vibrations staff external to the project. This then provided a third data set that could be triangulated with the data collected via participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Participant observation has been used in previous Good Vibrations research (Digard et al., 2007) and this method of data collection also seemed suitable for this research. However, whereas previously researchers have participated as learners, the researcher was able to participate from the position of tutor. This afforded a different position from which to view the learning processes taking place. That said, participation observation is not without its methodological challenges. Labaree (2002) raises issues concerning objectivity, boundaries and reality in relation to the four phases of the research process: entering the field, positioning and disclosure, shared and significant relationships and disengagement.

Participant observation gives the researcher a unique privilege through being accepting into a community or context that they would otherwise not have full access. On entering the field, the researcher has to negotiate the different identities that they bring into that field, utilising them to full effect and not confining themselves to the boundaries of a single researcher identity (Labaree, 2002). For the researcher, this manifested itself as balancing a number of different roles:

- being a Javanese Gamelan player and utilising this facility so as to understand the music;
- being a music educator and utilising this facility so as to understand the learning;
- being a researcher and utilising this facility so as to understand the interactions and relationships within both the learning and the music.

Each of these three identities provided something different that could be used whilst ensuring that the research respected the specific context and sensitivities that surrounded it. As a Javanese Gamelan player, the researcher was able to build a musical relationship with the project participants, thus offering legitimised entry into the field. As a music educator, the researcher was able to build a relationship with the project tutor as well as the participants, operating as a tutor within the Good Vibrations' code of conduct for facilitators. This ensured that work was within certain parameters and responsive to participants needs by stepping back as a researcher should the research role be perceived as interfering with the participants' personal, social, emotional or educational needs. Participating as a tutor also allowed for natural disengagement with the field. The nature of an intervention such as a Good Vibrations project is that tutors will enter the context at the start of the project and leave the context at the end of the project, thus leaving the field in an acceptable manner. As a researcher, it was possible to look at the musical and tutor identities from a meta-perspective, seeking to avoid being purely 'observationalist' and to integrate the observations made *of* others and the experience *with* others.

In order to collect data in a systematic way, and to ensure the robustness of the participant observation data collection, a framework was used derived from previous research. Henley et al. (2012) analysed Good Vibrations data from four different research strands using an activity system derived from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)(Roth and Lee, 2007). The system used comprises seven components: the *subject*, the *object*, the *learning tools*, the *community*, the *rules of the community*, the *division of labour* and finally *identity* (Henley, 2009). These components have been demonstrated to reveal transformative processes in different musical learning environments (Welch, 2011; 2007, for example). They also relate to the themes drawn out of the desistance theory literature, highlighting both the individual and their relationship with the social context (Barrett, 2005). Therefore alongside their previous application to Good Vibrations research data, they provided a way of systematically collecting data relating to both learning processes and desistance processes.

Data were then collated into these seven components of CHAT and the themes drawn out of the desistance theory literature above were applied. The themes were divided into two categories: individual agency and social capital, in-line with desistance theory, and data were coded according to these. As data were coded, it emerged that there were sub-themes within the six original themes and in total a list of eleven codes was used. Table 1 shows the final list of codes.

Table 1 – final list of codes

Individual Agency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal Identity ● Diversity ● Motivation ● Hope ● Self-determination ● Personal strengths
Social Interactions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Professional relationships ● Peer relationships ● Personal relationships ● Sense of belonging ● Ownership

Through collating using CHAT and coding the data using the desistance themes, the links emerged between musical learning and the development of attributes related to desistance from crime.

Two Participant Stories

The following two example participant stories, presented as narratives, provide an example of the findings relating to the two categories of individual agency and social capital. Story number 1 provides an example of individual agency being developed through the project and Story number 2 demonstrates how the social capital developed as a result of the project resulted in a new personal narrative being constructed.

