

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

September 2018 No 239



*Special Edition*  
**The Arts in Prison**

# Contents

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- 2 Editorial Comment**  
Dr Michael Fiddler and Alli Black
- 4 Unlocking talent at HMP Leicester**  
Kate Herrity, Simon Bland, Ralph Lubkowski and Phil Novis
- 10 The Bigger Picture: Digital Storytelling, Creativity and Resilience in Prisons**  
Dr Victoria Anderson
- 16 Scratching the Surface: A service evaluation of an applied theatre intervention for female offenders.**  
Dr Zoe Stephenson and Andy Watson MBE
- 22 Performing Punishment, Transporting Audiences: Clean Break Theatre Company's Sweatbox**  
Dr Aylwyn Walsh
- 27 Performance Matters: The Case for Including Performance in Prison Music Projects**  
Sarah Doxat-Pratt

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**Kim Workman**  
Rethinking Crime and Punishment, NZ  
**Adrian Rowbottom, Mike Tinning**  
HMP Leyhill Printshop

# September 2018

**33 Music, education, and opportunity**  
Katy Haigh and Laura Caulfield

**40 Music and identity in prison: Music as a technology of the self**  
Kate Herrity

**48 In Place of Hate**  
Yvonne Jewkes

**50 Edmund Clark's Artistic Residency at HMP Grendon: Exploring the impact upon residents**  
Elizabeth Yardley and Dan Rusu

**58 Interview with Edmund Clark**  
Edmund Clark and Michael Fiddler

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Cover design by **Mike Tinning**. HMP Leyhill. Sweatbox by **Chloe Moss**. Photographer: **Katherine Leedale**. Credit: **Clean Break Theatre Company**. **Gongs**: photo credit: **Francois Boutemy**, 2010. Flipchart: photo credit: **Gigi Chiyong Lam**, 2016. **1.98m**, Detail from **Oresteia** and **My Shadow's Reflection**: © **Edmund Clark**, courtesy **Ikona Gallery**, Birmingham

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# Editorial Comment

## The arts in prison

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Let us begin with a single image: Harou-Romain's Plan for a penitentiary, 1840.<sup>1</sup> If the reader is unfamiliar with the title, they may well know the image itself from the plate section of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. It depicts an imagined view from a cell within Bentham's Panopticon. The inhabitant of the cell—seemingly unaware of our presence behind them—is kneeling. They face outwards, towards the central observation tower. There are several ways in which we can read this particular image. For example, is the figure kneeling in silent penitence or are they engaged in some form of labour? On first being introduced to a poorly reproduced version of this image in an undergraduate lecture some years ago, it struck one of the editors of this special edition as the embodiment of Bentham's 'mill to grind rogues honest'.<sup>2</sup> It appeared as though the architecture of the building bore down upon the lone figure. It was the weight of both the physical and conceptual that had brought them to their knees. That editor has written elsewhere about the centrality of this image to their on-going research interests and projects, as well as using it in delivering their own undergraduate lectures.<sup>3</sup> Hopefully the reader will forgive this initial burst of solipsism, but—simply put—you would not be reading this were it not for that image. Of course, it is a truism to say that art has the capacity to transform. We know this. We know that art can challenge and provoke. It can reveal the artist's self to others, as well as illuminate aspects of the audience's self to themselves. It allows us to express who we are and who we want to be. This then takes us to the theme of this particular special edition: the arts in prison.

If it is axiomatic to suggest that art can produce revelatory experiences, then its value to any system that seeks to rehabilitate should be equally as clear. Simply stating that this is the case is, of course, insufficient. There is a need for the careful,

considered evaluations set out by several of the contributors here. The central innovation that is important in all of the articles that follow arrives in Herrity et al's expression of art existing as a 'benign gateway'. This sees the transformative aspects of art being captured and made to cascade throughout other aspects of prison life. In their article, **Kate Herrity, Simon Bland, Ralph Lubkowski and Phil Novis** detail the 'Talent Unlocked' arts festival that ran at HMP Leicester in November 2017. For the authors, the festival acted as precisely this sort of gateway, providing benefits to staff-prisoner relationships, civic participation and educational engagement. As these contributors themselves note in the piece, 'the difficulty in capturing these processes in a measurable, quantifiable form was a source of frustration'.

The frustrations and difficulties of many arts-related schemes in a secure setting is similarly well-evoked by **Victoria Anderson's** reflection upon the monitoring and evaluation of Stretch Digital projects. Specifically, these saw the use of iPads to facilitate digital storytelling exercises. As Anderson notes, the cohort utilising the iPads were highly engaged yet possessed low 'digital literacy' and had little experience of using the internet. Despite the lack of internet access for the exercises acting as a hindrance, participants and co-ordinators were still able to successfully manoeuvre around these obstacles and utilise applications in their creative projects.

Turning to theatre, **Zoe Stephenson and Andy Watson** discuss the work of the Geese Theatre Company. Stephenson and Watson touch upon the importance of 'the Mask' and 'mask lifting' as a means to encounter the hidden thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs of a character'.<sup>4</sup> Through this theatrical device—and an emphasis placed upon improvisation and interactivity—they unpack a

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1. Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish*. London: Penguin. See image 4 in the plate section.
  2. Bentham to JP Brissot to Warville, c. 25 November 1791 (The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham, vol 4, p.342). London: UCL Press.
  3. Fiddler M (2011). A 'system of light before being a figure of stone': the phantasmagoric prison. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 7, 1, 83-97.
  4. This pre-figures a discussion in the interview with Edmund Clark (that concludes this special edition) regarding the mask-like elements of pinhole photographic portraits.

programme for female offenders. Moving outside of the prison and into the liminal space of prison transportation, **Aylwyn Walsh** discusses Chloë Moss' 'Sweatbox'. First produced on the festival circuit in 2015, this immersive production took audiences inside a prison van. Limited audiences would share these claustrophobic spaces whilst observing three actors through small windows as they recounted their stories. The discomfort of the staging viscerally drove home the themes of the play. The value of the performance itself is further explored in **Sarah Doxat-Pratt's** article 'Performance Matters'. This piece is based upon observations of work carried out by the Irene Taylor Trust. There were two main elements to this: a Music in Prison week and a Musician-in-Residence series of sessions. Music in Prison saw prisoners team up with professional musicians to write and record new music with the aim of performing in front of an audience. As Doxat-Pratt describes it, the performance is intended to serve as 'a milestone for those who have performed, evidence of the journey they have been on'. However, the difficulties of performance within a secure setting meant that—upon its cancellation—there was a great deal of distress and frustration.

**Katy Haigh** and **Laura Caulfield** also highlight the 'Good Vibrations' gamelan musical project. They similarly saw the creation of a professionally-produced CD to be given to participants at the close of the project. This provided a sense of achievement that could be shared with others. Indeed, the authors highlight the way in which the CD itself can provide 'positive discussion points for visits and communication with the outside world'. As with the other projects outlined here, the authors also suggest that it could serve—in Herrity et al's phrasing—as a benign gateway to other treatment programmes.

We return to **Kate Herrity's** research in her innovative practice of 'sound walking' and 'aural ethnography' within prison. The soundscape of the carceral is often discussed in prison ethnography, but has—heretofore—not been examined in a sustained manner. It often appears simply as a descriptive backdrop to other discussions. Here Herrity frames

music as important in identity work. The playing of particular pieces can serve as De Certeau<sup>5</sup> 'spatial tactics' for navigating everyday life. It can reaffirm 'self' whilst also maintaining connections to the outside.

The final section of this special edition focuses upon the work of artist Edmund Clark. Edmund's award-winning work has been exhibited internationally. Often commenting upon carceral spaces, he has recently concluded an artistic residency at HMP Grendon. The work that was developed during this time was exhibited at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham in a show entitled 'In Place of Hate'. **Yvonne Jewke's** commentary discusses the themes of the show, in addition to the work of the residency itself. In particular, Jewkes points to an implicit focus upon temporality, as well as the (in)visible within the pieces: they are redolent of 'repetitiveness, tedium; trauma; torture; absence; fear; seeing; unseeing; and being seen'. **Elizabeth Yardley** and **Dan Rusu** discuss their evaluation of the artist-in-residence programme at HMP Grendon. They point to pre-existing research that demonstrates both psychological benefits to participants, as well as increases in their receptivity to further activities. This is a potential pathway to a profound impact upon incarcerated lives. Indeed, as they state, Edmund's residency has 'complemented the therapeutic regime at the prison and facilitated the process of identity reconstruction'. We conclude with **Michael Fiddler's** interview with Edmund Clark. The interview was conducted shortly after the opening of 'In Place of Hate'. In the interview, Clark discusses how 'My Shadow's Reflection'—a book that collected work carried out during the residency—was due to be sent out to opinion formers, policy makers and political commentators. As he states, 'maybe it will bring them a little closer to their own shadow's reflection'. And that is the hope of this special edition. It provides a partial snapshot of the vital and important work being done in the arts both within and outside prisons. If you are new to this area, our hope is that for you, the reader, this will act as a point for reflection and, potentially, a 'benign gateway'.

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5. de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. London: University of California Press.

# Unlocking talent at HMP Leicester

*Kate Herrity is a PhD candidate in the department of Criminology, University of Leicester; Simon Bland is a resettlement caseworker; Ralph Lubkowski is Governor at HMP Stafford; and Phil Novis is Governor at HMP Nottingham.*

**Over two weeks in November 2017, HMP Leicester hosted an arts festival; Talent Unlocked. A unique event, conceived by Ralph Lubkowski and organised by Simon Bland with contributions from a number of artists, community and education workers, supported by the governor Phil Novis. In the run up to the fortnight, artists performed at various points around the prison in pop up events. Talent Unlocked was a diverse programme including a voice over skills workshop, creative writing, poetry appreciation, screen printing, music-making and performance. This paper draws from observations, surveys and interviews with prisoners and staff participants to consider the utility of this event for the prison community. Much work focuses on the benefits of the arts for prisoners in achieving educational goals. We use this as a point of departure for considering the wider prison. The concept of civic skills provides a lens for considering the utility of Talent Unlocked in fostering responsibility, relationships and cooperation within the prison community. We move on to consider the benefits for prisoners, as a means of improving wellbeing, offering some respite from prison life and as a gateway for broadening participation in education. We conclude with some reflections on how to build on the success of HMP Leicester's experience.**

Within the prison walls is a society within society, adhering to its own rules and rituals. The prison is usefully thought of as a community, a closed society whose inner world requires understanding.<sup>1</sup> Much influential work in prison sociology is concerned with social organisation within prison spaces for this reason.<sup>2</sup> In so far as democratic societies benefit from active citizens (and there are obvious limitations to comparisons with prison since the majority of citizens are not voluntary participants), it is fruitful to explore the benefits of Talent Unlocked in this context. Associations between

the arts, civic education and good governance have persisted since ancient Greece.<sup>3,4</sup> Accounts of prisoners and staff suggest participation in the arts fosters civic skills. Such is the implicit understanding of civic skills that few trouble to define exactly what the component abilities are for operating as a competent citizen.<sup>5</sup> Providing a comprehensive and satisfying explanation would take considerably more space than available in this article. Parallels can be made between 'soft skills' and civic skills as both refer to abilities which are desirable in individuals as neighbours, colleagues or employees:<sup>6</sup> tolerance, patience, compromise, trustworthiness, conscientiousness. Responsibility, cooperativeness and relationship skills are used as markers for civic skills, demonstrating the benefits of Talent Unlocked to the prison community, and conversely what civic responsibility can teach us about arts in prison.<sup>7</sup>

## Responsibility

Inviting participation from prisoners in arts activities and performance invites civic engagement in the prison community by inviting individuals to take active responsibility for their conduct. Dermot demonstrates this when he talks about accepting Simon's invitation to perform:

*Simon said 'don't let me down' and I thought no, I don't want to let this guy down.*

Dermot wanted to demonstrate he was worthy of the trust placed in him to conduct a public performance (guests from outside the prison were present). Jem echoes this experience when he talks about

*...the freedom to do something... and the trust to go in a room, which, sometimes the officer is in with us, but normally they ain't and I think that's a big thing.*

1. Crewe, B. (2009) *The Prisoner society: power, adaptation and social life in an English prison*. Oxford; OUP
2. Eg Clemmer, D. (1940/1958) *The prison community*. London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston
3. Flinders, M., Cunningham, M. (2012) *Participatory arts and political engagement*. Arts and Humanities research council
4. Everson, S. (1988) (ed) *Aristotle, the politics*. Cambridge: CUP
5. Kirlin, M. (2003) *The role of civic skills in fostering civic engagement*. Circle Working paper 06
6. Nickson, D., Warhurst, C., Commander, J., Hurrell, S.A., Cullen, A. (2012) 'Soft skills and employability: Evidence from UK retail' *Economic and Industrial Democracy Vol. 33, No.1*
7. Hoffman Davis, J. (2010) 'Learning from examples of civic responsibility: What community-based art centers teach us about arts education' *The journal of aesthetic education Vol.44, No.3*

Trust was repeatedly referred to by the men as a source of pride and a means of asserting positive aspects of their identity. In this way participating in Talent Unlocked offered a remedy to the constraints on autonomy and agency presented by the prison regime.<sup>8</sup>

The value placed on the responsibility associated with such trust was reflected in prisoners' interactions with one another. On several occasions prisoners were observed negotiating with others to moderate their behaviour in order to avoid 'ruining it for the rest of us'. This request was made of one prisoner whose creative process was making a bit of a mess in a screen printing workshop and to encourage an exuberant dancer showing appreciation of a music performance to show a bit more restraint. Speaking specifically about teaching philosophy in prison, Kirstine Szifris identifies the learning process as a means of fostering greater consideration for others.<sup>9</sup> Mutual consideration for the benefit of the community and cooperation to achieve these ends can be thought of as preconditions for civic engagement within the prison.

### Cooperation

While prisoners participated in greater numbers, staff also engaged in a number of workshops and performances, as both audience and performer. Successfully organising such an event requires wide cooperation from staff already overstretched by the demands of the regime, while active participation indicates a broader commitment to the community. A number of staff reported enjoyable experiences, one member of staff saying they had '*just completed the most enjoyable shift in twenty-five years of service*' after attending a concert. Bethany E. Schmidt identifies cooperation as a source of improved prisoner-staff relationships which in turn increase morale and job satisfaction.<sup>10</sup> Observing an officer exchanging knowledge about music-making software with a prisoner, and another singing along to a prisoner's composition offer examples of occasions when staff participation went beyond dutiful conscientiousness.

Cooperation between members of the prison community paves the way for better relationships:

*I appreciate what Simon's done, and I appreciate the screws. Even the screws! It's brought me and them closer together cos*

*before I wouldn't talk to them in prison but now it's building the gap.* (Dermot).

The potential significance of this is illustrated by Danny who says the activities '*breaks up the atmosphere, it breaks up the tension between staff and inmates*'. He goes on to illustrate how this works in practice:

*...They'll go back and they're like 'ah we did this this morning and it was great' and they'll go back and tell the staff and the staff'll be interested and then they'll give you the time of day and then they'll be like 'do you mind going behind the doors?', 'No problem'. And then the landing runs a lot smoother because the fact they've had their chill time, they're looking forward to the next one...*

Here Danny identifies Talent Unlocked and similar initiatives with holding the potential to improve relationships between staff and prisoners, strengthening the sense of community, or civic engagement, within the prison.

### Relationships

While the festival gave prisoners the opportunity to display positive aspects of their identity, staff who participated likewise provided prisoners with a rare chance to see parts of themselves normally concealed by the uniform. I asked Marlon what he thought about an officer's spoken word performance and he told me

*I didn't know the brer could play them bongos like that... that come from his heart. So I seen him from a whole different perspective now. I'm feeling big respect for him.*

As well as exposing a more personal side of this officer, his performance also acted as an expression of shared culture which provided those prisoners with an opportunity to celebrate their cultural identity. Duwayne echoed this new appreciation for what he and the officer had in common:

*I just looked at him and I thought he's an officer, but I could relate to him and I thought you know what, that's why he is like that.*

On several occasions prisoners were observed negotiating with others to moderate their behaviour.

8. Eg Irwin, J., Owen, B. (2005) Harm and the contemporary prison in Liebling, A., Maruna, S. (eds) The effects of imprisonment. London: Routledge  
 9. Szifris, K. (2016) 'Philosophy in prisons: opening minds and broadening perspectives' Prison Service Journal May 2017, No. 225  
 10. Schmidt, B.E. (2013) 'User voice and the prison council model: a summary of key findings from an ethnographic exploration of participatory governance in three English prisons' Prison Service Journal September 2013, No. 209

Marlon spoke with pride about where he was from, and said he hoped to return to his homeland upon finishing his sentence. This performance echoed the narrative beyond prison that Marlon was in the process of writing for himself. Duwayne also expressed surprise at seeing staff in this light: *'...the medical guy doing the jazz and blues, I would never have expected that. Not at all.* This capacity for surprising one another with previously concealed talents nurtured empathy and respect.

Involvement in Talent Unlocked also generated some reflection amongst some of those spoken to about their participation in community and how this influenced their life on the outside.

*When I'm on the outside I associate with just drug users because they're the only group I really know. But to associate with 'normal' people... it's very good because it shows you that you don't need to have alcohol... to have drugs... to have a good time, you can just sit down and have a conversation about whatever.* (Duke)

Duke's account demonstrates that encouraging civic engagement within prison through participation in the arts, has implications for conduct in the wider community. Socialising with a broader range of people—visitors and staff who were present for the opening ceremony in this instance—prompted Duke to reflect on his conduct outside. Most of those performing or running workshops for Talent Unlocked were drawn from outside the prison. Demonstrating a willingness to give of their time for those living and working in HMP Leicester made a powerful statement about the place of the prison within the wider community, drawing these groups closer together. In so doing Talent Unlocked strengthened civic engagement with its city beyond the walls as well as within them.

### Wellbeing

Talent Unlocked had benefits for the wider community, both inside and beyond the prison walls, but was also credited with a number of positive effects on a more personal level by those I spoke with. A number of

men reported enhanced wellbeing as a result of taking part. For Duke Talent Unlocked presented him with an *'opportunity to make the most of your time in prison and to vent your, whatever, frustrations or anger you've got'*. Kerwan described himself as having *'mental health issues'*...

*...so the best place for me is down here [in the Lambert Unit]. I got PTSD and I don't like crowds and it's too noisy out there, too much going on and it makes me crazy and I fight.'*

He credited the opportunity for making music Talent Unlocked afforded him as helping to get his *'feelings out'*. He also said it *'gets people out their pad. Gets some structure in the day'* and proudly showed me the CD he had put together. Samir echoed this capacity for exposure to the arts as offering some respite from the harsh prison environment. He described the DMU orchestra performance as

*A Shawshank Redemption<sup>11</sup> moment. Just an escape from all this noise, and hear something a bit more beautiful, more peaceful.*

*Talent Unlocked* lent prisoners the ability to carve out space to explore and express emotions. Both Danny and Samir

referred to fellow prisoners who had recently received bad news deriving considerable comfort from events in the festival:

*From lighting a candle for a loved one who's lost, to dancing to jungle book... You know he was so lifted by that.* (Danny).

These accounts illustrate how important the arts can be for enhancing wellbeing<sup>12,13</sup> in prison, offering prisoners the opportunity to feel *'a purpose, a meaning, an existence as a human being'* (Danny).

Reasserting a sense of shared humanity creates space for enhancing civic skills, enhancing empathy.

### Pride

In addition to emotional comfort, a number of prisoners also reported feeling pride as a result of participating in Talent Unlocked:

Talent Unlocked had benefits for the wider community, both inside and beyond the prison walls...

11. Shawshank Redemption (1994) [film] Castle Rock Entertainment, U.S: Columbia Pictures.

12. Hughes, J., Miles, A., McLewan, A. (2003) Doing the arts justice: A review of research literature, practice and theory. The Unit for the arts and offenders centre for applied theatre research.

13. O'Brien, R. (2010) 'The learning prison' Royal Society for the encouragement of arts, manufacture and commerce.

*You see my name on there? That makes me feel proud. It's only a piece of paper with my name on it, but I've never had that. Usually you see my name in the paper for doing something shit.* (Dermot, displaying a performance programme).

When asked why he had chosen to participate, Pete told me he had wanted *'to become involved in the group. To try and inspire others as well'*. This idea of leading by example, and providing a role model for others to follow articulates the connection between individual achievement and collective responsibility. When asked to elaborate Pete said: *'I'm not a very confident person so I'm trying to test myself'*. He had participated in a poetry appreciation class that afternoon, and felt sufficiently at ease to extend a little outside his comfort zone. Pete also emphasised the importance of seeing examples of artistic endeavour amongst his peers.

Recognition from fellow prisoners was a source of considerable pride:

*When I got back to my wing last night, cos my wing's just there everybody heard it and I got back and they were all going mad. But it was good man, it was real good.* (Duke)

Duwayne referred repeatedly to other prisoners and staff telling him he *'smashed it'* in his performance. He was attempting to appear humble but his elation was clear as he managed to shoehorn this in to the conversation a number of times. Participation in Talent Unlocked also provided prisoners with an ongoing means for connecting with others, as Jason said *'I'm looking forward to showing people this'* (referring to music he had made). In these ways Talent Unlocked provided the prison community with opportunities to celebrate one another's talents and achievements while attempting to inspire others to follow. In making space to appreciate positive attributes of one another, participating in the event also ignited a desire to see peers similarly benefit, fostering a sense of community.

### **The arts as a 'benign gateway'**

Civic skills are sought after by prospective employers. In supporting their development the arts can act as a tool

for increasing prisoner's employability.<sup>14</sup> This is not to deny the need for expanded education provision in prison or to advance the idea that the arts are in any way sufficient to address the complex educational needs of the prison population.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in addition to providing prisoners with the means to satisfy the desire to keep occupied—*'I wanted to fill up my days, we all do'* (Samir)—the arts can function as a benign gateway to broadening participation in other strands of education. Memories of school are often unhappy ones for those in prison, with high rates of exclusion, truancy and low educational attainment.<sup>16</sup> Lesser association between the arts and formal education therefore has the advantage of embracing the informal dialogues and importance of learning for learning's sake which characterise more positive experiences of re-engagement with education.<sup>17</sup> Danny highlights this potential when he talks about a

prisoner who *'can't read and write [who] came to a poetry thing yesterday and he couldn't write it, but he spoke it. And then we used it and he got involved'*. Here the informal setting and encouragement of his peers presented the opportunity to use other skills to engage with the group. Danny also spoke about how exposure to the arts through Talent Unlocked had altered his outlook:

*when I get on the outside, I'm going to find somewhere orchestral bands play events, and I'm gonna go to them... I'm going to have a new perspective on life because I need to.*

While not indicating a specific intention to explore formal education, Danny credited his experience of Talent Unlocked with increasing his skill set for coping with the stresses of life outside. Samir made this association more explicit when, talking about a workshop on Shakespeare, he said *'it pure inspired me. Got me hungry'*. In this sense the focus of learning is less important than the method of teaching.<sup>18</sup> Engagement with learning is a process which extends beyond education to participation in broader concerns of social action

*When I put my mind to something I can be creative... but I can't be that if I don't have the*

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14. Ofsted (2012) Skills for employment: assessing training and support. No.110178.  
15. Coates, S. (2016) Unlocking potential: a review of education in prison. Ministry of Justice.  
16. Prison reform trust (2017) Bromley briefings Prison factfile, Autumn 2017.  
17. Warr, J. (2016: 19) 'Transformative dialogues: (re)privileging the informal in prison education' *Prison Service Journal* May 2016, No.225  
18. Jennie Henley in correspondence on shared learning outcomes and pedagogy April 2018, also see Henley, J. (in press) Music, emotion and learning In Gouk, P., Kennaway, J., Prins, J., Thomahlen, W. (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Music, mind and wellbeing: Historical and Scientific perspectives*. London: Routledge.

*support of other people. And people praising me makes me be more positive and do positive actions (Dermot).*

Here Dermot echoes Plato's assertion that the arts are a means of fostering greater civic engagement.

### Some lessons learned

Organising an event of this size offered some learning opportunities, in practical terms, with regards methods of recording data as a means of assessing impact, and in maintaining the momentum. Publicity for the event was insufficient to convey the purpose and content. Prisoners were unclear about what would be involved or required of them at specific workshops, as Callum said:

*I know a lot of people didn't know what we was doing... cos there's not much detail about what the date things are to people on that sheet so if there was more in a leaflet, more detail, just one sentence doesn't really explain a lot.*

Ralph reflected on this mid-festival, concluding that symbols denoting the type of activity and degree of involvement required would have reduced suspicion and added clarity. In retrospect it is quite understandable that uncertainty about the nature of the festival would inhibit engagement from some. Signing up for things without knowing details is not something that always pans out well for prisoners. Sign-up sheets on the wing were inconsistently used. More explanation would likely have increased and widened participation as it would have lent the festival more appearance of transparency. These difficulties were exacerbated by the particular challenges presented by a small local prison with extremely high churn.

Anticipating precisely what information to collect in tandem with organising an event of this size for the first time presented a challenge. While attendance was monitored via lists and feedback surveys, anonymising these made it difficult to accurately assess the breadth of engagement. Duplication of lists with sign-up sheets to

ensure accurate records of prisoner's location further compromised these efforts. Security is, of course, always the first priority in prison. Building on the momentum created by Talent Unlocked to widen participation requires a sustained effort, not without difficulty in an institution with a rapidly changing population and the attendant concerns of running a prison. Dermot expressed both the frustrations and potentials offered by such an event:

*No one was interested at the start but then it snowballed in to this... out of a hundred people you're gonna get forty knobheads who don't want to know and p\*\* about. And out of that hundred you're maybe gonna change forty... but then the next time, the ones that didn't change think maybe I'll have a go...so it's a snowball effect...*

The difficulty in capturing these processes in a measurable, quantifiable form was a source of considerable frustration for Ralph and Phil:

*This is where you need to do proper evaluation of this stuff. So okay six months ago you attended this session—are you taking it forward, is it having any effect, have you stopped being violent, have you stopped self-harming. (Phil)*

Anticipating precisely what information to collect in tandem with organising an event of this size for the first time presented a challenge.

Ralph spoke about the need for longitudinal research to assess the long-term impact of such initiatives. Both reflect the difficulty of communicating such complex processes in a clear quantifiable format for HMPSS digestion. Obstacles to demonstrating the value of Talent Unlocked echo the unhelpful distinction between 'soft' and 'hard' skills and persistent inadequacy in capturing the former despite widespread acceptance of their importance.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the exemplary MQPL<sup>20,21</sup> demonstrates how effectively qualitative aspects of prison life can be captured quantitatively as well as how enduringly influential such efforts can prove to prison policy. These challenges clearly illustrate the potential of working more closely across fields to better capture the benefits of such initiatives.

19. Heckman, J.J., Kautz, T.D. (2012) Hard evidence on soft skills. NBER Working paper series no: 18121. Massachusetts: National Bureau of Economic Research.
20. Liebling, A., Arnold, H. (2005) Prisons and their moral performance: A study of values, quality and prison life. Oxford: OUP.
21. NOMS (2015) Internal audit and assurance: Measuring the quality of prison life (MQPL) and the Harris review: Self-inflicted death in custody among 18-24 year olds.

## Building on success

Phil expressed a great deal of frustration at the difficulty of making such nebulous benefits more tangible:

*I would've hoped this would have had some impact in terms of the violence and the rest of it and it hasn't. You could argue, that because there's no control group, that actually violence would have been higher without it... the data doesn't suggest that. I'm in the top five violent prisons in the country.*

Such ambition underscores the high stakes involved in such an initiative, and consequent anxiety about demonstrating its benefits. Offsetting the cultural capital of violence in prison by investing value in learning and community is not an instantaneous shift but rather a slow process of cultural exchange.<sup>22</sup> It is also the case that there is a complex relationship between levels of violence, trust, staff-prisoner relationships and levels of reporting which official figures may conceal.<sup>23</sup> While there was frustration at the difficulty in capturing the net values of Talent Unlocked, elsewhere Phil acknowledged the ongoing nature of the process:

*We learn for next time. You continue to learn, so that's continuous improvement, that's what we're getting out of it. As a prison it fits absolutely with [us being a] part of the community.*

There was also clear awareness of a shift in staff culture:

*If I now say to staff we're doing this they say okay, because they've seen the benefits. It's this energy from the lads when they ask what's next.*

These cultural shifts formed part of a larger, incremental process which allowed each event<sup>24</sup> to build on the 'energy and the buzz' from the one before, each providing 'a springboard if you like, so what's next, let's keep pushing'. Simon contrasts his experience at HMP Leicester with thwarted attempts to launch innovative

projects in other prisons. This differentiates HMP Leicester from other prisons where 'it's difficult to get anything done' (Simon). Attempts to identify clear impact from Talent Unlocked by assessing its effects, are looking in the wrong place. It is the conditions created by a more receptive culture which have allowed such an ambitious event to take place. Talent Unlocked is the manifestation of positive cultural change; the effect, not the cause. The challenge lies in maintaining the momentum for civic improvement in the prison community.

Talent Unlocked demonstrates the broad value of widening access to the arts for the prison community. While the intangible similarity between civic skills and those characterised as 'soft' represent significant challenges to quantitative attempts to capture and assess them, prisoner and staff accounts indicate that the festival was regarded as an enriching experience. Investing trust in prisoners by inviting them to take part in activities or performance created space for exhibiting their acceptance of responsibility. Organising and sustaining such an event required a significant amount of cooperation from all participants; prisoners and staff. In creating opportunities to display different aspects of each other Talent Unlocked nurtured sentiments central to sympathetic relationships such as respect and understanding. In addition to various benefits for the wider prison community, prisoner participants identified more personal gains. The festival provided opportunities for improving wellbeing and prisoners reported enjoying a rare opportunity to forget they were inside. Access to the arts also provided a benign gateway for considering participation in other aspects of learning.

While Talent Unlocked was a steep learning curve, problems in recording and assessing less tangible benefits of such an initiative reflected wider challenges represented by the task. The cultural conditions of HMP Leicester were conducive to this innovative project. In this sense it is accurate to view Talent Unlocked as part of a wider process of cultural improvement within HMP Leicester. Acknowledging this alleviates some pressure to measure what is difficult to quantify. The biggest challenge perhaps lies in sustaining the impetus for change to access the hardest-to-reach groups in the furthest corners of the prison, to keep unlocking more talent, in HMP Leicester and beyond.

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22. Bourdieu, P. (1984/2010) *Distinction*. Routledge Classics. London: Routledge

23. See 18.

24. HMP Leicester has hosted a number of innovative events including a number of music performances from DeMontfort choir and orchestra, a Shakespeare festival, the first Tedex event to be filmed from a prison in England and Wales and most recently a Science-art project in collaboration with the national space academy.

# The Bigger Picture:

## Digital Storytelling, Creativity and Resilience in Prisons

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**Stretch Digital was conceived as a three-year project—commencing in 2015—developed by the arts charity Stretch and funded by the Big Lottery. Partially in response to increasing calls for digital access and infrastructure in prisons,<sup>1</sup> the project's aim has been to deliver digital training using iPads and simple editing applications into prisons through the medium of digital storytelling. Digital storytelling is a practice that has been used widely in a variety of contexts, from community archiving to corporate storytelling; pioneers of the form include Joe Lambert, who founded the Center for Digital Storytelling in California 25 years ago,<sup>2</sup> as well as the UK's Daniel Meadows whose Photobus project continues to evolve from its 1970s origins.<sup>3</sup> Traditional digital storytelling techniques combine personal narrative with photomontage collated into a short film. Such techniques are made considerably easier in the evolving digital landscape—although not in UK prisons, where access both to photography and digital equipment is heavily circumscribed. In fact, while digital infrastructure is slowly being introduced into some prisons around the UK, Stretch is the only external organisation that—according to available information—has so far been cleared to make digital equipment available to serving prisoners, and has been facilitating digital storytelling projects in prisons since 2011.<sup>4</sup>**

Between April and September 2017 I spent several intensive months alongside two practitioners monitoring and evaluating Stretch Digital projects in two Category B male prisons in South London. My background in digital learning, visual culture and

narrative allowed me to develop a useful overview of the quality of learning facilitated by a Stretch Digital project, make recommendations for future practice, and start to develop a sense of how meaningful learning can be better implemented in prison settings. My role was to oversee projects (as unobtrusively as possible) and make recommendations to build towards a more robust form of learning evaluation that would be of ongoing use to the development of a defined learning methodology. While it by no means conformed to a standard research project—and was never intended as such—it has hopefully laid the groundwork for future developments and possible research.

There has in recent decades been mounting pressure on schools and educational establishments to provide clear evidence of student learning progression, which has led to an eruption of innovative learning models and digitised analytics intended to systematise learning for failsafe evidential purposes. While prisons are not ostensibly educational establishments, they are nonetheless expected to operate as education providers. Several damning reports on the state of prison education,<sup>5</sup> as well as the highly influential 2016 report by Dame Sally Coates,<sup>6</sup> has led to prisons being required not only to provide, but to demonstrate that they are providing, adequate educational provision. The increasingly privatised and regulated (as well as media-conscious) milieu of the prison landscape has led to increased competition between contracted educational providers (Novus, for instance, openly advertises itself as 'The UK market leader in offender education, training and employability services'),<sup>7</sup> as well as pronounced risk-aversion: providers typically prioritise tangible skills-training and vocational qualifications that claim a

1. Nina Champion and Edgar Kimmet, 'Through the Gateway: How Computers Transform Rehabilitation' (London: The Prison Reform Trust, 2013); Alice Thomson and Rachel Sylvester, 'Give Homesick Prisoners iPads so They Can Stay in Touch', *The Times*, 10 December 2015, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/give-homesick-prisoners-ipads-so-they-can-stay-in-touch-dv7m9sfjz3x>; Sally Coates, 'Unlocking Potential: A Review of Education in Prison' (London: Ministry of Justice, 2016), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-potential-a-review-of-education-in-prison>.
2. Joe Lambert, *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (Berkeley: Digital Diner Press, 2002).
3. Daniel Meadows, 'Photobus', accessed 20 February 2018, <http://www.photobus.co.uk/>
4. 'STRETCH', accessed 20 February 2018, <http://stretch-charity.org/>
5. Nikki Stickland, 'Transforming Rehabilitation? Prison Education: Analysis and Options' (Education Policy Institute, 2016), <https://epi.org.uk/report/transforming-rehabilitation/>
6. Coates, 'Unlocking Potential'.
7. 'Novus', Novus, 4 March 2015, <https://www.novus.ac.uk/about>

righteous path to the 'straight and narrow' rather than a life of crime.<sup>8</sup>

Charities play a key part in a broader, frequently extra-curricular landscape,<sup>9</sup> but when it comes to securing contracts are forced to compete in the same challenging and risk-averse marketplace. This means the emphasis on evidenced learning evaluation applies as much to them as to the larger providers.

The stated objectives of the Stretch Digital project numbered just three:

- ❑ Offenders in and out of prison are more confident and better equipped to integrate into the community;
- ❑ Offenders in and out of prison have gained important digital literacy skills leading to increased employability;
- ❑ Offenders in and out of prison have increased sense of wellbeing so aiding rehabilitation.

These aims are based on the accumulation of evidence demonstrating the positive net effects of arts education on prison populations.<sup>10</sup> The aims, while modest, are nonetheless difficult to evidence within the parameters of the present project; it is challenging to keep track of individuals even while they are within the criminal justice system, let alone once they are released.

Over the course of several months, we worked consistently with around 25 male prisoners in four cohorts of varying sizes. A number of additional participants attended only one or two sessions, and may not have been registered, making precise overall numbers difficult to calculate. Ages ranged from 19 to 60+, although the majority were aged in their early 30s. Most participants were British nationals, but we also worked with a small cohort of six Eastern European ESOL learners (Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian), as well as their teacher who kindly accommodated us in her

classroom. A small minority of British Nationals who completed the course identified as White British (English), and one was Northern Irish Catholic. All other full-term participants were ethnically African, Caribbean, Asian, South American or of mixed ethnicity, and all were born and raised in the UK. Two were Muslim. At least five of the British nationals had attended university, including one individual who had completed a degree in Business Studies at a London university, sandwiched between two long prison stints (the second being unanticipated). Many reported having been in prison several times, and it seemed the cycle had become somewhat normalised. Three of these serial-detainees also reported having been raised in the care system.

### Evaluating Learning: the digital challenge

As demonstrated in the Coates Report, lack of digital infrastructure in prisons makes access to learning difficult and makes the work of prison teaching staff additionally difficult. It limits access to independent learning, which could otherwise take place during the not-unusual 23-hours-per-day cell-time during which most prisoners have little option but to watch daytime TV (which may well be their cellmate's choice of channel);<sup>11</sup> and it seriously

## Digital illiteracy impacts at all levels, limiting access to basic government and other information about rights, finances, employment and helping services.

disables prisoners from being able to re-enter an increasingly digitised world on release. Digital illiteracy impacts at all levels, limiting access to basic government and other information about rights, finances, employment and helping services.<sup>12</sup> Many younger prisoners will be 'Digital Natives'<sup>13</sup>—fast becoming an outdated term—but this is by no means the case across the board. During my limited time in the two London prisons I met several engaged learners who had very limited digital awareness and no knowledge or experience of the internet. These men were aged approximately between 30 and 50—the lower end of

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8. Mark Ellison et al., 'A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Effectiveness of Prison Education in Reducing Recidivism and Increasing Employment', *Probation Journal* 64, no. 2 (1 June 2017): 108–28.

9. Grace Wyld and James Noble, 'Beyond Bars: Maximising the Voluntary Sector's Contribution in Criminal Justice' (New Philanthropy Capital, March 2017), <https://www.thinknpc.org/publications/beyond-bars/>

10. Larry Brewster, 'The Impact of Prison Arts Programs on Inmate Attitudes and Behavior: A Quantitative Evaluation', *Justice Policy Journal* 11, no. 2 (2014), <https://repository.usfca.edu/pna/7/>; 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing' (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017); Paul Clements, 'The Rehabilitative Role of Arts Education in Prison: Accommodation or Enlightenment?', *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 23, no. 2 (1 May 2004): 169–78.

11. Victoria Knight, 'Remote Control: The Role of TV in Prison', *Criminal Justice Matters* 59, no. 1 (1 January 2005): 28–29.

12. Yvonne Jewkes and Bianca C. Reisdorf, 'A Brave New World: The Problems and Opportunities Presented by New Media Technologies in Prisons', *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 16, no. 5 (1 November 2016): 534–51.

13. Marc Prensky, 'Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants', *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (2001).

the scale firmly within the 'Digital Native' bracket. Lack of availability of internet inside the prison estate meant that despite both iPads and good intentions, we were effectively unable to help the prisoners learn how to use a search engine or find a useful website, which was frustrating and disappointing for all concerned. Nonetheless, the fact that they were able to be introduced to digital technology increased their confidence and they showed significant progress in a number of areas.

Without question it is difficult for charities to bring digital technology into prisons, since the movement of iPads constitutes a serious security risk. iPads are a threat to security on a number of grounds. Firstly, they have the capacity to record sound and images. It is an offence to take unauthorised video or sound-recording equipment into prisons; even once authorised, there are strict regulations over what may or may not be recorded and these differ between prisons (and sometimes between visits). Secondly, they have the potential capacity to transmit material both locally between linked machines and globally via the internet; a breach of security would include unauthorised material being both brought in to the prison and sent out. Their portability of iPads makes them easy to steal, and any such breach of security—such as the loss of a machine or the transmission of unauthorised images—would have serious repercussions not only for Stretch but also for prisoners, staff and the prison as a whole. For these reasons it has proven challenging to open new opportunities for Stretch Digital projects because of a tendency towards risk-aversion from the prisons themselves, especially given the current so-called 'prison crisis' and a sensitivity to unwanted media attention.

During a typical Stretch Digital Storytelling project, participants are exposed to a range of learning experiences. Lack of internet access in prisons limits the degree to which practical digital life skills can be taught to prisoners, although all participants typically report improvement in terms of using iPads for creative projects and developing visual literacy. Typically participants will learn basic image and film-editing, and learn how to tell a story using digital images and software. Much time is usually spent recording and re-recording voiceover audios, and in the vast majority of cases the participants are very keen to get their message across in a way that feels most authentic to them.

A significant motivating factor reported by many inmate participants is the idea of being able to have their film broadcast to the outside world in some way, shape or form, whether that be via the internet or given to them on a DVD for their own use. Frequently they are keen to present a visual and vocal critique of the prison system, which of course they cannot be

permitted to do if the charity wishes to remain on good terms with the prison and foster any hope of being able to show the films outside. While many Stretch digital stories already exist on the web, on occasion prisons can be especially restrictive in terms of allowing films to be shown outside the prison or even to audiences within the prison, citing security risks. This has caused some problems where prisoners have been severely let down after having worked hard on a project only to have the prison refuse to allow it to be shown and even, in some regrettable instances, requiring the films be deleted for opaque security reasons. It is extremely dispiriting to have work erased in this way, and one might safely assume this to have a demotivating effect on prisoners—possibly hampering or reversing any rehabilitative effects of having worked on the project.