Story number 1

'If I don't stick to it now, it makes me think I can't stick it when I go out and get a job'

The participant entered the room at the beginning of the week looking anxious. His first reaction was to the instruments. He asked what they were and how we were going to play them. When told, he replied quite firmly that he was not going to sit on the floor. He sat apart from the other participants that were in the room and did not speak to any of them at first, but gradually joined in conversations about the instruments as more participants entered the room.

He was taking part in 'In Cell Education', an individual programme of learning based within his own cell, and had not done a lot of activity outside of his cell before. After the first Good Vibrations session, he commented that *'I'm not really into this sort of thing'*. Even so, during one of the activities he was very intensively engaged with what he was doing. So much so, that the prison officer in the room commented on his level of concentration. At the end of the first day he commented, *'it is still not my thing, but it's getting alright. I enjoy it a bit and sometimes I don't.*

Through day 2, he continued to assert that Javanese gamelan was not his sort of thing, stating that he preferred to listen to 'bassline'. Nevertheless, he continued with the project, showing self-determination.

On the morning of day three, he was upset as he did not want to sit on the floor any more. Also, he was having difficulties in hitting the drum softly. He had been hitting the drum very hard whilst concentrating on the rhythm, and his hands were hurting. Some of the other participants became angry with him and two participants would not give him space to calm himself down, continually trying to get him to play the rhythm softly. This resulted in the participant becoming aggressive. He started to tense up, hold his breath and shout at the others in the group. The Good Vibrations facilitator managed the situation very skilfully, got the other participants on task and after a short space of time the participant calmed down and joined in again. After the morning session, the prison officer and facilitator did not expect him to return; however, he did. During the afternoon a photographer was invited to take publicity photos of the project. As with the other participants, this participant was very keen to be in the photos. He wanted his family to be able to see what he had done and wanted to be in as many photos as possible. After the afternoon session, he told us that he had got stressed with the music and that he did not want to get stressed on Friday during the

performance. Having said that, he did not want to give up because he was aware that no-one else knew his part.

This day seemed to be a turning point for both himself and the group's attitude towards him. During day four, he still got frustrated with himself when he could not do something, but the others in the group showed him a great amount of respect for coming back after such a difficult day and this seemed to settle him.

On the last day, in the rehearsal before the play through, he again got frustrated with himself and said that he was not going to play in one of the pieces. He played in the rehearsal, but said that he would not perform it. However, he did perform it and after performing he said that he had got lost, but that he had listened carefully and got himself back in again. He was clearly very proud of himself for doing this.

During the week, when he was working on something challenging he tended to give up very quickly, but then when left alone, he showed self-determination and was quick join in again. His initial reaction was to give up, but then on reflection he was able to control himself and continue to participate.

In response to the post-course questionnaire, he strongly agreed that he had communicated well and listened to other people during the project week, that he had become socially involved and had become an equal member of the group. He also strongly agreed that he felt more motivated to do other activities within the institution.

Reflecting at the end of project focus group, he said

'I normally spend 23 hours on the Wing. I do In Cell Education. In don't come out, I get very stressed. This has helped because I've been doing something constructive - I've been learning new skills and about a new culture; it's helped me keep my stress levels down.'

During the project week, he had found motivation and had become more socially involved in the group. However, he always maintained that he did not like the music. On talking to him six weeks after the end of the project, he was very proud of himself because he had stuck with the project. He said

'it gave me something to focus on. I don't like the music, I don't see the point. I never thought, dreamt of doing something like that. It don't sound good to me.'

But although he maintained that Javanese gamelan was not his sort of thing, he described the instruments in great detail and became animated in describing how the instruments could be used with technology to make a 'bassline' beat. He clearly had an interest in music, and had begun to make links between the music of the Good Vibrations project and his own music. He was enthusiastic about the actual music-making process, even if he maintained that he did not see the point of the music.