The spectrum of learning activities covered by a typical Stretch project encompasses far more than digital skills. Based on my observations I've attempted to compile an inventory of the learning engendered by a Stretch project in the table below, separated into positive and negative expressions, although this is by no means intended to be exhaustive. For evaluative purposes, practitioners would mark participants on a scale between the two poles:

Positive expression	Negative expression
Contributes positively to group dynamic	Does not work well within a group
Very willing to share personal stories and experience	Withdrawn and uncommunicative
Receptive to hearing about and learning from others' personal stories	Disinterested in others' experience, unwilling to listen
Enthusiastic and engaged approach	Perfunctory/disengaged approach
Able to produce a compelling and well-written script/storyboard	Unable to produce a script/storyboard
Shows significant evidence of personal growth	No clear evidence of personal growth
Able to draw meaning/life lessons from personal experience	Unable to make sense of life's experiences
Curious and willing to learn	Incurious and disinterested in learning
Shows proficiency using digital imaging and editing software	Unable to master basic digital skills
Able to work well with minimal supervision	Needs constant supervision
Excellent structure, style and presentation, demonstrating confident handling of materials	Confused structure, inappropriate style and poor presentation and use of materials
Innovative and/or inspired use of language and/or visuals	Perfunctory and/or derivative use of language and/or visuals

While some of these factors are ostensibly skills-based, I additionally draw specifically on research conducted at the University of Bristol (and which I had the opportunity to help develop for use in schools and universities) which argued that effective lifelong learning can be broken down into seven discrete factors. These are: Resilience; Curiosity; Creativity;

Learning Relationships; Meaning Making; Growth Orientation; Strategic Awareness.<sup>14</sup> According to this model, an individual using all seven of these learning dimensions will be demonstrating so-called ‘deep learning’, a term more often applied to artificial intelligence; a fact which perhaps shows the increased necessity of humans being able to demonstrate complex cognitive and creative learning capabilities as more and more robots assume responsibility in the workplace. Regrettably this is of even greater importance for ex-prisoners already at a disadvantage when seeking employment on release; not only do they face digital inequality but may increasingly be forced to compete with robots.<sup>15</sup>

There are numerous models of resilience, which have been widely discussed across disciplines.<sup>16</sup> Resilience in an educational context does not necessarily pivot on the precondition of adverse circumstances but indicates, amongst other things, the capacity to keep trying even when one finds a task challenging, and a willingness to persevere in the face of difficulties.<sup>17</sup> It allows learners to take risks, rather than being individually risk-averse (to be distinguished from organisational risk-aversion, as evidenced by many prisons). It must be noted that the precondition of adversity may well assume additional relevance amongst prison populations. There are additional environmental factors which can impact negatively on individual resilience, which responds to consistency and a clear expectation of outcomes. The prison environment—counterintuitively, and despite its inherent strictures, rules and regulations—can often be highly inconsistent and subject to apparently arbitrary rules and changing parameters, which lead to uncertainty and corresponding lack of motivation. This was evidenced particularly clearly during one cohort when halfway through a project one learner, A, left the course in protest after learning he would not be able to keep a copy of his film on DVD having previously been led to believe that this would be possible. Informal interviews conducted during the projects’ lifespan

Resilience, Curiosity  
and Creativity are  
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suggested, anecdotally, that prisoners found the arbitrary nature of prison regulations to be wholly demotivating. In fact, practitioners themselves at times reported feeling despondent, hopeless, trapped and blocked by ‘the system’—despite having the freedom to leave at the end of each day. Developing resilience in the face of prison regulations is something that practitioners equally need to develop and is an area where they are likely to need additional support.

Despite these limitations, participants worked well and generally displayed good levels of resilience and ability to commit themselves to the task at hand. This was fostered by the practitioners themselves, who worked hard to create an open, supportive and accepting learning environment. Fostering resilience, persistence, tenacity and grit is particularly valuable for those within the prison system since they face additional obstacles in terms of gaining employment on release, as well as stigma and loss of confidence. Another learner, B, successfully completed a course after initially requesting to have his name taken off the list. During his exit interview he reported that he had initially withdrawn because he thought he’d fail, ‘*like I’ve failed at everything else*’. B was particularly pleased to receive his certificate at the end of the course.

Resilience, Curiosity and Creativity are vitaly important for our economic infrastructure, which relies on innovators, businesspeople, risk-takers and entrepreneurs. These qualities may assume additional importance for ex-prisoners who inevitably find themselves additionally challenged when finding traditional employment and may need to consider self-employment. Encouraging creativity is not, then, simply of therapeutic benefit (although it is crucially shown to aid mental health and well-being)<sup>18</sup> but is an important component of the ex-prisoner’s economic arsenal. The fact that Stretch practitioners are arts practitioners means that they are naturally open to fostering creative approaches to visual storytelling, but this is also an area where they might receive additional support, or even peer support, to

14. Ruth Deakin-Crick, Patricia Broadfoot, and Guy Claxton, ‘Developing an Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory: The ELLI Project’, *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* 11, no. 3 (2004): 247–72.  
 15. ‘Will Robots Really Steal Our Jobs?’ An International Analysis of the Potential Long Term Impact of Automation’ (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2018), <https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/assets/international-impact-of-automation-feb-2018.pdf>  
 16. Einat S. Metzl and Malissa A. Morrell, ‘The Role of Creativity in Models of Resilience: Theoretical Exploration and Practical Applications’, *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 3, no. 3 (10 October 2008): 303–18.  
 17. Deakin-Crick, Broadfoot, and Claxton, ‘Developing an Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory: The ELLI Project’.  
 18. ‘Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing’.

help develop and articulate their own practices. Of the two practitioners I worked with, one was initially far less confident in terms of deviating from a 'standard' digital storytelling format which in many ways lacked creativity and led to some stilted results. Providing additional peer support to the practitioner enabled her to develop more freedom in terms of her own facilitation and significantly improved outcomes. This is evidence of increased resilience on the part of the practitioner dovetailing with creativity, and having a positive impact on both practitioner and participant outcomes.

Overall, participants were encouraged to participate in a range of creative practices, as well as engaging with technical aspects; these included paper-cutting and collage, photo-montage, poetry, prose, games and storytelling practices. One participant, C, showed outstanding talent at art and poetry that had apparently passed completely under the radar since he had never engaged with any arts provision. C was frequently heavily medicated and socially withdrawn, although no background information on his mental health was available. Practitioners allowed him to find his own level, not forcing him to participate in any activities where he struggled to communicate his ideas but rather allowing him to find his own way of approaching the task. He did this with aplomb, creating a wonderful film using his own drawings, and he further went on to create some genuinely astonishing poetry. Throughout the project he became increasingly able to communicate with his peers, asking them to share their own stories and creative efforts, and finding ways to talk non-confrontationally with other men in a way that it seemed had never been possible for him before.

It was frustrating that there was no possibility to 'join the dots' when it came to further helping C. There was no structure in place whereby practitioners could make any recommendations on C's progress to prison staff or submit anything of note to his formal record. Practitioners were not even able to offer support after release since C had no idea how to use the internet or access basic information that would guide him to useful services, much less the Stretch website. While he

said he wanted to contact Stretch after release, to date Stretch has received no communication from him.

Learning to work with others is an essential transferable skill. Developing good learning relationships is not only about being able to work in a team or group, but also being able to relate well to teachers, managers and mentors, and also being able to work well independently. Good learning relationships evidence a balance between all these components.<sup>19</sup>

Typically Stretch projects foster positive learning relationships owing to the fact that sharing of personal stories in a nonjudgemental space is often a key component of the project, helping to increase trust-building and empathy. While there is a convention in traditional digital storytelling practice that 'community members' should be trained and fostered as storytelling practitioners,<sup>20</sup> this situation is somewhat different in a prison setting. A prison community is a discrete entity, but members of that community are often moved—without prior notice—into different prison communities, and the fact of being in prison does not make one a member of a monolithic prison community. Even within a single prison a number of discrete communities might exist, so the idea that members of a mythical prison community should be brought in to facilitate 'authentic' storytelling

Typically Stretch projects foster positive learning relationships owing to the fact that sharing of personal stories in a nonjudgemental space is often a key component of the project...

projects is rather deceptive. There is also some suggestion that prisoners—who already live in a very restricted social environment—benefit from meeting (and learning from) those from a different social milieu.<sup>21</sup> In every cohort I observed bonding and support not only between the inmate participants but also amongst practitioners and any prison staff who participated. There was a clear willingness to share and listen in non-judgement, offering help and suggestions to peers.

Learning to self-articulate—to tell one's own story, to have a sense of the meaning of one's life and direction—are important learning factors as identified by the research conducted at Bristol.<sup>22</sup> These factors differentiate between someone who has no sense of autonomy or personally-defined trajectory, and who is

19. Deakin-Crick, Broadfoot, and Claxton, 'Developing an Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory: The ELLI Project'.

20. Lambert, *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*.

21. Gerard Lemos, *The Good Prison: Conscience, Crime and Punishment* (Lemos & Crane, 2014).

22. Deakin-Crick, Broadfoot, and Claxton, 'Developing an Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory: The ELLI Project'.

just 'going through the motions', and someone who knows who they are, what they're doing, and why. Again, these are important transferable attributes for individuals leaving the criminal justice system and seeking to re-establish themselves in the community. Although the CJS typically encourages prisoners to feel shame and remorse over whatever actions caused them to be in prison, there is substantial evidence that shame is a significant factor in recidivism, and that shame triggers further shame-inducing behaviours.<sup>23</sup> A Stretch project that allows participants to talk openly about their lives without being pathologised or shamed represents an important opportunity for them to think about the course of their lives and put all aspects of their experience into perspective, may help them to move beyond shameful stigma and self-perpetuating blocks.

Visual literacy is a valuable tool in learning, helping to develop abstract thought and higher cognitive skills.<sup>24</sup> Stretch digital storytelling projects that focus on visual literacy help develop this skill, so as much time as possible should be spent allowing participants to select, edit and create appropriate imagery for their stories. Finally, allowing them the time and space to think about how their final story should be presented and what strategies they might employ for optimal effects gives participants the opportunity to engage strategically with the important question of how they wish to tell their own story, what media they will use, and how to present it to the world. One ESOL learner, D, who was also dyslexic, showed considerable difficulty with some of the basic writing tasks set by his English teacher. However, D was enthused by the storytelling activities and spent many hours in his cell between sessions writing, rewriting and perfecting a substantial handwritten script—in English—which he then went on to record and re-record in audio form. At the same time, he collaborated with the Stretch practitioner to create a series of drawings to form a comic strip effect for the film. Again, this process involved much drawing and redrawing, and careful

selection of visual metaphors for each stage of the story.

Whereas D had previously struggled with written tasks, he showed himself to have a flair for language and creative expression when encouraged to work on something that was personally meaningful; and there was an additional motivating factor in that he was desperate to share his piece of work—essentially a love story—with his girlfriend on the outside. It was all the more devastating, then, when prison authorities refused to allow the film to be screened at a final presentation ceremony and declared that the film should be erased.

## Conclusion

Without question, the prison environment presents a series of unique challenges. It is difficult both for inmates and practitioners to come up against the blocks and vagaries of 'the system', and it's something Stretch and comparable organisations need to prepare for in terms of offering support, whether this comes down to managing expectations or finding alternative ways to disseminate work and incorporating viable alternatives into project outlines. Digital stories from prisons are arguably less of a community archive and represent both a therapeutic and even semi-political space where voices can be heard and dissent articulated (albeit in a limited sense). It is therefore important to recognise the unique impact of prison stories as a part of the criminal justice reform and rehabilitation landscape.

In the course of my observations I have tried to see 'the bigger picture'—not just what concrete skills inmates were learning, but what we could learn about the learners themselves, their hopes and needs, and the learning environment. The tentative conclusions drawn in these pages warrant further research as we move towards developing a more robust evaluation process that takes account of the broad range of social, emotional and cognitive learning one might hope to foster in any organisation, but perhaps particularly in prison contexts.

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23. Daniela Hosser, Michael Windzio, and Werner Greve, 'Guilt and Shame as Predictors of Recidivism: A Longitudinal Study With Young Prisoners', *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 35, no. 1 (January 2008): 138–52; June P. Tangney et al., 'Assessing Jail Inmates' Proneness to Shame and Guilt: Feeling Bad About the Behavior or the Self?', *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 38, no. 7 (1 July 2011): 710–34; June Price Tangney, Jeff Stuewig, and Logaina Hafez, 'Shame, Guilt and Remorse: Implications for Offender Populations', *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 22, no. 5 (1 September 2011): 706–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2011.617541>.
24. Nicole A. Beatty, 'Cognitive Visual Literacy: From Theories and Competencies to Pedagogy', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 32, no. 1 (2013): 33–42.

# Scratching the Surface:

## A service evaluation of an applied theatre intervention for female offenders.

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**Over the last three decades, Geese Theatre Company (hereafter referred to as GT) have been using applied theatre techniques to promote positive change in a range of individuals with a particular focus on offenders. They are accustomed to tailoring the content and intensity of programme elements to be responsive to the needs of specific population types and individuals. Although drama has been utilised in forensic settings for many years, GT are known for their innovative approach which places emphasis on improvisation and interactivity as a catalyst for instigating cognitive and behavioural change.<sup>1</sup> Baim and colleagues<sup>2</sup> note that applied theatre techniques allow for exercises to be tailored to the individual, and have the further advantages of not being constrained by the requirement of sufficient literacy skills and that they allow for realistic skills rehearsal.**

The evidence base for the effectiveness of drama interventions with offenders is promising for a range of issues associated with depression<sup>3,4</sup> and low self-esteem.<sup>5</sup> Research into the effectiveness of GT programmes has indicated the programme to be

effective in reducing anger,<sup>6</sup> and increasing self-efficacy, confidence and motivation to change.<sup>7,8</sup> The work of GT is based on three key underlying theories: Social learning theory; Cognitive-behavioural theory; and Role theory. Rehabilitative work, grounded in such theories, has been found to be effective in producing positive change.<sup>9</sup>

Geese Theatre enables offenders to learn and practice new skills and consider these within the social context, gain insight into their thinking patterns and how these impact upon their behaviour, and to consider the roles that they play in their lives—providing them with assurance that they can create new, prosocial roles.

Geese Theatre use a range of methods which promote and elicit self-reflection and change. 'The Mask' and 'mask lifting' are over-arching concepts used by GT as key catalysts in enabling offenders to 'encounter the hidden thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs of a character'.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, performances have been found to lead offenders to witnessing the character reveal 'vulnerabilities, insecurities and fears which might otherwise remain hidden'.<sup>11</sup> The technique has been found to be powerful and memorable with

1. Baim, C. (2007). 'Drama in prisons', in Blatner, A. and Wiener, D. (eds) *Interactive and improvisational drama: Varieties of applied theatre and performance*. Lincoln, UK: iUniverse, pp. 205 – 216.
2. Baim C., Brookes S., and Mountford A. (2002) *The Geese Theatre Handbook*. Winchester, UK: Waterside Press.
3. Chapman, E. (2014) 'Using dramatic reality to reduce depressive symptoms: A qualitative study', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 41, pp. 137 – 144.
4. Hamamci, Z. (2006) 'Integrating psychodrama and cognitive behavioural therapy to treat moderate depression', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 33, pp. 199 – 207.
5. Pendzik, S. (2008) 'Dramatic resonances: A technique of intervention in drama therapy, supervision, and training', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 35, pp. 217-223.
6. Blacker, J., Watson, A., and Beech, A. R. (2008) 'A combined drama-based and CBT approach to working with self-reported anger and aggression', *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 18, pp. 129-137.
7. Harkins, L., Haskayne, D., Watson, A., Beech, A., and Sweeney, C. (2009). Evaluation of Geese Theatre's 'Inside Talk' Programme. Available at: <http://www.artsevidence.org.uk/media/uploads/evaluation-downloads/geese-inside-talk-evaluation-dec-2009.pdf> (Accessed: 15 February 2017).
8. Harkins, L., Pritchard, C., Haskayne, D., Watson, A., and Beech, A. (2011) 'Evaluation of Geese Theatre's Reconnect programme: Use of theatre and drama to address resettlement issues in prison', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 55, pp. 546-566.
9. Antonowicz, D., and Ross, R. (1994) 'Essential components of successful rehabilitation programs for offenders', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 38, pp. 97-104.
10. Baim et al. (2002).
11. Watson, A. (2009) 'Lift your mask': Geese Theatre Company in performance', in Prentki, T. and Preston, S. (eds) *The Applied Theatre Reader*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, pp. 47 – 54.

the metaphor being quickly grasped by offenders. In addition to short performances by GT practitioners, a range of experiential exercises are used which aim to help offenders become conscious of and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and ability to make decisions.<sup>12</sup>

Skills practice in sessions can be tailored to the individual's needs and the situations that they struggle with (e.g. dealing with feelings of anger, communication with staff and peers, coping with negative feelings, and asking for help). Issues addressed by GT include self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation to change, hope for the future, healing of past negative experiences (e.g. trauma and abuse/neglect), perspective taking, problem solving skills, pro-social/realistic goals, empathy and social skills.<sup>13</sup>

Recent statistics in the UK suggest that those in prison are 8.6 times more likely to commit suicide than those in the general population.<sup>14</sup> High levels of mental health issues, suicide, self-harm and low self-esteem have been found among female offenders,<sup>15</sup> with issues such as hopelessness and depression being found to be associated with suicide attempts in female offenders.<sup>16</sup>

In an article co-produced by the International Association of Suicide Prevention (IASP) and the World Health Organization (WHO),<sup>17</sup> it was noted that 'Whatever individual stressors and vulnerabilities may be operating, a final common pathway leading an inmate to suicide seems to be feelings of hopelessness, a narrowing of future prospects and a loss of options for coping.' (p. 7). In addition, research suggests that holding positive beliefs about the future (e.g., being able to cope and positive prospects) is inversely associated with suicidal ideation.<sup>18</sup> As such, it is suggested that interventions designed to target hopelessness, fear over future prospects, and mental well-being may be beneficial for offenders in terms of reducing suicidal ideation, decreasing levels of depression and increasing well-being.

As outlined above, previous research findings regarding the impact of drama based interventions and, more specifically, GT programmes, are promising. However, such research has not yet been conducted with a sample of female offenders and the issue of hopelessness has not yet been explored. It could be

hypothesised that, within a population of vulnerable female offenders who have issues such as suicide ideation and/or who commit acts of deliberate self-harm (DSH), addressing issues such as hope, self-esteem, control, and asking for help would have a positive impact on reducing such thoughts and/or acts.

The current study sought to examine the potential impact of *Scratching the Surface*—a ten session programme delivered intensively over five days for female offenders in prison in the UK. More specifically, the study aimed to address the questions:

- Does completion of the programme lead to a statistically significant increase in levels of mental well-being and psychological functioning as measured by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale?
- Does completion of the programme lead to statistically significant and clinically meaningful increases in levels of hope as measured by The Beck Hopelessness scale?
- Do participants hold positive opinions about the *Scratching the Surface* programme?

## Method

### Participants

Participants were recruited through the Safer Custody team. *Scratching the Surface* was delivered to four groups, resulting in a total of 23 women who completed the programme. Of these women, 21 participated in the study. Women were aged between 20 and 49 with a mean age of 31 ( $SD = 8.0$ ). Specific information about offending behaviour was not provided, however, the majority of the women were felt by the team to be vulnerable and at risk of suicide and/or DSH. The majority ( $n = 16$ ) were white British (69.6 per cent). Other ethnicities in the group were two black British Caribbean women, one black British African, one Asian British Indian, one mixed white and black African, one mixed white and black Caribbean, and one Asian British Pakistani.

12. Baim (2007).

13. Baim (2007); Baim et al. (2002).

14. Ministry of Justice (2017). *Safer in custody statistics bulletin, England and Wales, deaths in prison custody to December 2016, assaults and self-harm to September 2016*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-december-2016> (Accessed: 15 March 2017).

15. Byrne, M., and Howells, K. (2002), 'The psychological needs of women prisoners: implications for rehabilitation and management', *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 9, pp. 34–43.

16. Chapman, A., Specht, M., and Cellucci, T. (2005), 'Factors associated with suicide attempts in female inmates: The hegemony of hopelessness', *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour*, 35, pp. 867 – 875.

17. World Health Organization (2007). *Preventing suicide in jails and prisons*. Available at:

[http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/resource\\_jails\\_prisons.pdf](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/resource_jails_prisons.pdf) (Accessed: 15 March 2017).

18. Linehan, M., Goodstein, J., Nielsen, S., and Chiles, J. (1983), 'Reasons for staying alive when you are thinking of killing yourself: The reasons for living inventory', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 51, pp. 276 – 286.

## Measures

Participants were asked to complete two psychometric measures (The Beck Hopelessness scale; and the Warwick-Edinburgh Well-being scale) prior to the first session and following completion of the programme; comparisons of pre and post scores were made.

The Beck Hopelessness Scale is designed to assess three main aspects of hopelessness: loss of motivation; expectations; and feelings about the future. The scale contains 20 'true or false' statements and participants are required to tick a box to state whether they either agree with a pessimistic statement or disagree with an optimistic statement. Whilst not directly measuring suicide ideation and DSH, the tool provides an indication as to changes in levels of depression<sup>19</sup> and general hope for the future. As Scratching the Surface aimed to address issues such as these, this was considered an appropriate measure for use in the study.

The WEMWBS contains 14 Likert scale items designed to measure subjective wellbeing and psychological functioning.<sup>20</sup> Developers note that an interest in mental wellbeing is a comparatively recent phenomenon and, as such, there are no specific clinical cut-off points although increases of between three and eight points would indicate meaningful improvements. In addition, it is suggested that very low scores relate to depression. At an individual level the measure has value as a qualitative tool on which to base further investigation of a person's mental wellbeing in a clinical context.<sup>21</sup> More specifically, the WEMWBS was considered to be a suitable measure for the current evaluation due to the focus on areas targeted by the GT such as hope, anxiety, self-esteem, positivity, confidence, self-efficacy and creating future goals.

Both psychometric measures are widely used and have been tested for reliability and validity.<sup>22,23</sup>

In addition, an eight item Likert scale and open-ended question questionnaire was administered immediately following the final day of the programme. The Likert scale contained items such as 'they had

enjoyed the programme', 'they had learnt new skills', 'they had done something they were proud of.' Open-ended questions were used to explore areas such as whether participants felt the programme had had an impact on them, whether there were parts they found to be memorable, and how did they feel about the way in which GT staff interacted with them.

## Procedure

Prisoners who had agreed to take part in Scratching the Surface were provided with an information sheet about the study by GT staff. Prisoners who were willing to take part in the study were asked to sign a consent form. Psychometric measures were completed by participants prior to the start of the programme in a quiet room where their responses could not be overlooked by other participants or GT staff. Participants were asked to write a memorable 4-digit code on their completed measures to allow it to be matched with the post programme psychometric measures (administered following the same

procedure as pre-programme measures). Likert scale/open ended questionnaires were administered immediately following programme completion; questionnaires were also anonymised.

## Analysis

Anonymised pre and post data for the Beck Hopelessness Scale and the Warwick-Edinburgh Well-being scale were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS: Version 22). Paired sample t-tests were conducted to look for the existence of statistically significant differences between pre and post scores.

### Likert scale/open ended questions

Likert scale scores given (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree) were averaged across the group and percentages were calculated. Open ended question responses were collated and summarised.

## The WEMWBS contains 14 Likert scale items designed to measure subjective wellbeing and psychological functioning.

19. Bouvard, M., Charles, S., Guerin, J., Aimard, G., and J. Cottraux. (1992), 'Study of Beck's hopelessness scale: Validation and factor analysis', *L'Encephale*, 18, pp. 237–240.

20. Taggart, F., Stewart-Brown, S., and Parkinson, J. (2016), *Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): User guide, version 2*. Edinburgh, UK: NHS Scotland.

21. Stewart-Brown, S., and Janmohamed, K. (2008). *Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS). User Guide Version 1*. Warwick and Edinburgh: University of Warwick and NHS Health Scotland.

22. Bouvard et al. (1992).

23. Stewart-Brown, A., Platt, S., Tennant, A., Maheswaran, H., Parkinson, J., Weich, S., Tennant, R., Taggart, F., and Clarke, A. (2011), 'The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): A valid and reliable tool for measuring mental well-being in diverse populations and projects', *Journal of Epidemiology Community Health*, 65, pp. 1- 40.

## Results

### Beck Hopelessness Scale

Repeated measures t-tests were conducted on pre and post scores. Statistically significant reductions in scores on the hopelessness scale were identified ( $t(20) = 5.58, p = < .001, d = 1.26$ ) between questionnaires completed prior to and following the programme ( $M = 8.52, SD = 5.32; M = 3.38, SD = 4.08$ ). Ten of the 21 respondents scored above the clinical cut-off point of 8 (implying higher risk of suicide) prior to the programme. A reduction ( $M = 8.3$ ) in scores was found for nine of these participants. In all of the nine cases this led to the score moving from above clinical cut-off for increased risk of suicide to below the cut-off point.

### Warwick-Edinburgh Well-being Scale

A statistically significant increase in scores on the well-being scale were found for participants between their scores prior to the programme ( $M = 37.33, SD = 9.70$ ) and scores following the programme ( $M = 47.71, SD = 7.72; t(20) = -4.50, p = < .001, d = 1.18$ ). Scores from 19 of the 21 women showed an increase in well-being; 16 of these were such that they indicated a meaningful improvement in mental well-being.

### Likert scale/open ended questions

The Likert scale responses (see Table 1) showed that all participants would recommend the programme to someone else, enjoyed the programme, and felt they had learnt new skills. The vast majority of participants agreed with all other items; where participants did not respond with 'agree' or 'strongly agree', a response of 'neither agree nor disagree' was given. No participants disagreed with any statement.

**Table 1.** Likert scale statement response summary

Statements regarding Scratching the Surface	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Would recommend the programme to someone else	-	-	-	2	19
2. Enjoyed the programme	-	-	-	8	13
3. Learnt new skills	-	-	-	13	8
4. Have more confidence	-	-	1	13	7
5. Using theatre and drama made the project more memorable	-	-	1	3	17
6. Done something they are proud of	-	-	2	12	7
7. Better at opening up to people	-	-	3	12	6
8. Feel better in themselves	-	-	4	10	7

### Open-ended question summaries

*Which elements of the project were found most useful/memorable?*

Four women mentioned that they felt role play to be useful/memorable. In addition, four participants commented that the masks were useful: 'Acting out things with masks was a good source to reflect on our self.' More generally, participants commented that they felt they knew themselves better as a result of the programme ( $n = 5$ ), one participant commented,

*Learning about how I can react to different situations and how the outcome of the situation is down to me and my decisions.*

Others felt they were now better able think about how their actions affect their future in the short and/or long term ( $n = 6$ ), and to think about life goals ( $n = 3$ ). Four participants made reference to enjoying and/or seeing the benefit of feeling supported by others in the group and team work, for example:

*Being in a safe environment which has enabled me to look at myself as a person and recognise that I am not a bad person. Found working as a team to solve problems in particular the games that were played.*

Part of *Scratching the Surface* involves the GT practitioners devising a personal piece of work for each individual in the group, based on their progress throughout the course and on the areas the women themselves have identified as difficult, challenging or that they feel they need to work further on. These tasks may involve skills practice role plays, opportunities to reflect on aspects of their lives, or the creation of memorable statements or images. For GT what is important is that the piece of work is specifically tailored to the individual.

Reference was made to the benefits of these personalised pieces of work ( $n = 5$ ) such as developing coping skills, problem solving skills and confidence. With reference to her particular issues, one participant commented

*...it helped me with situations with my children and problem solving—they're fantastic what they do—I'm a different person.*

*Which elements were found least useful/memorable?*

The vast majority of participants ( $n = 16$ ) stated that there was nothing in the programme that was not useful. Four respondents felt the warm-up games were not necessarily useful and one commented that she was not comfortable with a particular game that involved pointing at people as she felt this to be rude (this was potentially as a result of a cultural difference).

What impact did participants feel the project had on them?

All participants made reference to solely positive impact of participating in the programme. There was a range of positive impacts noted. Four women made remarks that they felt the programme had given them a more positive outlook on life and six felt the programme had resulted in an increase in confidence and/or self-esteem: *'I can see to the future, it looks a lot brighter and I have more confidence'*. In addition, some participants ( $n = 4$ ) mentioned that they are now more able to think before they act: *'To think what might that word or action have on my future achievements'*.

Furthermore, eight participants felt they had developed new skills and/or changed their behaviour, for example:

*It has made me see a better me and it's showed me new skills that I can use in everyday situations' and 'Will allow me to build up self-esteem. To have more confidence in self and ability to carry things out that I find difficult.*

How did participants feel about the way Geese staff interacted with them?

All respondents made positive comments regarding Geese staff. Words such as *'friendly', 'approachable', 'fun', 'understanding', 'fantastic', 'amazing', 'supportive', 'creative', 'non-judgemental', 'empathetic', 'helpful', 'respectful'* and *'gifted'* were used to describe the practitioners. It was also commented that they were easy to interact with and engaging.

Where women went in to more detail regarding their thoughts on the GT practitioners, comments were made such as, *'They were amazing, supportive and very creative. They engaged with us well and listened to us as much as we did to them—extremely respectful and passionate'* and *'They were supportive and helpful they made me think I can do this.'*

Three participants noted that staff were able to meet the needs of individuals despite it being group work. One woman went further to mention how GT practitioners made her feel able to explore her feelings:

*The staff who delivered this course were excellent, they made me feel safe and secure which allowed me to explore my feelings then not being judgemental—this goes a long way*

*in making me feel a valued individual. The staff were empathetic, supportive, acknowledging when things were tough. Both [names practitioners] are a credit to Geese Theatre.*

### Further comments

The majority of participants ( $n = 19$ ) chose to make additional comments all of which were positive. Seven women took the opportunity to thank GT practitioners for delivering the programme and five mentioned that they felt the programme should be made available to others. More specifically, based on individual experiences, it was commented that the programme may be particularly good for women who lack confidence or who have mental health issues. One participant went further to suggest it would also be beneficial for those who are not in prison: *'This group needs to be available in all prisons and all types of people whatever problems they have. Everybody should have a chance to do the course whether they are in prison or not.'*

Lastly, one participant commented that the course is particularly useful for people in prison as it will improve relationships in the prison

environment:

*I believe the project should be done as part of a regime for also making others aware that everyone has a better understanding in getting along with others in prison life.*

### Discussion

Concurrent with previous studies looking at drama based interventions and GT programmes with male offenders,<sup>24</sup> findings of the current evaluation indicate that *Scratching the Surface* had a positive impact on participants in areas such as hope, mental well-being, confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem, positivity, anger reduction and control, decreasing depression, and reduction in the risk of attempted suicide and DSH.

Clinically significant reductions in post programme scores for participants who scored above the clinical cut-off point on the Beck hopelessness scale prior to the

... the programme may be particularly good for women who lack confidence or who have mental health issues.

24. Blacker et al. (2008); Chapman (2014); Hamamci (2006); Harkins et al. (2009); Harkins et al. (2011); Pendzik (2008).

programme were indicative of a decreased likelihood suicidal ideation and corresponding increases in levels of hope.

In addition, statistically significant improvements on the WEMWBS were indicative of the programme having had a positive impact on participants mental well-being (i.e., anxiety, problem solving, future planning, ability to communicate with others). The WEMWBS can be seen to measure states of happiness and life satisfaction, as well as psychological functioning, relationships and self-acceptance;<sup>25</sup> in short, authors of the WEMWBS describe mental well-being as 'positive states of being, thinking, behaving and feeling' (p. 4). Despite the small sample size, results can be seen to provide an indication that improvements may also be seen in scores on the Beck hopelessness scale and the WEMWBS for a larger sample of female offenders.

Results of the Likert scale/open-ended question questionnaire were also very promising. Largely positive responses on Likert scale items such as having more confidence, being better at opening up, and feeling better in themselves, were also indicative that participation in the programme had addressed issues which were related to relationships and mental well-being. Responses to open-ended questions highlighted the positive views that participants held about GT staff. Participants mentioned traits such as empathetic, respectful, non-judgemental when describing GT staff. Such comments are supportive of previous research which has highlighted the importance of a positive therapeutic relationship.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, comments made regarding the usefulness of role play and being in a safe environment were supportive of previous literature.<sup>27,28</sup> Results from the psychometric and questionnaire measures emphasise that, through the use of applied theatre techniques and exercises, the programme benefits participants by instilling or increasing positivity towards themselves and positivity regarding their futures (i.e., the planning of attainable, pro-social life goals). The success of placing an emphasis on such positive elements is concurrent with Good Lives Model (GLM) principles.<sup>29</sup>

## Limitations

It was felt by prison Safer Custody Team staff that prisoners may be less likely to volunteer for the programme if it were to be overtly targeted at those who commit DSH and/or contemplate suicide. As such it was advertised to prisoners as being suitable for those who wish to address confidence and general well-being. As a result, participants on the programme were not all considered to be at high risk of DSH and suicide. However, groups did contain prisoners who were considered vulnerable to such thoughts/behaviours. Pre-programme scores on the Beck Hopelessness Scale indicated that approximately half of those participating in the study were at increased risk of attempting suicide.

Due to the small sample size for the study, generalisability cannot be inferred. Future evaluations may benefit from larger sample sizes, access to data on frequency of incidents of DSH by participants pre and post programme, and access to data on adjudications within prison in order to measure changes in behaviour following the programme.

Furthermore, it would be advised that future studies include a follow-up element whereby psychometric measures are administered after a period of time has elapsed to look at whether the benefits experienced were maintained.

## Conclusions

Although methodological limitations must be taken into account, through combining findings of the psychometric measures and questionnaire elements of the study, it can be tentatively concluded that *Scratching the Surface* benefitted those who took part. More specifically, comparisons of pre and post scores indicated an increase in levels of hope and mental well-being. Qualitative feedback gained through the questionnaire indicate that the applied theatre techniques and exercises used by GT were integral to the programme benefitting those who participated.

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25. Putz, R., O'Hara, K., Taggart, F., and Stewart-Brown, S. (2012). *Using WEMWBS to measure the impact of your work on mental wellbeing: A practice-based user guide. Feeling good and doing well in Coventry Wellbeing Project*. Available at: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/researchers/userguide/wemwbs\\_practice\\_based\\_user\\_guide.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/researchers/userguide/wemwbs_practice_based_user_guide.pdf) (Accessed 15 March 2017).

26. Kozar, C., and Day, A. (2012) 'The therapeutic alliance in offending behaviour programs: A necessary and sufficient condition for change?' *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 17, pp. 482-487.

27. Hudson, K. (2005) *Offending identities. Sex offenders' perspectives on their treatment and management*. Devon, UK: Willan Publishing.

28. Yalom, I. (2005) *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (5th ed.). New York, USA: Basic Books.

29. Ward, T., and Stewart, C. A. (2003) 'Criminogenic needs and human needs: A theoretical model', *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 9, pp. 125-143.

# Performing Punishment, Transporting Audiences: Clean Break Theatre Company's *Sweatbox*

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*Credit: Clean Break Theatre Company. Sweatbox by Chloe Moss. Photographer: Katherine Leedale*

**It's not everyone that gets to experience the inside of a prison van—or sweatbox. Hard seats, unforgiving heat (or cold), no windows, and no way out. Most of those that have been transported in one have been arrested and are being moved between holding cells and courts or from sentencing to prisons. Otherwise, they are officers responsible for ensuring the safe transportation of people between various sites associated with the criminal justice system. Very few would find the experience one they would like to repeat. Yvonne Jewkes characterises the transportation of prisoners in sweatboxes as hell-holes. Each prisoner being transported, she says,**

*is locked inside a tiny coffin-like cubicle, approximately five feet high and measuring about 34in by 24in, with a 10in square clear plastic window and a small hard metal seat on which they must remain seated.<sup>1</sup>*

In Clean Break Theatre Company's recent production *Sweatbox*, written by Chloë Moss, first produced for the

festival circuit in 2015 and directed by Imogen Ashby, the general public is invited to get into a sweatbox and immerse themselves in the dramas playing out when people are transported up and down the country.<sup>2</sup>

Limited audiences are invited to join three characters in the prison van and sit opposite windows to women whose stories they witness through the small windows in the doors. It is a claustrophobic, sweaty, difficult experience as the audience overhears the women's unfolding stories. As audiences encounter the physical realities of women constrained and confined, the space of the sweatbox gives form to the simultaneous structure and chaos of people's journeys through the criminal justice system. We are not informed of much—the particular stories of these women are not ostensibly about their pasts but their present. The audience thus experiences the embodiedness of the confined present for women in the endlessness and uncertainty of the sweatbox. Each of the characters reflects some of the known challenges faced by people who have been sentenced. To communicate, the women shout through the doors to each other—to find out where they are, to ask when they might stop, or to work out what is going to happen to them. The van becomes a space of encounter with these different women but also, for the audience, an encounter with the spaces of criminal justice.

As readers of PSJ will know, prisons as institutions and carceral conditions more broadly pose particular problems or challenges for research across the range of disciplines: criminology, legal studies and the humanities. I suggest that there are three central problems that are made evident in this short discussion about *Sweatbox*—and which are central to the field of critical analysis of the arts in criminal justice more broadly. These problems are not necessarily discrete, chronological or hierarchical, but rather inter-relate, and are concerns that I explore in other work on prison cultures.<sup>3</sup> The first ontological problem is of how to understand being in prison (in particular the distance between entering and leaving (workers of all

1. Jewkes, Y. (2012) Penal Hell-Holes and Dante's Inferno. *Prison Service Journal* 199. pp. 20-25.

2. Clean Break (2018) Productions. [online] Available at: <<http://www.cleanbreak.org.uk/productions/sweatbox/>>. Accessed on 18 May 2018.

3. Walsh, A. (2019) *Prison Cultures: Performance, Resistance and Desire*. Bristol: Intellect.

kinds, including officers) and living there (prisoners)). One of the reasons it is helpful to explore theatrical and mediated stories about criminal justice relates to this problem—stories (particularly visual ones) can help humanise and embody the cycles of crime, criminalisation and justice. The second is an epistemological problem of how to understand prison (its material conditions, its social and political functions and its daily operations), and the third problem relates to what we know of prisoners themselves—in this case, through consuming representations via cultural products in media and performance modes.<sup>4</sup>

From a range of perspectives, including criminology, cultural studies and carceral geography, the potential to explore a theatrical representation of mobility in the form of prison vans is productive for a number of reasons. Initially, it signals this key problem in the carceral imaginary by dealing with the themes of confinement and criminalisation. Secondly, it considers mobility and the space of the sweatbox as culturally produced in similar ways to the fixed locations of incarceration. Furthermore, it enables an analytic frame for conceiving of mobilities of women involved in the arts education programmes at Clean Break.

Clean Break's model of developing artistic projects with graduates of their education programmes enables women with experience of criminal justice to participate in professional productions. Past examples have included *Sounds Like an Insult* by Vivienne Franzmann (2014), as well as Katherine Chandler's play *Spent* (2016). Perhaps the most visible of these platforms was the incorporation of graduate actors in the company of the Donmar Warehouse Shakespeare trilogy (2016) directed by Phyllida Lloyd.<sup>5</sup> Clean Break and the project partners, York St John University and the Donmar Warehouse were awarded the 2016 Lord Longford Prize for this impressive and wide-ranging work.<sup>6</sup> In a review of one of these shows, critic Lyn Gardner says:

*By the end, as [protagonist Harriet] Walter sits alone in her cell, you can't help weeping for the lives lost to the injustices of our prison system and the way we all make prisons for ourselves. This is genuinely art to enchant.*<sup>7</sup>

The Donmar Shakespeare Trilogy evidently enabled incarceration to be explored in mainstream cultural productions that have made an international impression.

Clean Break's artistic programme has been lauded for developing a significant body of work by female playwrights for female casts. While much of this work has also received critical attention, the company's mission has always included a complementary aim. What is particularly noteworthy is the commitment to using the art form of theatre to educate, as explored by Chief Executive, Lucy Perman, who has led the company for 21 years.<sup>8</sup> Their education programme has served as an important training ground for women affected by the criminal justice system, and has resulted in numerous graduate successes, including women pursuing further study in the arts as well as professional commissions for theatre as writers and castings for some of the women graduates as actors.<sup>9</sup> Particular successes for writing include Sonia Hale, who was commissioned to write *Hours to Midnight*. In terms of partnerships with Higher Education, the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama has welcomed Clean Break graduates onto their BA and MA programmes.

### Mobilities: Transformation/ Transportation

The director and performance studies scholar Richard Schechner tells us that performance operates on a spectrum between transportation and transformation.<sup>10</sup> His perspective is that theatre can fulfil a function of entertainment or efficacy—and that these possibilities result in specific conditions for the audience—in which performance that aims to entertain may 'transport' audiences to different eras or spaces and thereby enable them to move imaginatively into experiences very distinct from their own. On the other end of the spectrum, artistic work that might have a specific function (such as skills development) could effect change in a specific way—thus transforming an audience's understanding. Schechner also notes the importance of the ritual function of performance in many cultural contexts so that its effects may be to transform spaces, or to mark ritual or liminal moments.

4. Cheliotis, L.K. (ed.) (2012) *The Arts of Imprisonment: Control, Resistance and Empowerment*. Ashgate: Farnham.
5. The trilogy included: *Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest*, *Henry IV*. <https://www.donmarwarehouse.com/production/10013/shakespeare-trilogy/>
6. Davey, K. (2016) Member News. National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance [online] <<https://www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/clean-break-have-been-awarded-the-2016-longford-prize-for-their-collaboration-with-the-donmar-warehouse-and-york-st-johns-university/>>. Accessed on 19 May 2018.
7. Gardner, L. (2016) Review: Shakespeare Trilogy. *The Guardian*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/nov/23/shakespeare-trilogy-five-star-review-donmar-kings-cross-harriet-walter>>. Accessed on 19 May 2018.
8. Perman, L. (2013) Restorative Theatre: Working Inside Out with Prisons and Offenders. *The Guardian*. [online] Available from: <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2013/mar/13/restorative-theatre-clean-break-offenders>>. [Accessed 18 May 2018]. and Walsh, A. (2016) 'Staging Women in Prison: Clean Break Theatre Company's Dramaturgy of the Cage' *Crime, Media, Culture*. 12(3): pp. 309-326.
9. Herrmann, A. (2009) 'The Mothership': Sustainability and Transformation in the Work of Clean Break. In T. Prentki and S. Preston (eds.) *The Applied Theatre Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 328–335.
10. Schechner, R. (2013) *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

Since his early formulation, others have drawn on this foundational debate, which has informed much analysis of socially engaged performance ever since. In my own sub-discipline, claims for transformation are viewed critically in light of funding agendas and policies such as payment by results. Nonetheless, as the long term Head of Education Anna Herrmann describes in a moving discussion of journeys through Clean Break's education programme, narratives of transformation are significant for women who have been involved with the company.<sup>11</sup>

What makes this spectrum interesting in the context of Clean Break is how it can be applied to the long history as a theatre company working with women involved in the criminal justice system. Clean Break's four decades of work are notable in mainstream culture. The company has had a profound impact for opportunities for women playwrights and also in terms of its education programme for the hundreds of women who have graduated from the North London foundation courses. The ethos of its founders, two serving prisoners from HMP Askham Grange has been upheld throughout, with the charity's staff dedicating themselves to the artistic, educational as well as personal development of the women recruited to the courses.

In an important report commissioned by the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, researchers explored the link between participation in arts activities and desistance from crime. They found that 'participation in arts activities enables individuals to begin to redefine themselves, an important factor in desistance from crime'.<sup>12</sup> They go on to demonstrate that 'arts projects provide safe spaces for individuals to have positive experiences and begin to make individual choices'.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Clean Break, the kinds of outcomes reported by participants in this kind of embedded, long-term programme include a sense of safety, empowerment, being seen and heard, offering alternatives to cycles of crime, striving for achievement and success, and a sense of community. These outcomes are alongside the skills based training in theatre and the

resulting confidence skills, re-connection to the body, the strength of creative ensembles, the flexibility needed in performance and building capacity to improvise (or react to the unexpected).