When asked about his work since the project, he said that he had moved from In Cell Education and was now on 'Teapot', which is a tea-making job. He said *'I needed a change. I was fed up of doing In Cell, but I'll go back to it after a year.'* He then went on to talk about how he wanted to be a joiner

and that he wanted to get out and get a job. I asked whether the project had any impact on all of this and he said

'If I don't stick to it now, it makes me think I can't stick it when I go out. I want to go the right way about it this time. So I know I can stick at it when I go out. I really want to go out and get a job. I want to buy my own clothes. It means a lot to me.'

Whether or not participating in the Good Vibrations project motivated him to come out of his cell and move into a more social job within the prison is difficult to say. It would appear that it could have made a contribution; however, there is no hard evidence for this. There is clear evidence though that the act of participating in the project was a great personal triumph to him, and this seemed to contribute to the construction of a personal narrative surrounding employment after his release. He was clearly proud of the fact that he had stuck with it and it had meant a lot for him to do so. He was using the project as a test of his own commitment and, by committing to a project that was not to his taste musically, he could believe that he will be able to be committed to a job on his release. Participation appeared to have given him a sense of hope.

Story number 2

'Every morning I sit on my bed with a fag and a coffee and just listen. I listen to the birds and the keys.'

This participant was quite jovial when he entered the room at the beginning of the project. He knew a number of the other participants and entered immediately into conversation with them. He joined in with conversations about the instruments as well as other things that they were doing on the Wing.

The participant appeared to be honest about his reasons for coming on the course. He did it so as to get out of work for the week. However, after the first session, he was totally engaged with the project. He volunteered to conduct and he wanted to take on leadership roles from the beginning. At the end of the first day, he commented that he had enjoyed it immensely and that he was really glad to be there.

On the second day, this participant was one of a number who came in the morning reporting that they had had a really good night's sleep. He said that he had been going over the music in his mind and that it had been really relaxing. Not only this, by day two he had connected his music with the music that was being made in the project. He said *'I do a lot of music. Lots of music in general. It's good. I really enjoy it.'* This being the case, he became quite annoyed with people talking during the sessions. He felt that they were not concentrating and that it meant that he was not enjoying it as much.

This participant missed some of the sessions due to other appointments and meetings. When he came back to a session after he had been out he always seemed a little agitated. When participants were talking about something that had happened, he would respond that he would not know because he was not there. He was keen to catch up, but he was also worried about someone else

taking his place. However, by the end of the week when the musical roles of the group had been established, he realised that his place would not be taken and he seemed more able to relax.

During the week there was a shift in this participant's attitude. At first he was concerned with himself. He wanted the others to be quiet so that he could get what he wanted out of the project. There were clearly some issues between him and some of the other participants and once or twice at the end of the day whilst waiting for movement back to the Wings, there had been some 'play fighting' and banter between him and other participants. Other participants had mentioned that he was annoying them, but the situation was always controlled by the facilitator.

Towards the end of the week, he evidenced a sense of community and group ownership. On day four, when the participants were becoming stressed about the play through and starting to argue about the music, he called for the whole group to be silent for two minutes so that they could all calm themselves down. He also volunteered to speak at the play through. He was very keen to be seen as part of the group and wanted to take on responsibility within the group.

In his post-course questionnaire, he strongly agreed that he had been socially involved with others and that he had listened, as well as felt that his point of view had been listened to. He strongly agreed that he had developed more patience and that he had worked as a team player.

In the focus group, he commented that it had been a really relaxing week, that it had been therapeutic and that he had slept really well during the week.

Six-weeks after the project, he commented, *'After the project, looking back, I only [now] realise the effect.'* As with story number 1, the interview allowed the participant to vocalise his feelings about the project for the first time afterwards. He said that he had thought about the project a lot, about *'how much of a good experience it was, how much it taught me, how it has expanded my life.'*

He admitted that he had been very nervous about coming and working in a group. He was always more concerned with himself, but the project had not only made him feel that he had personally achieved something, but that he was also proud of everyone.

'It made me feel like I'd achieved something. I did that. It made you proud of yourself. Proud of everyone. We all pulled together and pulled it off.'

He spoke about the group composition and that *'It just kind of clicked. Came together.'* He also acknowledged that the music meant that they had to work together.