Merrill and Frigon's criminological study (2015)<sup>14</sup> explores the value of education based programmes for women enrolled on courses at Clean Break, highlighting the students' 'journeys', and their newfound capacity to address identity-work in a communal, creative and affirming way in a 'safe space'. Their findings reiterate some of the spatial metaphors that are often deployed when discussing arts in criminal justice, but which are further underpinned by the ethos of Clean Break as a feminist organisation—namely the production of a space that is safe for women.

This leads me to the potential for disciplinary crossovers with carceral geography as an analytic framework that can help to interrogate how such spaces are produced; and what that might offer for a reading of Clean Break's Sweatbox.

### Mobilising Carceral Geography<sup>15</sup>

Dominique Moran is a geographer engaged in furthering the burgeoning critical engagement with carceral geography. This attends to the explicitly spatial dynamics inherent to incarceration — from mobilities of prison vans, to mapping visits to the carceral

estate, as well as how uses of space are communicated beyond carceral spaces themselves (Moran *et al*, 2013). Carceral geography opens up understandings of experiences of criminal justice beyond the criminogenic factors that are often the focus of academic research. This lends it to productive interplay with cultural criminology and means that by applying this framing to performance, we can consider how spaces of meaning are produced in the cultural event such as the short play Sweatbox; or in the long-term education programme at Clean Break.

Moran states that '*Understanding the affective dimension of human experience in carceral space could not only exemplify a concept, but participate in efforts*

Participation in arts activities enables individuals to begin to redefine themselves, an important factor in desistance from crime.

11. Ibid, 2009.

12. Bilby, C., Caulfield, L., & Ridley, L. (2013) *Re-imagining Futures: Exploring Arts Interventions and the Process of Desistance*. London: Arts Alliance, pp. 5-6

13. Ibid, 2013: pp. 5-6.

14. Merrill, E., & S. Frigon (2015) Performative Criminology and the 'State of Play' for Theatre with Criminalized Women. *Societies*. 5, pp. 295-313.

15. Moran, D. (2013), Carceral Geography and the Spatialities of Prison Visiting: Visitation, Recidivism, and Hyperincarceration. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31, pp.174–190. Moran, D., Gill, N. & Conlon, D. (eds.) (2013) *Carceral Spaces: Mobility and Agency in Imprisonment and Migrant Detention*. Farnham: Ashgate. Moran, D. (2015) *Carceral Geography: Spaces and Practices of Incarceration*. Farnham. Ashgate.

to make positive social and political change.<sup>16</sup>

Theatrical representations, film and the cultural events such as annual Koestler awards do much to enable this affective dimension to the wider public. Arguably, the capacity offered by the immediacy of performance can help to engage with human stories. When characters reflect on experiences before and during prison, this can help to both move the imaginary of the prison as institution beyond the tropes of mainstream representations.

What is offered by performance, then, is a more complex engagement with stories and spaces of incarceration. For Moran, in a later work on the cultural work of carceral geography:

Spaces of incarceration, as places through which prevailing criminal justice systems impose punishments on those deemed to have offended against the rule of law, are explicitly intended to promote the values of the state, and its dominant ideologies of justice and punitivity. As 'texts' which can be 'read' they form 'palimpsests' of identity and culture, which both validate and authenticate consensual notions of justice, whilst simultaneously inviting alternative readings.<sup>17</sup>

This perspective is valuable for those of us working in cogent disciplines whose engagement with geographic thinking is via the cultural imaginary. Where spaces are produced through theatre and performance, the perspective from carceral geography is significant because it recognises not only the material conditions of prisons, prison vans or visiting rooms. This perspective also accounts for how a dynamic production of space is predicated upon understandings of inside and outside. In some cases it also relies upon audiences or publics to constitute the carceral as a spectacle of punishment. Similarly, Jennifer Turner puts forward a reading of spectacle and voyeurism that are particular to televised representations of prisons and carceral spaces.<sup>18</sup> Her reading encourages an understanding of reality television that deals with prisoners. She proposes a means of '[l]earning to critically reflect upon how the geographies of inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside, prisoner and civilian, come to be variously ordered and disordered.'<sup>19</sup>

This approach encourages a critical engagement with how aesthetics, frames, and spaces or spectacles of

criminological interest are produced and disseminated. It is this project of how culture replicates, undermines or revolutionises representations of crime and the criminal justice system to which I now turn.

Yvonne Jewkes' description of sweatbox transportation is illuminating:

*Many prisoners—including women, children and teenagers—spend long hours in these vans being transported, sometimes hundreds of miles, between courts and prisons. They usually get no fresh air or exercise, no food or water and no toilet facilities. If they urinate in the cubicle they simply have to clean it out on arrival at their destination. For the thousands of prisoners transported in this way, a large proportion of whom are on remand, many of whom are ill, traumatised, mentally unstable or claustrophobic, the experience recalls the barbarism of a previous era's transportation of slaves and convicts.<sup>20</sup>*

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Though technically, the public is aware that sweatboxes contain prisoners being transported between courts and prisons, to encounter the physical realities of the prison van and the women inside it provides an embodied, experiential understanding.

The performance demonstrates women's different reactions to being confined in the sweatbox. One is pregnant and pisses herself. The second seems to be quite accustomed to the sweatbox (and tells of her prior experiences of arrest) and the last is suffering from a panic attack as she was not informed about the likelihood of being 'sent down'. She was remanded from court and her child is expecting to be picked up from school. One of the prisoners talks to an unseen officer who is not coming to help let them out or tell them when they can expect to get out of the van and into the prison. This short encounter builds tension as the three narratives signal the women's pre-existing anxieties. One woman hasn't had any experience of prison while the others tell of how to survive when she gets inside. The final woman explains her first time in a sweatbox was when she was ill from drug withdrawal. These overlapping stories build to a claustrophobic frustration with the officers who are seated outside the van having lunch. The usual

16. Moran, 2013: 186.

17. Moran, 2015: 130.

18. Turner, J. (2013) The Politics of Carceral Spectacle: Televising Prison Life. In Moran, D., N Gill, N. and Conlon, D. (eds.) Carceral Spaces: Mobility and Agency in Imprisonment and Migrant Detention. Ashgate: Farnham, pp. 219 – 238. Brown, M. (2009) The Culture of Punishment: Prison, Culture, and Spectacle. New York: New York University Press.

19. Moran, 2013: 238.

20. Ibid, 2012: 25.

perspective is shifted and the opacity of the prison van is now replicated in the ways the women can see out but cannot communicate with the outside. The audience's view of fragments through the windows is a means of reiterating that we can only ever know slices of criminalised women's stories.

The story's main themes relate to the audience's physical proximity to suffering, which suggests an ethical encounter with these women. The location of stories inside the van encourages audience consideration of mobility, space and agency. Both thematics and the staging of the stories in an actual sweatbox means that the performance asks audiences to contemplate the limits of criminalised people as spectacle whilst also contributing to the sense of surveillance as they witness the action from the other side of the glass.

### Clean Break as/and mobility

The context of continued precarity for women exiting prison in the UK means that, like two of the three characters in *Sweatbox*, a large proportion of women are returned to prison several times in a cycle of reoffending. Criminologists Segrave and Carlton say (speaking about a range of contexts):

*most women [...] will experience multiple episodes of release that are part of lifetime trajectories characterised by complex levels of disadvantage, experiences of injustice and oppression, cycles of state intervention (often from an early age), criminalisation and serial imprisonment (2013: 1).<sup>21</sup>*

Having noted the kinds of narratives used to characterise criminalised women and interventions post-release,<sup>22</sup> I now shift focus towards Clean Break more generally. Moran says that we can 'see the 'carceral' as embodied through the corporeal inscription of released inmates', which she correlates with institutionalisation.<sup>23</sup> Interventions post-release need to account for what is particular about women's lives and attend to the elements that can change. In particular, critical attention to how interventions are bound up with, and impacted by the systems (including the funding agendas and languages) of criminal justice is necessary.<sup>24</sup>

Nick Hardwick, the former Chief Inspector of Prisons, says:

*We all know from our personal experience how participating in or creating art has the possibility to change how we see the world and our place in it. This is true for prisoners too—and I have seen how great arts projects in prisons can play a crucial role in helping prisoners see a new crime-free future for themselves.<sup>25</sup>*

While there are several significant studies on benefits of participation in the arts in criminal justice, the organisations that deliver these interventions are nonetheless also circumscribed by the wider economic climate. Sustainability—so central to models of transformation and continued desistance—is not possible without sustained resourcing. By highlighting this here, I intend to focus attention on these benefits evidenced in evaluations and inspections that need resourcing. Yet, they are undermined if well established companies such as Clean Break are firstly, reduced to reliance on arts funding only and secondly and relatedly, thus vulnerable to cuts in times of austerity.

Clean Break Theatre Company celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2019, and this occasion marks a shift in delivery. Its ethos to produce excellent quality theatre that challenges a wider understanding of women affected by criminalisation continues. Such a commitment has contributed to scores of beneficiaries whose capacity for mobility from lives of confinement, stigmatisation and cycles of reoffending has been met by the challenges of learning, along with structures of regular attendance in creatively beneficial activities. Despite the challenges and creative potential in Clean Break's future, the company will no doubt continue to produce thought provoking work that illuminates the debates between the arts and criminal justice, under the joint artistic leadership of Anna Herrmann and Roisín McBrinn.

To return to the transportation/transformation dichotomy posed by Schechner, I propose that the consideration of the short, intimate touring performance *Sweatbox* has enabled an understanding of the complexities of representing prison mobilities. The experience of the production transports the public to the often hidden locations inside the sweatbox, while transforming understandings of prison vans and the multiplicity of stories transported across the UK daily.

21. Segrave, M. & Carlton, B. (2013) 'Introduction: Gendered Transcarcerated Realities' pp. 1-13. In *Women Exiting Prison: Critical Essays on Gender, Post-Release Support and Survival*. Edited by B. Carlton & M. Segrave. London: Routledge.

22. Carlton, B. & Segrave, M. (eds.) (2013) *Women Exiting Prison: Critical Essays on Gender, Post-Release Support and Survival*. London: Routledge.

23. Ibid, 2013: 189.

24. McAvinchey, C. (ed.) (2018) *Applied Theatre: Women and the Criminal Justice System*. London: Bloomsbury.

25. Cited in Bilby et al, 2013: 4.

# Performance Matters:

## The Case for Including Performance in Prison Music Projects

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**In 1968, Johnny Cash performed live at Folsom State Prison in California. The subsequent release of the live recording meant the event lodged itself into cultural memory and Cash's prison concerts are still commonly referenced when the idea of music in prisons is mentioned. My research, however, does not concern professionals performing to an audience of prisoners; it is to do with prisoners creating and performing their own music in prison, as part of a prison music project. Around the country, organisations provide musical activities in prisons as part of rehabilitation, educational courses, or other areas of activity provision. In recent years, however, access has been more restricted, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to include performance as part of these projects. This article presents the case for reversing this trend. It will discuss various ways in which performance can both be valuable for the prisoner participants and contribute to prison goals, and then discuss the benefits of having a varied audience, arguing that performance is not an optional extra but a key part of a prison music project.**

It is important to clarify what is meant here by 'performance'. Music can be 'performative' in many ways—a group music session, for example, is to some extent performative in that players perform in front of one another. But for the purposes of this article, 'performance' is treated in a more straightforward way: an organised musical event in front of an audience. Performance, here, simply means the 'big reveal'—the point at which the musical works are played live by the participants to people who have not yet been involved in the process.

### The Research Setting

The data for this paper come from research conducted for my doctoral project. Fieldwork took

place over 14 months across 2015-16, during which I observed the work of the Irene Taylor Trust (ITT) in one prison.<sup>1</sup> The ITT have been working in prisons for over 20 years, providing participatory music projects for groups of prisoners. They predominantly facilitate two types of project in prisons: the Music in Prisons (MiP) week, during which a group of around 10 prisoners come together with three professional musicians to write and record new songs; and Musician in Residence (MiR) sessions, whereby a smaller group of prisoners attend once weekly music classes of a few hours with one professional musician to write new music together. The prison in which the research took place is anonymised; it is a category-C, adult male training prison housing over 1,300 men across two sites. The ITT projects ran as part of the addiction recovery services and were facilitated by staff from an addiction recovery organisation (ARO).<sup>2</sup> I observed three MiP weeks and 20 MiR sessions, often joining in as an additional musician; I then interviewed 29 participants (all those willing who were still in the prison), two ITT musicians and four ARO staff to get their reflections on the programmes.<sup>3</sup>

The ITT have a well-crafted format for MiP weeks: three days of song-writing, a day of recording so the participants can have CDs of their work, and a performance on the Friday as the culmination of the week. Historically, this final performance has been to a large audience of other prisoners, prison staff and participants' families or friends from outside; more recently, according to ITT musicians, this has become harder to facilitate. On my first day of fieldwork, it transpired that permission for the performance had been refused by the governor. The understanding of the ARO staff was that this was due to fears of public perception if the tabloid media found out prisoners were 'having fun'. Both ARO staff and ITT musicians were frustrated but discussed what to do instead to end the week. It was decided for all three MiP weeks I

1. The research was conducted as an independent study; the views here are my own and not necessarily those of the ITT.
2. The addiction recovery organisation changed during my fieldwork. To give details would risk undermining anonymity; as there was very little structural or personnel change, both organisations are referred to synonymously as an ARO.
3. All research participants are referred to using pseudonyms.

observed that the 'performance' at the end would be a 'live run-through' consisting of ARO staff watching the participants play through their songs with the windows and doors open so other prisoners could overhear from a distance. Prisoner participants were made aware of this, and the ITT musicians made efforts to instil the same level of dedication towards the 'live run-through' as there would be for a full performance.

The MiR sessions, in contrast, did not have any explicit performance goal. There were several reasons for this: the hope that MiR participants would at some point do an MiP week where they would experience a performance (or 'live run-through'), the recognition that there are benefits of involvement in musical activity which does not culminate in a performance, and the logistical difficulties of setting up a performance. Regardless, many MiR participants suggested they would value having a performance. One prisoner had spent almost a year trying to organise an event which would enable the participants to showcase their work. His efforts were unsuccessful, indicating again the difficulties of putting on a performance in prison. This article aims to provide evidence to bolster what is already felt by participants: that performance is a valuable event for a prison to put on.

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### Performance as a Musical Norm

Regular performance events are the norm for most musical societies, organisations and ensembles. Performance traditions vary enormously between cultures but performing to others in some form is deeply engrained in musical activity, so much so that few musicologists have even attempted to account for the phenomenon. Stephanie Pitts' research into participatory music activities around the UK—asking why people get involved in music at all—contains a tacit assumption that musical activity includes a performance event.<sup>4</sup> Ruth Finnegan, in a seminal work investigating the everyday musical life of an average UK town (Milton Keynes) in the 1980s, wrote: 'The idea of special performance events plays a central part in most local musical groups and activities.'<sup>5</sup> Amateur musical activities, she found, were usually explained as being preparation for a performance, but the performance event itself 'was not regarded as needing explanation.'<sup>6</sup>

Performance, then, is a normal part of musical life around the country. That is not to say that there is no value in other forms of music-making. Musical activities where performance is not the focus are growing in prominence: community music organisations, for example, focus on the joy of music-making as a group, and the individual and societal change that can come as a result. Even when performance is assumed at some stage, most musicians can still find 'satisfaction in playing for themselves, listening, practising, or just 'jamming together',<sup>7</sup> as MiR participants found in their regular music sessions.

However, the MiP performances were not refused permission in order to enhance these positive aspects of music-making; rather, the restrictions on performance removed an integral part of the process. The MiP weeks, in particular, are designed to include a performance, and its absence stood out to most participants as well as to ITT and ARO staff. Many prisoner participants, oblivious to the norms of the ITT and the hopes of ARO staff, suggested to me that a performance would be beneficial or, as Josh (MiP participant) said, that 'just to play to a handful of people seems a bit pointless. Or a bit wasted.' Others suggested that it would have been good to include families or other prisoners in the audience. There was a clear sense that many participants would find it valuable, and highly sensible, to perform to a large, mixed audience.

### Performance Encourages Personal Development

Performance may be a normal part of musical life, but prison is, of course, not a normal setting. The ITT projects in prison are intended to be helpful for prisoners and the prison, to contribute to personal development in a way that aids rehabilitation and reduces reoffending rates. The inclusion of a performance can increase the capacity of the projects to foster individual and social change.

There is a plethora of research into the benefits of music-making.<sup>8</sup> The transformative effect of music is evidenced by changes in participants' behaviour and attitudes towards other people, and by their own

4. Pitts, S. (2005) *Valuing Musical Participation* Sheffield: Ashgate.

5. Finnegan, R. (1989) *The Midden Musicians: Music-making in an English town* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p143.

6. Ibid. p158.

7. Ibid. p143.

8. For a recent and comprehensive review of the research, see Crossick, G. & Kaszynska, P. (2016) 'Understanding the value of arts and culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project' Swindon: Arts and Humanities Research Council.

testimonies about their experiences.<sup>9</sup> In a prison context, music has been found to increase prisoner safety by providing an expressive emotional outlet, improve engagement in other rehabilitative activities, and help develop personal capacities which, in turn, are known to promote desistance.<sup>10</sup> Performing to others can support this personal development. This is most clearly demonstrated when considering teamwork as a benefit of music projects, but can also be seen in other personal traits.

Teamwork is a commonly-cited benefit of being involved in group music activities, and there are suggestions that music is a particularly good medium for bringing people together because the harmonious nature of music can be imitated in the relationships between the players.<sup>11</sup> This idea has some merit, and certainly prisoners found themselves appreciating the other members of the band as they realised the role each instrument played in the music as a whole. But during MiP weeks there was also something more concrete going on: the knowledge that they would be playing to an audience, even a small one, was the impetus needed for them to put aside differences or competition and work together. In short, they learnt to work as a team because the performance required it—their desire to play well overcame personal differences. Scott, one of the ITT musicians, reflected during his interview that the MiP weeks are often ‘about getting from A to B [and] in that process we learn to work as a team, we learn to manage...to resolve issues.’ Scott indicates that it is in the process of working towards a joint aim that some interpersonal issues can be worked out. Several prisoners reflected similarly that the ‘live run-through’, small as the audience was, put pressure on in a good way, meaning that they had a focus which was more important than relational issues. A distinct end point is an important factor in that.

George, the prisoner who had hoped (unsuccessfully) to organise a performance event for MiR participants, shared why he thought performance was important:

In a prison context,  
music has been  
found to increase  
prisoner safety  
by providing  
an expressive  
emotional outlet...

*it brings people together, because the team...that are actually performing, they're gonna have to work together.*

George understood that having a performance event in front of others created necessity. But he also proposed that performance brings out the ‘team’ dynamic in a way that other aspects of music-making may not. He continued,

*on that day especially [they will] give each other some...confidence boosts, you know...like encouragement.*

This encouragement was evident in the ‘live run-throughs’ at the end of MiP weeks during my research—the group would applaud each other, high five or fist bump one another at the end of a good solo and congratulate each other at the end of a song. The cooperation had evolved into genuine affability. Performance, then, is important for teamwork because the combination of necessity (*we won't do well if we don't work together*) and sentiment (*wow, that was amazing*), inspired the development of cooperative skills and also gave an opportunity to utilise them.

As well as teamwork and cooperation, there are numerous personal capacities developed through the music projects which can be encouraged further by performing. Traits such as perseverance, self-confidence, a sense of achievement or overcoming fear of failure are all necessary for prisoners, who are aware they will face difficult circumstances upon release. Such traits require a goal—one cannot persevere, for example, towards nothing. When there was not a performance to be worked towards, musical learning became that goal, but a performance has the advantage of being definite and time-sensitive. The performance also gave them the immediate reward for their effort, increasing the sense of having achieved something worthwhile. They may have had feelings of nervousness, but prisoners’

9. My doctoral thesis (forthcoming) will address the notion of ‘effectiveness’ in more detail, suggesting it is a more problematic concept than is often acknowledged.  
10. See Cox, A. and Gelsthorpe L. (2008) ‘Beats & Bars. Music in prisons: An evaluation’ London: The Irene Taylor Trust; Cursley, J. and Maruna, S. (2015) ‘A Narrative-Based Evaluation of ‘*Changing Tunes*’ Music-Based Prisoner Reintegration Interventions’ available at <<http://www.artsevidence.org.uk/media/uploads/final-report-cursley-and-maruna-changing-tunes.pdf>> [accessed 19.02.2018]; Wilson, D. et al (2008) ‘Promoting positive change: Assessing the long-term psychological, emotional and behavioural effects of the Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project’ Birmingham: Centre for Criminal Justice Policy.  
11. Cohen C. (2003) ‘Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence’ in Chayes A. and Minow, M. (eds.) *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity After Violent Ethnic Conflict* Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.

feedback showed that this was always replaced by feelings of elation when their hard work had paid off. Nathan felt that had been missing from his experience in MiR sessions: he commented that he thought a performance would be good for MiR participants because 'at least then they'd know they've achieved something.' ITT musicians have noticed this over their many years of working—one talked with enthusiasm in interview about the moment

*when people have done their gig at the end of the week and the audience comes up, and you can see them [prisoner participants] holding themselves differently.*

For people who have been marked out for doing something wrong, achieving something worthwhile can be transformative.

### **Performance as a Marker of Significance**

Performances, then, are important for the aims of the project and for the experience of the participants. Performances are also significant occasions in and of themselves, which is vital in a prison context. As has been seen, the hope and aim of an ITT project, as with any prison programme, is that it will have a positive impact on participants' lives. Simply put, the project needs to matter. A performance marks the project as significant, both by being something notable with which the performers can identify their progress, and in demonstrating that others—those who organise and those who attend—are also invested in their progress.

Performance events are momentous occasions for the performers, characterised by heightened emotion and meaning in a way that is 'very different to the rehearsal process.'<sup>12</sup> This difference was evident from the way that even for the 'live run-through' at the end of each MiP week the participants paid more attention to their personal presentation. Gemma (ARO) had noticed this in other MiP weeks she had witnessed:

*it's amazing isn't it, how they get themselves all ready and all smart and everything.*

And, indeed, I observed during my fieldwork that the men prepared for the final morning by visiting the barbers, shaving and, sometimes, putting a shirt.

Clearly, even with a small audience this was an event that the prisoners were taking seriously.

Performances are memorable, and thus can act as a milestone for those who have performed, evidence of the journey they have been on. And crucially for prisoner participants, the performance event marks the entire process as significant, in that both the musical and personal development are understood as important life events worth recognising and celebrating. Christopher, an MiR participant who had not been able to perform, compared the idea of a performance to a 'graduation day'. The analogy works well: both involve some ceremony, the approval of a supportive audience, and the recognition of a process that has been noteworthy and worthwhile. In interview, some MiP participants, who had given some form of performance, claimed that the week had changed their lives or made them a better person—largely

unsubstantiated but deeply-felt accounts of the transformative experience they had been through. These claims are easy enough for researchers to either state without critique in an effort to justify musical activity or ignore completely in an attempt to only make assertions that are empirically provable; the middle ground between these two positions is to acknowledge that these experiences are highly significant and full of meaning for some participants, even if the

transformation is yet to be seen in a tangible way. Learning musical skills was clearly valuable for all participants, regardless of whether they showed others, but performing to an audience signified that the journey they had gone on, musically and personally, was quite literally applauded by others as well.

Learning musical skills was clearly valuable for all participants, regardless of whether they showed others...

### **The Audience Question**

Who, then, should be doing the applauding? Clearly for MiP participants the 'live run-through' to the drug and alcohol counsellors constituted a performance of sorts, but there are good reasons for extending the audience beyond the ARO staff and including other prisoners, prison officers, participants' families, and even the general public.

Although participants expressed doubts about whether they would feel confident performing to other prisoners, they were sure other prisoners would appreciate being in the audience. Performing to other

12. Davidson, J. W. and Correia, J. S. (2001) 'Meaningful musical performance: A bodily experience' *Research Studies in Music Education* 17/1 p75.

prisoners was presumed to be the best way of widening involvement in the project, because other prisoners would see and hear what they had done and want to take part. Given the value the participants placed on their musical activities, more people doing music projects was seen as an unequivocal positive. Prisoners also suggested that having an enjoyable performance event would be good for the prison atmosphere, with knock-on effects on prison safety. Prisoners declared that much of the violence in prison is the result of boredom and the depressive atmosphere; a performance would raise spirits and provide an exciting conversation topic. There were glimpses of this during my fieldwork: other prisoners would dance along in the corridors when they heard the music through the windows or doors, and prisoner participants reported the 'buzz' on their units after sessions. Far from posing a security risk, prisoners were convinced that musical performances could improve the safety of the prison.

Similarly, having prison staff in the audience, particularly officers, could improve the prison environment. The ARO staff who made up the audience of the 'live run-throughs' are plain-clothed and seen as having a more caring relationship with the prisoners; officers, on the other hand, are in a position of power.<sup>13</sup> Several prisoners pointed out that including officers in the audience might help the uniformed staff see the prisoners in a more positive light and could break down the barriers between the two groups. Aaron pondered having a mixed band—which has happened in other prisons—as a way of improving relationships, and thought that having officers in an audience would be the first step in this process. From a staff point of view, a performance can bring some excitement and optimism to their jobs. Gemma (ARO) spoke of her experience of performances in previous years, saying:

*I think as well for the staff morale and things like that, it's really good, you get a sense of everybody coming in together. And I think we're lacking that a lot.*

Staff concerns are an issue across the prison estate, with high levels of violence and understaffing

creating dangerous conditions. A performance would not be the solution to all these problems, but the joy of seeing prisoners at their best and being a part of their success could help with job satisfaction. Many prisoners suggested having their families in the audience, unaware that this is the ideal in every ITT project. Desistance literature shows that maintaining good family relationships can be a key part of ex-prisoners staying away from crime;<sup>14</sup> we also know that the consequences of one person going to prison are felt beyond that individual.<sup>15</sup> Prisoners told me how excited their families were to hear what they had been doing—their children, partners and parents were proud of them, and the experience gave them something new to talk about. Including loved ones in the audience allows that pride to be felt and received in person; families can share these valuable moments together. Many prisoners wanted their families to see

that they were capable of achieving good things, and to know their lives and relationships with others did not have to be defined by their crime and imprisonment.

There is also a case for including members of the general public in the audience for performances. Few prisoners suggested this explicitly, but there were comments suggesting that the desire to prove they were able to do something of value

was not directed just at their families, but to the world at large. George spoke about wanting to educate people, to show that just because someone is a prisoner, *'it doesn't mean that...they haven't got talent, they can't do something positive, can't do something good.'* A performance would let them *'show people what we can do as prisoners'*.

But beyond the enhanced feelings of self-worth in prisoners, including the public in audiences for prison performances could also aid eventual reintegration. Fergus McNeill has argued that desistance must include reintegration into society, therefore rehabilitation 'is not just about sorting out the individual's readiness for or fitness for reintegration; it is as much about rebuilding the social relationships without which reintegration is impossible.'<sup>16</sup> Almost all prisoners will eventually be released into the community, and the likelihood of continued desistance is influenced by the relationship between ex-offender and community. In any musical

Many prisoners suggested having their families in the audience, unaware that this is the ideal in every ITT project.

13. Prisoners and ARO staff shared this sentiment.

14. Laub, J.H. and Sampson, R. J. (2003) *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent boys to age 70* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

15. Arditti, J. (2012) *Parental Incarceration and the Family: Psychological and Social Effects of Imprisonment on Children, Parents, and Caregivers* New York and London: New York University.

performance, the audience are more than passive observers: connections are forged between performer and audience as one 'speaks' and one listens. By including the general public in an audience, music can act as a mediator, or bridge, between the incarcerated and the free, who will one day be living alongside one another.

### **Conclusion**

This article has shown various benefits of including performance in a music project, and the potential benefit of widening the audience to those in prison and out of prison, known and unknown to the participants. What has not been addressed in this article is how some of these ends might be achieved

by other means. One suggestion from ITT staff was to make the recording day the apex of the week, using this to provide the sense of achievement and the resultant CD a physical milestone of the progress made. Bridges can be built between prisoners and community by having through-the-gate programmes, such as the ITT's 'Sounding Out' course, or collaborative projects in which prisoners, ex-prisoners and the general public make music together. These possibilities are all worth exploring. However, none of these should replace having performances inside prison. Performance is not an added extra to musical activity; it is an important and valuable aspect of a prison music project, and evidence shows that the outcomes of holding a performance in prison will make the effort worthwhile.

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16. McNeill, F. (2012) 'Four forms of 'offender' rehabilitation: Towards an interdisciplinary perspective' *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 17/1 p30.

# Music, education, and opportunity

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## Good Vibrations: what we do

**Good Vibrations is a charity known for its use of gamelan music in criminal justice settings. The gamelan is an orchestra of percussion instruments from Indonesia, made up of various metallophones, xylophones, gongs and drums. You can see and hear one at HMP Peterborough here: <https://www.goodvibrations.org.uk/watch-some-clips/watch-a-documentary-on-a-typical-gamelan-in-prison-project/>**



Image 1: In front of the gongs, a pair work with each other to create an interlocking pattern on the bonang (photo credit: **Francois Boutemy**, 2010).

Good Vibrations runs intensive projects using this unusual medium with the aim of supporting people to:

- Improve their well-being
- Become more engaged in learning
- Develop confidence and motivation
- Develop transferable life and work skills
- See themselves with positive self-identities and positive futures

Since 2003, Good Vibrations has worked with more than 3,300 participants in 53 different secure institutions in the United Kingdom. It is a particularly communal form of music-making where participants are compelled to work together.<sup>1</sup>

Good Vibrations goes into prisons, Young Offender Institutions, and probation services. It runs week-long projects where groups of up to 20 participants work together to learn to play a gamelan orchestra from scratch. They learn traditional pieces, compose, improvise and conduct, and also learn about Indonesian culture and associated art-forms, such as shadow puppetry. The projects are available to any person convicted of an offence in contact with these services, and are particularly well-suited to people with mental health needs or personality disorders, Vulnerable Prisoners, and those not engaging in work or education.

Sessions are punctuated by reflective group discussions, which support participants to develop communication skills and social skills. Participants can also gain modules of nationally-recognised Team-working or Musical Ensemble Skills qualifications. Throughout the week, participants work together to devise a concert, which they perform to their peers, staff and others on the last day. As well as receiving a completion certificate and professionally-mastered CD of their music, Good Vibrations offers progression support to participants as they return to the community, through the Keep in Touch programme.

The choice of medium—gamelan—is crucial:

- It's novel, so people tend not to form prejudices about it
- It's accessible and adaptable for all abilities
- It's formed of layers, so as you fit your part in, you grow listening and non-verbal communication skills
- It can be played without any prior musical training or knowledge of musical notation
- It's communal, so everyone's contribution is equally important

1. Henley, J., Caulfield, L.S., Wilson, D. and Wilkinson, D.J. (2012) Good Vibrations: Positive Change through Social Music-Making, *Music Education Research*, 14, 499–520.



Image 2: A flip-chart from an exercise which supports participants to explore social dynamics through the safe lens of music (photo credit: **Gigi Chiying Lam**, 2016).

### What the research tells us about Good Vibrations

Research evaluations of Good Vibrations have consistently found positive outcomes for participants,<sup>2</sup> and the effectiveness of the project is evidenced through nine pieces of independent research by Birmingham City University, University of London, Bath Spa University, University of Worcester, Nottingham Trent University and The Royal College of Music. These publications have investigated the impact the charity's interventions have had both with the general prison population and on women, older men, young offenders, and men convicted of sexual offences. Research methods have included focus groups, interviews, psychometric measures, case studies,

participant observation, pre and post programme measures, questionnaires, skills rating, adjudication reports and emotion scales.

Henley (2018)<sup>3</sup> and Digard et al. (2007)<sup>4</sup> identified the following as important features of Good Vibrations' approach:

- ❑ setting parameters to create safe spaces in which participants can develop physically, musically and socially;
- ❑ giving power to participants so they develop ownership of their work, which then leads onto self-regulation;
- ❑ constantly making space and creating opportunities for participants to flourish as individuals and members of a team;
- ❑ exploring social dynamics through communal music-making to help participants reflect on how they function in groups;
- ❑ letting awkward moments happen so participants can figure out how to get past them themselves;
- ❑ recognising that conflict is a natural part of group functioning, and that it can lead to creative problem-solving and transformation.

Gamelan supports isolated prisoners to develop inter-personal and team-working skills that can help them cope better with being in prison, and so contribute to reductions in self-harm incidents and suicide.<sup>5</sup> A significant finding in the research on Good Vibrations to date is the increase in communication skills and social skills that participants experience. Through communal music-making, people who don't normally socialise have discovered they can cope better in group environments.<sup>6</sup> Caulfield *et al.* (2010) discuss how, 'communicating with other participants leads to greater tolerance and, for some, these greater levels of tolerance and openness continue after release from prison'.<sup>7</sup>

Post-project, participants have identified that they are more able to express their emotions, especially in front of people they did not know.<sup>8</sup> Research has found that participation in gamelan projects can improve

2. Henley, J. (2014) Musical learning and desistance from crime: the case of a "Good Vibrations" Javanese gamelan project with young offenders. *Music Education Research*, 17, 103-120.
3. Henley, J. (forthcoming, 2018) Music, Emotion, and Learning. In P. Gouk, J. Kennaway, J. Prins, and W Thormählen (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Music, Mind and Wellbeing: Historical and Scientific Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
4. Digard, L., von Sponeck, A. G., and Liebling, A. (2007) All Together Now: The therapeutic potential of a prison-based music programme, *Prison Service Journal*, 170, 3-14.
5. Wilson, D. and Logan, M. (2006) *Breaking Down Walls; The Good Vibrations Project in Prison*. Lincoln: The Firebird Trust.
6. Digard et al. (2007).
7. Caulfield, L., Wilson, D. and Wilkinson, D. (2010) *Continuing Positive Change in Prison and the Community*. Grant Report to Good Vibrations.
8. Winder, B., Sperling, V., Elliott, H., Lievesley, R., Faulkner, J. and Blagden, N. (2015) Evaluation of the use of the use of 'Good Vibrations' percussion courses to improve motivation to change and treatment readiness with convicted sexual offenders embarking on treatment programmes, Sexual Offences, Crime and Misconduct Research Unit, Psychology, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham.

participants' listening skills, and the experience gives much needed space to less extroverted individuals to find their voice within a group.<sup>9</sup> Participation in a Good Vibrations' gamelan project has been found to promote confidence and self-esteem. Wilson and Logan (2007)<sup>10</sup> interviewed participants who indicated that they wanted to change their offending behaviour because of this new-found self-confidence: 'The final performance in front of an audience promotes a huge sense of pride and achievement, which in turn increases participants' confidence and self-esteem'.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the people Good Vibrations works with in prison have rarely experienced a sense of achievement in the past. The professionally-produced CD of their work that is made on the project, therefore, demonstrates a highly-significant achievement whilst inside, which creates positive discussion points for visits and communication with the outside world.<sup>12</sup>

'Participants talk about the humanising experience of the project and the freedom it makes them feel, despite being in prison'.<sup>13</sup> The projects have helped reduce anxiety levels for participants, enabling them to feel more relaxed and cope better with stress.<sup>14</sup> Some participants have even reported stopping self-harming during a project week.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, some participants have commented that they consciously avoided acting on their anger and having confrontations with other people during the project because they didn't want to mess up the performance, after having worked so hard on it. Several participants were pleased and surprised that they had managed to control their anger in this way.<sup>16</sup>

The gamelan projects help participants develop more trust in their own ability to make meaningful, valid decisions<sup>17</sup> and an ethos of collective responsibility grows. The facilitators encourage a culture of shared

leadership and joint decision-making, which enables participants to become better at communicating with, and listening to others.<sup>18</sup>

*The development of group self-regulation seemed to be driven by: respect for instructors; a genuine desire to learn; and a commitment to producing a high-quality performance, which necessitates a focused team approach.*<sup>19</sup>

### Responding to need

In the previous section of this article we talked about what the research tells us are the key impacts of Good Vibrations. However, it is also vital to ensure that programmes targeted at those involved in the criminal justice system are able to engage the different groups they may be working with, by matching the style of programme delivery to the participants' needs—this concept is termed 'responsivity'.<sup>20</sup>

*To maximise responsivity, the design of services should be sensitive, for example, to the offender's gender and culture. Increasing responsivity*

*will minimise attrition from the programme and maximise the potential of the programme to impact on offending.*<sup>21</sup>

Research has been conducted on Good Vibrations projects working with a variety of different populations, to understand how far Good Vibrations is responsive to the needs of different groups. Below we talk about the research conducted with four specific groups: women; young people; older people; and men convicted of sexual offences.

The projects have helped reduce anxiety levels for participants, enabling them to feel more relaxed and cope better with stress.

9. Caulfield et al. (2010).

10. Wilson and Logan (2006).

11. Caulfield et al. (2010).

12. Wilkinson, D. J. and Caulfield, L. S. (2017). The perceived benefits of an arts project for health and wellbeing of older offenders. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 13, 16-27.

13. Caulfield et al. (2010).

14. Winder et al. (2015).

15. Wilson and Logan (2006).

16. Digard et al. (2007).

17. Ibid.

18. Henley (2014).

19. Digard et al. (2007).

20. Antonowicz, D.H., and Ross, R.R. (1994) Essential components of successful rehabilitation programs of offenders, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 38, 97-104.

21. Hedderman, C., Palmer, E., Hollin, C. with assistance of Gunby, C., Shelton, N. and Askari, M. (2008) *Implementing Services for Women Offenders and Those 'At Risk' of Offending: Action Research with Together Women*, London: MOJ Research Series 12/08.

## Women

The needs of women in prison are often varied and complex. From poor educational histories, work and financial needs, to emotional and mental health issues and problems with childcare, many women have a multitude of significant needs that are clearly related to their offending behaviour. Educational achievement and women's emotional well-being have been highlighted as particularly significant issues for women in prison.<sup>22</sup>

Two studies have been conducted with Good Vibrations projects in women's prisons.<sup>23</sup> Both studies collected interview data with participants and prison staff, and support the general findings discussed earlier. For example, the findings suggest that the project significantly improved women's communications skills, levels of self-expression, and ability to cope with stress and prison life. In one of the studies, the findings suggested that the project may have a positive impact upon women's levels of self-harming behaviour, but given the limited numbers of participants in this research with a history of self-harming behaviour, this requires more investigation.

*I've got children and the project took my mind off worrying about them as I was concentrating and enjoying it. (Participant quote, from Caulfield 2015)*

The involvement of prison staff, and the performance in front of an audience, appear to be important factors in any lasting impact of Good Vibrations projects. A particularly notable finding is that completing the project positively changed the way some of the most 'difficult' women were viewed by prison staff. The challenging and vulnerable nature of the women taking part in one of the studies,<sup>24</sup> means

they are likely to have greater issues with aggression and emotional/mental health problems than other women in prison and in the community. Given that emotional and mental health problems have been identified as statistically related to increased risk of reoffending and that this is one of the largest areas of need for women in prison, any intervention that addresses this area is to be welcomed.

## Young People

Limited research has looked at the impact of taking part in music programmes on young people in contact with the criminal justice system. For example, a study with young people in juvenile detention centres in Australia taking part in a project that involved individual music tuition<sup>25</sup> found that engagement in musical learning led to the development of both musical and extra-musical outcomes. A study conducted with young people in contact with the Youth Offending Service in England<sup>26</sup> found improvements in musical ability, well-being, attitudes and behaviour, and sentence compliance. However, both of these studies have focused on individual programmes.

Henley (2012,<sup>27</sup> 2014<sup>28</sup>) conducted research with 19 participants in a Young Offender Institution taking part in a Good Vibrations project. The project group included some very vulnerable young people, including some with self-harm issues, some taking medications, suffering from mental health problems, and many suffering from insomnia. Data was collected via participant observation, focus groups, and interviews with the young people.

The research focused on understanding the potential impact of taking part in a Good Vibrations project on individual and social factors, those '*generated through musical development that also are attributed to desistance from crime*'.<sup>29</sup> These were divided into two

Educational achievement and women's emotional well-being have been highlighted as particularly significant issues for women in prison.

22. Caulfield, L. S. (2012) *Life Histories of Women Who Offend: A Study of Women in English Prisons*, PhD thesis, Loughborough University; Hollin, C. R., and Palmer, E. J. (2006) Criminogenic need and women offenders: A critique of the literature, *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 11, 179-195.
23. Caulfield et al. (2010); Caulfield, L.S. (2015). *The role of music programmes in English women's prisons: engaging the vulnerable and the 'hard to treat'*. Report for Good Vibrations.
24. Caulfield (2015)
25. Barrett, M. S., & Baker, J. S. (2012) Developing learning identities in and through music: A case study of the outcomes of a music programme in an Australian juvenile detention centre, *International Journal of Music Education*, 30, 244-259.
26. Caulfield, L.S., Simpson, E. and Jacobs, C. (2016). An evaluation of the Youth Offending Service Youth Music Project. Final grant report to Birmingham Youth Offending Service.
27. Henley, J. (2012) Good Vibrations: Music and social education for young offenders. Evaluation Report. International Music Education Research Centre, UCL Institute of Education.
28. Henley (2014).
29. Ibid.

categories: individual agency and social interactions. The research documented musical developments both individually and at a group-level. What is particularly interesting to note is that the researcher observed a direct relationship between the musical developments, and developments in *'listening, observing, negotiating and team work skills in order to transfer their own individual musical development into an ensemble performance.'*<sup>30</sup> The research also identified increased motivation and self-determination, with participants learning to see their own personal-strengths. Henley summarises the findings as demonstrating a clear impact on both individual agency and social interactions, where participants develop personally but also improve their ability to thrive in a group setting.

### Older People

The number of older prisoners has increased significantly in recent years. Older prisoners (50+) typically report high levels of chronic health conditions,<sup>31</sup> including mobility issues.<sup>32</sup> Mental health issues are also a concern.<sup>33</sup> The most common illnesses reported in one study of older prisoners were psychiatric, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal and respiratory.<sup>34</sup>

One study has specifically focused on Good Vibrations projects with older prisoners.<sup>35</sup> The study adopted a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews with older prisoners at two men's prisons in England. Consistent with previous research, this study found self-reported improvements in communication and social skills, managing emotions, achievement, and motivation to change. The study also reported a number of findings specific to older offenders:

The Good Vibrations project was considered by all participants to be accommodating and easily adapted in order for accessibility issues to be overcome, allowing any prisoner to take part. Participants noted

that there are limited courses on offer for the older prison population, particularly those serving long sentences who have completed mandatory programmes. Good Vibrations provides an opportunity to engage in a project and potentially develop a hobby or interest in something different from the usual prison routine. For participants who were approaching parole, developing an interest and links with an organisation outside of the prison was viewed as an important opportunity.