Moreover, he was able to articulate the impact that working together during the week had on him;

'I am able to listen a lot more. What other people are saying - that was something that I struggled with before. I used to [think] 'I don't care, I'm here for one person and one person only'. You can't be like that. In order to get anywhere in this world you've got to listen. Good Vibrations taught me that. It made me appreciate life a lot more. I get up in the morning now and just sit in silence for a minute and listen. Listen to the birds and the keys and everything around me. I sit on my bed with a fag and a coffee and just listen. I don't switch the TV on any more ... I'm not used to silence so I had to have the TV on to go to sleep. Now, I don't do that. I've learnt to be myself and to listen more.'

When asked directly if this was a result of the Good Vibrations project, he said 'Yes'.

This participant was working in graphic design during the project and he had moved to being an orderly after the project. Being an orderly involves cleaning duties and requires social skills and the ability to work as a team². Whether or not the Good Vibrations project helped him move into this position is difficult to say; however, it is clear that this participant made a dramatic change in his attitude during the week, from being concerned only with himself, to exhibiting a sense of social responsibility. There is explicit evidence to show that the project enabled him to listen to others and respect their opinions.

Most importantly, it is clear that voicing his reflections on the project was enabling him to begin to construct a new personal narrative.

Musical learning and the desistance paradigm

What these stories show is that different elements of desistance theory relate to different people at different times during and after a Good Vibrations project. The first story highlights how a Good Vibrations project can inspire self-determination and motivation. It shows how important it was for the participant to succeed and also that he was keen for his family outside to see him as succeeding. He found respect from the other participants for returning to the project after he had met with difficulty and he was able to take ownership of his learning, both on an individual level and on a group level. In turn, this appeared to give him hope for his future life as an ex-offender.

The second story highlights how the participant discovered the importance of listening and respecting other people's opinions. The evidence suggests that he learnt that working in a group requires listening skills and also the ability to see oneself as part of a team. More strikingly, this story highlights the impact that the project had on the participant's sleeping patterns. Insomnia is one of the biggest contributing factors to mental health issues within prisons (Elger, 2009). This was a completely unexpected finding, but probably one of the most positive effects of the project in terms of the participants' health.

Although there is not room here to share all of the detailed findings of the project, what was clear on analysing the data was that, during the project week, the focus was always kept on the music. The facilitator treated the project as a musical learning opportunity and the activities were designed to develop a sense of pulse, to understand the relationship between pulse and rhythm, to understand how melody is constructed and how texture can be manipulated to extend melody through layers. The participants were referred to as musicians at all times and there was never any question as to their musical capabilities. The activities were differentiated to suit different participants and there was constant assessment of progress; feedback being given both by the facilitator and through discussions of audio recordings. The participants were encouraged to self-assess as well as peer-assess and there was a shared ownership of learning both between facilitator and participants and also between the participants themselves.

² For information on prison regimes in the UK see www.justice.gov.uk.

The analysis of the findings suggest that the processes of musical learning that the participants engaged in during the week were the same processes that fostered personal attributes related to individual agency and social capital. As the participants progressed musically, they moved from an individualistic engagement with the music, where simple patterns of sound were created, to a social engagement with the music through developing ensemble skills and complex music being created by integration of the individual contributions. This movement from individual to social interaction was facilitated by activities such as *imbal*, where four-note ostinatos were created by two people playing alternate notes, improvisation, where a framework of 'Observe-Lead-Follow-Oppose' was given for free improvisation and composition, done through a process of composing individual motifs, small-group composition and then drawing it altogether as a whole-class composition. Once the participants had found their voice within the ensemble, they could then focus back on their individual contribution to this, creating an individual-ensemble-individual reflective cycle.

All through the musical activities, the Good Vibrations facilitator modelled the positive behaviour and values that the participants were developing. The discussions also took on the 'Observe-Lead-Follow-Oppose' framework employed in free improvisation activities and as participants were interacting musically, they were also interacting with and developing social capital. Therefore, the musical processes of developing both individual and ensemble skills transferred to the development of personal attributes related to individual agency and social capital.

Why is this important for musical interventions within criminal justice systems?

Whilst this research makes no claims regarding Good Vibrations' ability to inspire desistance from crime, what it does highlight is the shared processes between musical development and the development of attributes related to the desistance process.

The potential for developing individual agency and social capital during a Good Vibrations project can clearly be seen. What is also clear from these two stories (and others) is that, although the qualities that the participants were developing could be seen during the week, it was not until the follow-up interviews that the reasons behind these were revealed and the full extent of the (at least short- to medium term) impact of the project shown. Moreover, this follow-up gave the opportunity for participants to articulate their thoughts and feelings, facilitating the construction of new personal narratives around the Good Vibrations project. This reinforces the need for systematic reflection after an intervention, something that is not always available to participants, as part of the process of internalising the impacts and constructing new personal narratives.

It would now be interesting to investigate whether the development of these qualities could be sustained over a longer project; however there are many difficulties with carrying out longer-term interventions in the criminal justice system. Often people are in their establishment for short periods of time and there are frequent movements within and between different establishments that can happen at short notice. For example, within the project week of the current research one participant was moved to a different establishment and was unable to finish the project. Furthermore, two participants had left the establishment before the six-week follow up interviews and out of the remaining 16 participants, all were available as of the Friday before the arranged interview day yet

only five participants could be located for their interview on the following Monday. This was due to an incident over the weekend that resulted in a mass change of people within each wing, with some people being transferred to the adjoining male prison. In order to find the interviewees the researcher had to visit each wing in turn to try and locate and interview each participant. Due to security restrictions she only had a limited time in which to do this and therefore only found five interviewees. This highlights some of the challenges for both music interventions and researchers working in this context and continuity within a Good Vibrations project lasting longer than a fortnight would be extremely challenging. Having said that, there are interventions that are successful in maintaining longer-term participation and the increasing evidence base of research is opening up opportunities for comparison across different types of interventions in different settings. Moreover, work is currently being done on joining up research in criminal justice contexts in different countries, and further research looking at the learning processes within interventions in more depth and on a wider scale is being planned.

Why is this important for music education?

When the UK government surveyed offenders' views of prison education, they found that

'Music was the course most desired, and least provided. Prisoners praised the music courses they had had at other prisons, and longed to have another chance' (Prison Reform Trust, 2003; 30)

The literature provides evidence of the positive effects that musical learning can have within a range of criminal justice settings, and these are not localised geographically. Positive effects have been consistently reported throughout the world, including in the UK, USA, Australia, Portugal and Indonesia. This research has highlighted links between musical learning and desistance theory, and there is a value in this to inform subsequent research so as to continue to build the evidence supporting music within criminal justice systems.

Furthermore, there is a wider value of this body of evidence. In mainstream education systems music has been squeezed as a subject and emotional and behaviour difficulties remain a challenge. If participating in musical learning activities fosters the construction and development of new personal narratives that encompass hope and a renewed relationship with society and communities, then perhaps this is also the case within education outside of the criminal justice system. Thus, reinforcing the need to provide quality musical learning opportunities for those deemed 'at risk' of offending or those who have the potential to disengage with mainstream education.

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Appendix I – A typical Good Vibrations module plan

	AM 1	AM 2	PM 1	PM 2
Monday	Introduction Taster	Conduction Traditional Piece	Imbal	Improvisation
Tuesday	Group composition (small groups)	Group composition (all together)	‘Free’ Improvisation	Song, Dance, talk about puppets, masks etc.

Wednesday	Group decide on contents of play through	Any new items?	Detailed work on pieces for performance	Detailed work on pieces for performance
Thursday	Detailed work on pieces for performance	Detailed work on pieces for performance	Final rehearsal of all pieces for play through	Debrief rehearsal, look at any outstanding musical issues
Friday	Play through (informal performance) and final feedback session			