Some participants noted that the CD recording of the participant's final performance provided discussion points for visits, letters and communication with family and friends. This was seen as valuable, as friends and family often lived far away, or experienced difficulty in mobility themselves, making visits difficult.

A particular group of offenders for which music therapy may have multiple benefits are sexual offenders.

### Men convicted of sexual Offences

Winder and colleagues (2015)<sup>36</sup> note that *'a particular group of offenders for which music therapy may have multiple benefits are sexual offenders. Although less likely to have experienced the disadvantaged upbringing of the general prison*

*population, they may have particularly poor interpersonal skills.'*<sup>37</sup> Poor interpersonal skills are likely to result in social isolation, which is a risk factor for sex offenders. Music may provide a way for individuals who struggle to express themselves verbally to communicate their feelings and emotions.<sup>38</sup> Previous research has shown that Good Vibrations programmes improve participants social and communication skills.

One study<sup>39</sup> has been conducted with men participating in a Good Vibrations project while imprisoned for sex offences.

The research included a qualitative and quantitative element. The qualitative interviews with participants support previous research, noting positive

39. Winder et al., 2015

30. Ibid.

31. Fazel, S., Hope, T., O'Donnell, I., Piper, M., & Jacoby, R. (2001). Health of elderly male prisoners: Worse than the general population, worse than younger prisoners. *Age and Ageing*, 30, 403-407; Merten, M. J., Bishop, A. J., & Williams, A. L. (2012). Prisoner health and valuation of life, loneliness, and depressed mood. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 36(2), 275-288.

32. Fazel et al. (2001).

33. Merten et al. (2012).

34. de Viggiani, N., Mackintosh, S., & Lang, P. (2010), Music in time: An evaluation of a participatory creative music programme for older prisoners. Project Report, University of the West of England.

35. Wilkinson and Caulfield (2017)

36. Winder et al. (2015)

37. Hanson, R. K., & Harris, A. J. R. (2000) Where should we intervene? Dynamic predictors of sexual offence recidivism, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 27, 6-35.

38. Fulford, M. (2002). Overview of a music therapy program at a maximum security unit of a state psychiatric facility. *Music Therapy Perspectives*, 20(2), 112-116.; Loth, H. (1994). Music therapy and forensic psychiatry choice, denial and the law. *Journal of British Music Therapy*, 8(10), 10-18.

improvements in 'Social skills; managing emotions; confidence; escaping the prison routine'.

The quantitative element of the research investigated if participants were more motivated to engage with psychological treatment, and whether Good Vibrations added any additional 'value' to the standard treatment in the prison. Using validated psychometric measures, and including a control group of prisoners not taking part in a Good Vibration project, the researchers found significant increases in positive beliefs about programmes and a greater desire to change after participating in a Good Vibrations project. The findings were inconclusive for prisoners with an intellectual disability.

The authors<sup>40</sup> note that taking part in a Good Vibration project may 'promote and increase treatment readiness prior to program participation in further accredited programs, this process can contribute to maximising treatment goals on further programs and fuller engagement in treatment'.<sup>41</sup>

### **The impact on engagement, learning and progression**

Soon there will be further change to prison education—what it looks like, and how it's funded. Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contracts will end in 2018, and prisons and governors will be given increased flexibility and control over education budgets and the range of provision they can commission. But, however the landscape changes, research and current practice points to the fact that Good Vibrations' interventions are remarkably effective at connecting with prisoners, and 'switching on' something inside them that motivates them and makes them ready to engage with further prison education and work.

Digard *et al.* (2007:13)<sup>42</sup> found that, 'the sense of achievement experienced at the end of the week was invaluable for the recognition it provided of participants' abilities and hidden potential, which many had lost sight of during their formal education'.

The feelings of freedom and being 'normal again' engendered by the project appear to give some offenders the 'head-space' to begin making a positive change in their lives'.

Their research found that the humanising way in which Good Vibrations' gamelan courses are facilitated was a key factor in connecting with participants and getting them to engage with an educational activity.<sup>43</sup>

Caulfield *et al.* (2010) note that Good Vibrations projects 'provide participants with a stimulating week that stays vivid in their mind, where they can explore something of themselves, the music and the group. The feelings of freedom and being 'normal again' engendered by the project appear to give some offenders the 'head-space' to begin making a positive change in their lives'. Crucially, these projects act as catalysts for change—participants take learnings and memories with them, which many treat as foundations of positive change to build upon.<sup>45</sup>

Researchers have concluded that Good Vibrations' courses act as gateways into further learning—getting many prisoners into the education department, enrolling on English and Maths courses, who would never previously have done. This is largely due to gamelan's uniqueness; in the gamelan ensemble no one is an expert, and everyone is equal. This removes intimidating elements that are often found in formal education.<sup>46</sup> 'The project appears to act as a stepping-stone into further education'.<sup>47</sup> On one project, for example, half of the participants enrolled on

subsequent learning courses in prison, whereas before the project they had chosen not to do so.

*That this attendance also facilitated the prison's achievement of a Key Performance Target is significant, especially as it would seem to have been achieved at a financial cost that was lower than would have been the case had more traditional educational courses been purchased by the prison.*<sup>48</sup>

Because of reasons such as: dislike of the education system; feelings of inadequacy; and fear of failure, people with poor educational backgrounds are

40. Ibid.

41. Ward, T., Day, A., Howells, K., & Birgden, A. (2004), The multifactor offender readiness model. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 9, 645-673.

42. Digard *et al.* (2007).

43. Henley (forthcoming, 2018).

44. Caulfield *et al.* (2010).

45. Ibid.

46. Wilson and Logan (2006).

47. Caulfield *et al.* (2010).

48. Wilson and Logan (2006).

reluctant to engage with formal prison education.<sup>49</sup> However, after completing a gamelan course, participants' increased confidence allowed them to push their boundaries further.

*The sense of achievement gained through the project was something new and highlighted that achieving was something they could do and wanted to continue doing.*<sup>50</sup>

Participants experience sustained and positive emotional and psychological impacts after attending Good Vibrations' projects, which spur on further positive behavioural change.

*Six months after completing a Good Vibrations course, participants experienced: greater levels of engagement; an increased openness to wider learning; improved listening and communication skills; improved social skills and increased social interaction; improved relationships with prison staff; decreased levels of self-reported anger; and a greater sense of calmness.*<sup>51</sup>

Participation develops skills, which lead to positive change, for example progressing onto formal

education, and coping better with the experience of incarceration.<sup>52</sup> All participants said that their social skills had improved, for example that they could communicate better, were more co-operative team-players, and were more effective leaders. Given that motivation to change is influenced by positive interpersonal relationships with peers, Good Vibrations courses have been found to have the potential to motivate offenders to change.<sup>53</sup>

## Summary

Working together to learn to play a gamelan orchestra, Good Vibrations' participants develop skills through a culture of collective responsibility, shared leadership, and joint decision making. A substantial research base exists about Good Vibrations, and tells us that participants: develop social and group skills; improve their communication skills; experience achievement that for many prompts engagement with formal educational programmes; report reduced anxiety levels and an increased ability to cope with stress; and improve their anger management skills.

The research suggests that Good Vibrations projects are responsive to the needs of different groups, including women, adult men, men convicted of sexual offences, older prisoners, and young people.

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49. Caulfield *et al.* (2010).<sup>50</sup> Ibid

51. Wilson, D., Caulfield, L.S., & Atherton, S. (2009). Good Vibrations: The long-term impact of a prison based music project, *Prison Service Journal*, 182, 27-32.

52. Caulfield *et al.* (2010)

53. Winder *et al.* (2015)

# Music and identity in prison:

## Music as a technology of the self

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**For many, music is fundamental to navigating the prison sentence. In the rush to demonstrate that music can be a powerful tool in lessening the impact of imprisonment, insufficient energy has been devoted to demonstrating how music is used to accomplish this. I speak to this absence, drawing on observations and interviews conducted at a number of sites for research projects between 2014 and 2018. Much literature on prisons charts the deprivations of imprisonment and the assault on the self which can occur as a result.<sup>1</sup> Speaking specifically on the effects of long-term imprisonment, Ben Crewe refers to the process of acclimatising to prison as ‘coming to terms with a profound set of dislocations’.<sup>2</sup> Yvonne Jewkes argues imprisonment can suspend the life course resulting in a hiatus to accounts of personal life.<sup>3</sup> Tia DeNora identifies music consumption as a technology of the self: a means of expressing identity and constructing personal narrative.<sup>4</sup> I apply this understanding to explore how music is utilised in strategies of coping in prison.**

I first detail the research projects this paper draws from.<sup>5</sup> I then elaborate on DeNora’s concept of music as a technology for the self and its application to people in prison spaces. I go on to apply this idea to three aspects of music consumption as identity work to consider how music is used to stitch the self together: as a means of doing emotion work and reinvigorating aspects of identity given little room for expression in prison, as ‘tactics’<sup>6</sup> for navigating everyday life inside, and for

constructing narratives of life after prison. I conclude by briefly drawing these aspects of music consumption together to consider the implications of this for music practice in prison.

### Research background

The following insights are drawn from a range of staff and prisoners. Interviews conducted in 2014 for a project exploring the significance of music in prison forms the earliest as well as the largest source of reference. I moved on to research sound in prison more broadly, using soundwalking—a focus on listening to the environment<sup>7</sup>—in two prisons as a means of piloting the methodology for doctoral research in 2015. I adapted the research design to conduct an aural ethnography in a local men’s prison for seven months during 2017.<sup>8</sup> Music is a ubiquitous component of the prison soundscape and featured in conversations and interviews with prisoners and staff.

### Music and identity: technology of the self

DeNora identifies music as providing a means for effecting what she terms ‘social agency’.<sup>9</sup> Music is a means of making connections with other human beings and of acting in the social world. The term ‘technology of the self’ is adapted from Michel Foucault’s analysis of modern configurations of power as acting upon the self as a technique of improvement.<sup>10</sup> By presenting music as a tool her respondents use to do emotion work and

1. Eg. Sykes, G. (2007, 1958) (new edition) *The Society of captives: A study of a maximum security prison*. With a new introduction by Bruce Western. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Liebling, A., Maruna, S. (2005) (eds) *the effects of imprisonment*. London: Routledge. Crewe, B. (2011) *Depth, weight, tightness: revisiting the pains of imprisonment* *Punishment and Society* Vol.13, No.5.
2. Crewe, B. (2018) *the problems of long term imprisonment Seminar*, University of Leicester Prison research group seminar series, 24th April 2018.
3. Jewkes, Y. (2012) *Identity and adaptation in prison* pp40-42 in Crewe, B., Bennett, J. (2012) (eds) *The prisoner*. London: Routledge.
4. DeNora, T. (1999) *Music as a technology of the self* *Poetics* Vol.27, No.1.
5. Herrity, K. (2014) *The significance of music to the prison experience*, dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London. Herrity, K. (2015) *Prison Sound ecology: a research design*, dissertation, University of Oxford. Herrity, K. (ongoing) *An aural ethnography of a local men’s prison: Exploring the significance of sound in prison*. PhD, University of Leicester.
6. Yvonne Jewkes uses DeCerteau’s concept to detail the ways prisoners find ways to reassert agency within the constricting social relations of carceral spaces. Jewkes, Y. (2013) *On carceral space and agency* in Moran, D., Gill, N., Conlon, D. (eds) *Carceral spaces: Mobility and agency in imprisonment and migrant detention*. Surrey: Ashgate. De Certeau, M. (1984) *The practice of everyday life*. California: University of California press.
7. Schafer, R.M. (1994) *Soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*. Vermont: Destiny.
8. See 5.
9. DeNora, T. (2000) *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge: CUP.
10. Foucault explores this idea in a number of works including: Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and punish: the birth of the modern prison*. New York: Second vintage books.

reconstitute themselves, DeNora effectively subverts this reading, implicitly challenging Foucault's broader conception of power relations by emphasising the importance of agency.<sup>11</sup> DeNora's reading of music as a way to express identity echoes Erving Goffman's conception of identity as negotiated through performance.<sup>12</sup> Social life is awash with illustrative examples of this, from the northern soul enthusiast to the metalhead—we use music to say things about who we are. In an environment with fewer means of expressing identity, and less latitude to do so, music is more important as a means of making the self. In *music asylums*<sup>13</sup> Tia DeNora explicitly aligns her work with Goffman's<sup>14</sup> arguing that music is a powerful tool for improving health and wellbeing in institutional settings. I use these ideas as a theoretical framework to explore how music is used to accomplish this by those in prison.

### Music, emotion, identity

Goffman contends that we manage impressions of our identity through context-specific performances.<sup>15</sup> In a sense

*all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players... one man in his time plays many parts.*<sup>16</sup>

Like theatre, there are different spheres of behaviour; front stage and the back stage where we relax attempts at impression management. The close proximity people live and work in, and the constraints of the prison environment present profound challenges. In blurring distinctions between frontstage and backstage, public and private, prison disrupts the usual apparatuses for these performances.<sup>17</sup> Prison conditions restrict the range of relationships, occupations and activities through which people perform various aspects of identity. Music carves out space to explore emotion and to knit together components of the self otherwise lent little room for expression.

Nathan spent twelve years in prison, moving through various parts of the system from young

offenders, through lifer centres to the open estate. He describes prison as being '*about control. It's about limiting you it's about preventing you from having an identity they don't want you to have*'. Nathan identifies music as having a quality of '*untamperable pureness*' which provides a '*...means of having some kind of identity of your own...*'. His experience underscores the utility of music for activating agency through self-expression. Several participants, when asked to imagine what prison would have been like without music, evoked a fractured self. Music's absence would have rendered Wesley '*devastated. Lost, I'd be lost*'. This was a rare lapse in Wesley's tendency to neutralise answers by de-personalising them. His years inside, including a sentence resulting from a miscarriage of justice left him wary and skittish. Jai, who had served a relatively short

sentence in a Young offender's institution, reported he would '*get a psychiatrist*', while Nathan '*would have gone mad*', Michael '*insane*'. Robyn, who had recently completed a sentence in the women's estate reiterated music's importance: '*take anything, leave my music and I'll be alright*'. While Danny believed there'd be a '*hell of a lot more fighting...hell of a lot more pent up aggression. It'd be kicking off all the time*'. Music sustained the self — a necessary component of psychological survival in prison.<sup>18</sup>

Wesley used music as a means of reasserting his former self when relaying his autobiography: '*I was a sort of a leader, back in the day, when it comes to music*'. His tastes and knowledge provided a way of articulating his individual identity: '*...when I was growing up in the 70's a lot of the music I was listening to was shunned by the system so it was more underground...*' Wesley's declaration: '*I'm not a populist*'—illustrated his reworking the stigma<sup>19</sup> of the outsider in to a successful identity. This echoes Nathan's affinity with Public Enemy when he first went to prison: '*There's a kind of rebelliousness to the music and, you know, I've never been one for rules and regulations*'. Wesley also used taste to make a statement about moral and social standing:

Tia DeNora explicitly aligns her work with Goffman's arguing that music is a powerful tool for improving health and wellbeing in institutional settings.

11. I explore power and sound in more depth elsewhere (see 5).  
 12. Goffman, E. (1959) *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Penguin.  
 13. DeNora, T. (2015) *Music Asylums: wellbeing through music in everyday life*. Surrey: Ashgate.  
 14. Specifically Goffman, E. (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. London: Penguin  
 15. See 12.  
 16. Shakespeare, W. *As you like it* (Act 2, Scene 7). *The complete works of William Shakespeare*. London: Collins.  
 17. Jewkes, Y. (2005) *Loss, liminality and the life sentence: managing identity through a disrupted lifecourse in* Liebling, A., Maruna, S. (eds) *The effects of imprisonment*. USA: Willan.  
 18. Cohen, S., Taylor, L. (1981) (Second ed) *Psychological survival: The experience of longer-term imprisonment*. Middlesex: Penguin  
 19. Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: notes on the management of spoiled identity*. London: Penguin.

*I had to go to a lot of reggae clubs...I've always got a lot of females around me, they could just be friends, family, whatever but guys didn't know how to behave... so I stopped going to these places and started going soul clubs.*

Wesley credits the 'upliftment' from 'soulful' music as having 'kept me sane in my time away'. These accounts present music consumption as a catalyst for agency,<sup>20</sup> supporting DeNora's contention that music provides a 'grid or grammar'<sup>21</sup> for temporal experience, aiding the memory in refashioning the autobiography as a source of personal comfort. Jai's memory of using music as a means of reliving specific events in his past, a means of performing himself: '*...just doing me*' supports this reading.

Wesley and Nathan's recollections suggest different types of music reflect different identity performances. Billy's disclosure suggests a relationship of considerably greater complexity:

*I went away when I was seventeen, eighteen and music is my biggest interest... so one of the most profound losses for me... was the loss of music and I remember... I saved up diligently to buy a walkman...but I didn't have anything to play on it but I moved in to another cell and in that cell was a tape. ... Anyway, so I found this tape and it was Robbie Williams... On civvie street I would never have considered listening to it, never... but I remember listening to it and being euphoric just because of the sound of music.*

Billy suggests music has intrinsic value as a means of pushing back against prisons imposition of spatial and social limitations. This lends a specific pertinence to the qualities of music for those in prison, allowing for a reimagining of space and for their place within it <sup>22,23</sup> Usnan echoes this use of music to make room. Having served fifteen years of a sentence beginning in his late

teens, music functioned as a means of emotion regulation :

*...if you had things on your mind you could always put music on so you didn't have to think about things...forget about it for a while, calm yourself down... and then go back out and get on with it.*

This use of music as emotional respite supports the idea 'music facilitates a sense of privacy and re-inhabitation of life before incarceration in the form of musical sanctuary'.<sup>24</sup> Jai's experience of music in a YOI echoes this:

*...In prison I told them what I wanted them to know. If I didn't want them to know something I kept it to myself. I always had my boundaries up, my protection up and music gave me that ability to just be me, be free.*

## music facilitates a sense of privacy and re-inhabitation of life before incarceration in the form of musical sanctuary'

Jai's use of music adds insight in to the emotional geography of the prisoner as well as the prison, adding texture to explorations of differentiated emotional spaces in prison.<sup>25</sup> These insights also illustrate the value of examining the interaction between music/sound, person and environment as a means of understanding the survival of prison ecology.<sup>26</sup> Music was used

to express the backstage self in a process of active self-making, without breaking the front stage performance required by the stark prison environment.

Oscar Wilde says of prison: '*the most terrible thing about it is not that it breaks one's heart—hearts are made to be broken—but that it turns one's heart to stone*'.<sup>27</sup> Nathan reinforces the sense the prison environment imposes suppression of emotion:

*...If you're in a position where you've got to take a blade to someone at any moment you don't really want too much of an emotional life going on in your head.*

20. Sloboda, J. (2005) Exploring the musical mind: Cognition, emotion, ability, function. Oxford: OUP.

21. See 9, DeNora, T. 2000: 68.

22. Hudson, R. (2006) Regions and place: Music, identity and place *Progress in human geography* Vol.30, No.5.

23. Frith, S. (1998) Performing rites: evaluating popular music. Oxford: OUP.

24. Harbert, B. (2010: 65) I'll keep on living after I die: Musical manipulation and transcendence at a Louisiana penitentiary *International journal of community music* Vol.3, No.1.

25. Crewe, B., Warr, J., Bennett, P., Smith, A. (2014) The emotional geography of prison life *Theoretical criminology* Vol.18, No.1.

26. Toch, H. (1992) Living in prison: the ecology of survival. Washington: The American psychological association.

27. Wilde, O. (1897: 921) De Profundis: Epistola: In carcere et Vinculis in *The complete works of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde: Stories, plays, poems, essays.* 1948, London: Collins.

Maintaining the emotional self in confinement can be a difficult act to balance. Michael, who had not long completed two lengthy sentences back to back in addition to other periods inside, used music to lessen the challenge of maintaining the emotional self by managing his emotion: *'...but when I did need to have a breakdown and take some reflection, music was on'*. David Hesmondhalgh<sup>28</sup> identifies the quality of the relationship between people and music as being bound up with the emotional link music provides with the private self. Robyn's account of music as a means of emotional catharsis echoes this, music was a resource for restoring her wellbeing: *'People who self-harm, that's their escape route. My pain and release was singing and playing music'*. Jai used music as a means of processing emotions by evoking memories:

*...certain songs will stay with me, I'll remember different moments and it's like I was right back there... part of it was nice...and part of it was like I need to put it to bed. It's gone and I need to accept that.*

Michael expresses ambivalent feelings about music and emotion: *'It would bring up feelings what I really didn't want to deal with. Look, prison taught me two things: How to handle my emotions and how to hide things'*. Yet he asserts *'music held my hand the whole way'*. Michael's eighteen-year sentence, compared to Jai's relatively short term of seven months, perhaps accounts for his difficulty in maintaining his emotional core.<sup>29</sup> Missing somebody is consistently identified as the most painful aspect of imprisonment<sup>30,31,32</sup>. Danny illustrates the fundamental role of music in exploring the emotions arising from this loss of intimacy: *'All those sappy love songs would really kind of stir up really emotional stuff. You'd sit there a full-grown man blurring your eyes out thinking about your loved ones'*. In providing a benign

medium to explore emotion and self, music is a means of promoting wellbeing and agency in a place which presents challenges for both.

### Musical tactics for navigating everyday life inside

The prison soundscape, while frequently overlooked, is an important element of experience.<sup>33</sup> Usnan remembers music forming a large part of the prison soundscape: *'everyone listens to music or the radio all the time'* (TVs have now largely replaced the radio). Music offers a means of making connections. While often characterised as one of 'those things that holds us together'<sup>34</sup> music also features in contestations of power.<sup>35</sup> Tales of 'window warriors' tormenting hapless prisoners, directing them to sing *'Baa baa black sheep'* have passed in to prison lore.<sup>36</sup> In these ways

music is both a means of, and an obstacle to navigating everyday life inside. Julie De Dardel explores how prisoners in Columbia use cultural items to navigate the restrictive prison regime.<sup>37</sup> Music constitutes the call and answer of sonic power relations between prisoners. An officer working in the care and segregation unit illustrates the diverse range of social action music features in:

Music offers a means of making connections. While often characterised as one of 'those things that holds us together'.

*someone was playing Marvin Gaye... 'sexual healing'... and I thought somebody's happy... I suppose that made me chuckle which offset the day, and I was curious to know who it was. But then on the flipside, sometimes you hear people playing their stereos so loud it's like, you just want to annoy. You just want to upset the set up...maybe that's their way of getting back. (Tone)*

28. Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013) *Why music matters*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

29. See 3.

30. Crewe, B., Hulley, S., Wright, S. (2017) *Swimming with the tide: Adapting to long-term imprisonment* *Justice quarterly* Vol. 34, No.3.

31. Flanagan, T.J. (1980) *The pains of long-term imprisonment: a comparison of British and American perspectives* *British Journal of Criminology* Vol.20, No.2.

32. Richards, B. (1978) *The experience of long-term imprisonment: An exploratory investigation* *British journal of criminology* Vol.18, No.2

33. Hassine, V.(1996) *Life without parole: Living in prison today*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing.

34. Hennion, A. (2007) *'These things that hold us together'* *Cultural Sociology* Vol.1, No.1.

35. See Herrity 2014.

36. Relayed by prisoners, the No.1 at the site of PhD research and David Maguire: *Failing marginalised men in UK Carceral spaces* Presentation at the international conference for Carceral geography, 12th December 2017.

37. De Dardel, J. (2013) *Resisting 'bare life': prisoners agency in the new prison culture era in Columbia* in Moran, D., Gill, N., Conlon, D. (eds) *Carceral spaces: Mobility and agency in imprisonment and migrant detention*. Surrey: Ashgate.

Michael demonstrates the way music bridges performances of backstage and front stage self as well as defining territory:

*Cos I had a bass tube in gaol, so in my eighteen year sentence I could play the bass tube loud in my cell and it'd block out everything, so I knew the whole landing was listening to what I was listening to when I chose to turn it up.*

One deputy governor described playing excessively loud music as demonstrating status as *'the big swinging dick of the wing'* (No.2). Michael's use of his powerful bass tube contrasts with Danny's less sure-footed acknowledgement of music consumption as identity performance:

*...How much more of a performance you're making cos everyone can hear you...it's putting on different masks and different faces and that can be really tiring, really draining. I got to a point where I didn't know who I was. I didn't have any identity.*

Danny spent a considerable part of his time (around eight years) in young offender institutions. His recollections reflect the difficulty for young men of defining identity within the hypermasculine environment of prison<sup>38</sup> and the greater need some male young offenders feel to 'show off' (Usnan). Danny's use of changing music consumption as a marker of maturity conflates with this interpretation:

*As you start growing up, what you play, your taste, that doesn't change. What I would listen to just to fit in would change once I'd started to get my own identity and realised what it was about. It doesn't matter what other people think. This is what I'm listening to. This is what I like.*

Soundclashes exemplify this distinction between the social life of young offender's institutions and that

of older prisoners, as Usnan attests: 'You'd hear everyone shouting and carrying on, that always used to happen. There used to be music clashes between people to see who had the best music. I think that's particular to young offenders'. Michael relates to this as an extension of his youth outside: 'Yes, music out the windows...Someone'd hire my bass tube off me to go have a sound clash...like we used to have...' Michael refers here to an earlier mention he makes of being a young West Indian in London—'while the music was there so it united us instead of us fighting with each other...' This suggests the sound clash offered the use of music as a non-violent means of contesting identity between prisoners.<sup>39</sup> Michael's presentation of his youth as interchangeably inside/outside echoes Wesley's experience, and resonates with Shabazz's observation of a 'carcerally inflected black masculinity'.<sup>40</sup> These experiences suggest a greater complexity to Goffman's process of 'disculturation',<sup>41</sup> music here operating as a means of performing and re-making cultural identity. Nathan indicates how much time and pleasure was taken in preparing for such an event:

*You used to be able to get your heads out the windows so everyone'd be talking while some others were doing sound clashes. At least once a week you'd spend all day lining up your tapes so that when you put them in and press play you'd have them telling someone to 'fuck off'. There's a line one of the ICE T albums, I think it's 'power' and it's 'Damn motherfucker that's wack' and you'd line that up...I knew my music...*

Nathan's memory of these social events echo the idea that 'music has the potential to create social space critical to the pains of incarceration'.<sup>42</sup> His account enhances understanding of the ways in which music was a means of diffusing aggression. Nathan also presents music as a way of de-escalating confrontation between staff and inmates: 'Sometimes it ain't appropriate to rage at the screw...but you don't want to walk away...so you go back to your cell and you put on 'fuck the police' or some of... those real hardcore'. These accounts illustrate

They suggest  
the sound clash  
offered the use of  
music as a non-  
violent means of  
contesting identity  
between prisoners.

38. Toch, H. (1998) Hypermasculinity and prison violence in Bowker, L.H. (ed) Masculinities and violence. London: Sage.

39. Cooper, C. (2004) Sound Clash: Jamaican dance hall culture at large. Hampshire: Palgrave.

40. Shabazz, R (2009: 276) So high you can't get over it, so low you can't get under it: carceral spatiality and Black masculinities in the United States and South Africa *Souls: a critical journal of Black politics, culture and society* Vol.11, No.3.

41. See 14.

42. Harbert, B (2013: 31) Editors introduction *American Music* Vol.31, No.2.

the ways in which music consumption operates as tactics for navigating informal control in prison. Music was described as a way of overcoming the limitations of physical confinement to create social space: *'...put your reggae on and you can almost not be in prison, sitting there with your mates listening to that together'* (Danny). In contrast to accounts of music consumption as an ameliorative social practice, Billy uses his distinctive music tastes to differentiate him from the prison and its other inhabitants: *'I just had different music tastes from everyone else in there...or they had no interest in music whatsoever so—you've got no soul, that's what I think'*. For Billy, who served a relatively short sentence, music was *'a personal expression...a means of not having to think about my own environment'*.

For most of those interviewed, music formed a *'massive'* (Danny) feature of the prison environment though Robyn would *'rather have a wing that's calm than noisy'*. The use of calm as an antonym for noisy suggests the possibility of a markedly different and partially gendered experience of music consumption within the prison soundscape though this further research. For Danny *'late at night...lying in your bed...in the middle [of] four different types of music at the same time...all having different sound offs'* is *'quite funny'*. For Robyn music is a way of feeling *'like you're in control'* as an *'escape route'* from the sounds of *'someone banging on their door in the middle of the night cos they're having a panic attack or something'*. Music provided sanctuary.

For Robyn, lending music was an opportunity to display kindness: *'I got an album sent in and I used to lend it to the person living next door to me...a lot of people there don't have much on the outside...so it can mean a lot to them'*. Sharing music constitutes additional tactics of resistance in prison life, each informal transaction a contravention of prison rules, a transgression risking punishment.<sup>43</sup> Music sharing, while sometimes causing *'major arguments'* (Nathan) offers a means of opposing regime restrictions. Nathan explains: *'you'd be walking down the landing and you'd hear this new thing...eventually you'd just go and ask them...he'd copy it for us, put it on a tape for me'*. The extent to which music was interpreted as an expression of autonomy from prison authority is emphasised by the opposition to television. As Wesley says *'when they wrongfully [Wesley was eventually exonerated] put me*

*in prison I played music behind that door all the time and then when they brought in televisions I refused'*. Nathan offers a possible explanation: *'I resisted having one for at least a year after they brought them in because they're a control mechanism, that's the way I saw it—tvs are there to control you'*.

A chapter of Richard Wener's exploration of 'the environmental psychology of correctional spaces is devoted to the impact of noise.'<sup>44</sup> Music offers a means of illuminating how this works. Danny's recollection of the conflict between staff *'screws... constantly like 'turn your music down or we'll take your stereo off you'* and young offenders *'we're just like fuck off, fucking turn the music up'* can be viewed as a site of power negotiations between staff and inmates. Michael's memory: *'when the staff come on the wing...the doors are being unlocked the music gets louder and louder as the doors open the music builds'* offers aural resistance

to prison acoustics: *the 'clinking of the flap, the locking of the door'* (Jai). These testimonies indicate the significance of sound as a facet of institutionalisation in prison and beyond. Nathan's observation supports this: *'a lot of the people I'd been banged up with had been in care homes...they'd keep their music on all the time...they couldn't relax without the noise'*.

Billy's recollections of an environment in which there was *'a paucity of any kind of music, or kind of positive sound because you know you had big echoey borstal halls and fights and bells and whistles'* illustrates how sound features in power relations.<sup>45</sup> Accounts of prison staff responses reflect this: *'that's what they used to use all the time—they'd take your music off you, your stereo and that tended to work cos people didn't want their music taken off them'* (Danny). Nathan offers a powerful example:

*You're in the segregation unit...you'd be in there on your jacks with fuck all—the first time I ever came across this was a block in Rochester. One of the screws used to put a radio on a stool out in the middle of the cells so everyone could hear the radio but the minute that officer left...one of the others would ever-so-slightly untune the radio so you'd still have the sounds but that whiney noise, no music, so he turned it right up and then left so you had that noise all night.*

## These testimonies indicate the significance of sound as a facet of institutionalisation in prison and beyond.

43. PSI 12/2011..

44. Wener, R. (2012) *The environmental psychology of prisons and jails: creating humane spaces in secure settings*. Cambridge: CUP

45. There are numerous examples of this eg: Goodman, S. (2012) *Sonic warfare: Sound, affect and the ecology of fear*. Cambridge: MIT press.

This echoes Brandon Labelle's<sup>46</sup> assertion that sound and music form a particular 'economy of power' within the prison environment.

### Music and life after prison

Music forms the focus of a multitude of initiatives to reduce cycles of reoffending.<sup>47</sup> The active construction of alternative narratives which envisage life beyond prison and away from criminal activity are key to these processes.<sup>48</sup> Music featured in accounts of these narratives construction, as a way of imagining a future self in freedom as well as a means of strengthening relationships crucial to their co-production.<sup>49</sup>

A prison sentence presents difficulties to maintaining contact with those outside. Jai describes the problem of navigating relationships between these spaces: *'Different time zone. Different rules. Different game'*. Loss of these relationships presents obstacles to the resettlement process.<sup>50</sup> For Michael this was a strain: *'I only used to send out vo's [visiting orders] on birthdays and Christmas... the visit was alright but when they had to get up and go home I had to start to deal with emotions I didn't want to...'* Jai refers to music as 'that link reminding me there was stuff still out there cos when you're in prison it's like you're in another world'. He spoke of a *'Whitney Houston song, that's one of my Mum's favourites...it was nice to feel that and remember her'*. Wesley reiterates the important role of music in maintaining relationships: *'Music...can get people through their bird, it can associate them with that lifeline on the outside, it reminds them of their family, their friends, their children, whatever you see?'* networks often crucial to the process of successful resettlement and staying out of prison.<sup>51</sup> Jai talked about *'certain songs... stuff that reminded me of my friends'*. Exploring feelings for loved ones through music also aroused a sense of ambivalence:

Music functions as a way of retaining connections with the outside, aiding the memory of intimate relationships and aiding their maintenance.

*A friend sent me a tape and there was a song, Zoe's 'Sunshine on a rainy day', which me and Jasmina would get pissed and sing along to...it was a really bittersweet moment because when you're locked up for years you don't want to think about the outside world' (Nathan).*

Music functions as a way of retaining connections with the outside, aiding the memory of intimate relationships and their maintenance.

DeNora<sup>52</sup> emphasises music's association with romantic and intimate relationships, a point corroborated by Michael's statement that: *'I couldn't visualise myself living without music so I couldn't live without love, without intimacy...'* The deprivation of human intimacy is an acute pain of imprisonment<sup>53</sup> and a challenge to psychological survival.<sup>54</sup> It is here that the link between music and the emotional, private self is most explicitly demonstrated:

*I'd probably got to a very dark, very cold place as the years were extending before me...really it was when Lara came back in to my life and she started writing to me... there always used to be songs...that kind of realigned me in to having an emotional life (Nathan).*

Michael describes music as a way of expressing emotion as well as exploring it through carefully compiled mixed tapes:

*It would be a means of communication and describing our love to that person...cos a lot of men have difficulty saying it so...we put all our efforts in to every track and then write a letter backing it up saying this is what you mean to me, listen to that track...*

46. Labelle, B. (2010: 66) Acoustic territories: Sound, culture and everyday life. London: Continuum.

47. Eg Good vibrations, the Irene Taylor trust, Changing Tunes, Sing inside.

48. Maruna, S. (2001) Making good: how ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives. England: American Psychological association.

49. Cursley, J. (2015) Time for an encore: Exploring the symbiotic links between music, forming meaningful relationships and desistance *Papers from the British Criminology conference*.

50. See 47.

51. Eg Home office (2004) Reducing reoffending; national action plan. London: Home office communication directorate.

52. See 9.

53. See 29, 30, 31.

54. Eg see 18.

Music also provided a means for Michael's loved ones to communicate from the outside: *'if I'd told her to buy me an Angie Stone album...mine had to come to me sealed so she'd buy one for herself and we'd be conversing on the phone 'I like that track'. So we are sharing...'* Music enabled navigation of the visiting room where *'often on visits they don't tell you what's going on out there just as you don't tell them what's going on on the inside'* (Nathan). Nathan recollects:

*My Mum started buying a subscription to this magazine about Blues and every month would be about a different blues artist with accompanying tape so we'd be talking about all these blues artists.*

Music was a way for Wesley to connect with a wider circle of people outside: *'Loads of people used to send me music all the time. I mean, people I didn't even know they just knew about the case and they heard I really like music and then they'd tell me about their(s).'*

Music featured in accounts of resettlement and constructions of desistance narratives. Wesley reports that on getting out, *'one of the first things I did...I reconnected with my tunes'*. Danny's experience suggests music was integral to his adaptation to the outside: *'you have to prepare yourself for when you get out and nice music like that would make me think of nice stuff and getting out'*. These are illustrations of the use of music's transcendental qualities to envisage a self after release. Robyn, Billy, Jai, and Danny use the word *'escape'* when describing the significance of music, emphasising its capacity for liberating the imagination. Nathan's assertion that music *'allowed you to experience vicariously'* reinforces the idea of music as a tool for transcending the prison walls.

Michael refers to life as a *'playlist...while we're talking it's being made so you always have to keep adding to the playlist'*. Drake's *'Started from the bottom'* is particularly significant to Michael's construction of a post-prison story: *'in my own mind when I come out I started from the bottom, but I've got a job and now I'm at the top...I really do relate to it'*. Robyn describes a similar relationship with Beyonce's *'Wishing on a star'*: *'that was the song to say you know what, I'm wishing on a star to get out of prison and I'm never coming back again'*. Nathan talks about *'working my way out the system to getting back out again...when I started rediscovering things and*

*listening to things I hadn't heard in years'*. His account further emphasises music as a feature of preparation for life beyond the prison walls and a tool to assist with adaptation both to prison and to life beyond it. Music formed a central part of narratives of desistance for respondents, aiding in the maintenance of vital components of successful resettlement.

### Practising music in prison

In prison music provides a valuable mechanism for exercising agency to shore up the self, to perform identity as a social actor and to form narratives of a future beyond the prison walls. Recognition of the ways in which music can be used to offset the effects of imprisonment has implications for the significance attributed to restricting access to music for those inside.

Exploring the significance of music for these facets of identity work has implications for the potential impact of restricting access to music in prison. Jennie Henley articulates the distinction between learning music and learning *through music*.<sup>55</sup> In the prison context, where negative experiences of education can cast a long shadow,<sup>56</sup> music offers a benign gateway to reconsider the possibilities of learning. Henley outlines the ways in which musical development is naturally connected with social development, an idea echoed in Sarah Doxat-Pratt's argument for the importance of performance in prison music projects.<sup>57</sup> By allowing a means for reconstituting identity music can be thought of as a freedom practice<sup>58</sup> a necessary component for formulating narratives of desistance with all the potential that implies.<sup>59</sup>

In prison music's utility as a technology of the self is particularly potent, assisting with the reconstitution of identity within an environment offering relatively sparse materials with which to do so. Associations between music and memory places it in a unique position to explore emotion, offering a means to carve out private space within an restrictive environment. Music is a means of repairing the rupture to self-narrative presented by the prison sentence. By providing emotional respite as well as social exchange, music enhances wellbeing and offers a means of maintaining connections with the outside. For some, music is so intertwined with their performance of self as to constitute an aspect of their identity, which explains the strength of feeling behind Danny's declaration: *'take whatever else you want, but don't take my music'*.

55. Henley, J. (in Press) Music, emotion and learning in Gouk, P., Kennaway, J., Prins, J., Thomahlen, W. (eds) *The Routledge companion to music, mind and wellbeing: Historical and scientific perspectives*. London: Routledge.

56. Eg Prison Reform Trust (2017) *The Bromley briefings prison factfile Autumn*.

57. Doxat-Pratt, S. (2018) This volume: *Performance matters: the case for including performance in prison music projects*.

58. Tuastad, L., O'Grady, L. Music therapy inside and outside prison – a freedom practice? *Nordic Journal of music therapy* Vol.22, No.3.

59. Henley, J. (2014) Musical learning and desistance from crime: the case of a Good vibrations Javanese gamelan project with young offenders *Music education research* Vol.17, No.1.

# In Place of Hate

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**In Place of Hate comes at the end of a two-year residence at HMP Grendon, during which acclaimed photographer Edmund Clark has taught, mentored, encouraged and inspired the prisoners there to express themselves through a wide range of artistic mediums, including drawing, painting, writing and drama. The quality and quantity of art on the walls of Grendon and at recent Koestler Trust exhibitions is testimony to Edmund's success in unlocking the men's creative potential. But in the current exhibition, he presents us with glimpses of his own time spent in Grendon, a period of deep immersion as artist-in-residence, and the work he produced there.**

The exhibition reveals multifarious discourses that link to Edmund's wider body of work, yet also reveal much about the therapeutic *raison d'être* of HMP Grendon. The first prison in Europe to operate as a therapeutic community, and still the only HMPPS therapeutic community in the UK, Grendon is a special prison. Regarded by many as the jewel in the (admittedly currently tarnished) crown of Her Majesty's Prison Service—not least because it lays claim to a significantly lower reoffending rate than the rest of the prison estate—Grendon provides, in the words of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons a 'uniquely supportive environment.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet Grendon is no easy option. It is inherently more 'panoptic' than other prisons because its therapeutic mission requires a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, 52-weeks-a-year commitment by the prisoners to analysing and understanding the underlying reasons for their offending and changing their attitudes and behaviour. The men are, of course, monitored and assessed by prison staff and psychologists, but they must also attend regular group therapy and psychodrama sessions and community meetings, making them answerable to their peers and to themselves. They become, in effect, bearers of their own surveillance. It is common to find in academic research on imprisonment references to prisoners striving not to 'lose face', to feeling it necessary to 'wear a mask' and 'front it out', but these strategies are simply not possible at Grendon. The therapeutic culture necessitates exposure—exposure of your offence(s), of your inner world, of your imaginings

of what your victim(s) experienced and felt, of your very soul. It strips you back to the rawest of states.

'Doing time' also takes on a particularly heavy meaning at Grendon prison. Nearly three-quarters of the men here are serving an indeterminate sentence—in other words, they do not know when they will be released from custody. In such circumstances, time takes on even greater significance than is usually the case for people in prison. It elongates and distorts temporality, as one's 'own' time becomes institutional time, and time without a visible end. But while most individuals serving very long prison sentences do indeed have 'too much' time, they must simultaneously cope with a sense of their lives being foreshortened; of time being taken from them.

Surveillance, panopticism, exposure and the multiple meanings associated with time are facets of life in Grendon that chime with themes that we are familiar with from Edmund Clark's previous work—among them, repetitiveness, tedium; trauma; torture; absence; fear; seeing; unseeing; and being seen. The photographs give visual form to the fears, pains and preoccupations that come with a long prison sentence: the tricks that are played with time; the meaninglessness of passing from one season to the next; the pain of being separated from loved ones; the fear of dying inside; and the feelings of alienation and anonymity that can arise from being deeply buried in the prison system—a 'ghost in the machine'.

Here, then, are the eerie images of the men taken with a pinhole camera. The shadowy, spectral figures are evocative of a different age. Blurry and indistinct, they play with the idea of criminal 'mug shots'. Of course, the mug shot was originally devised to represent the sitter's face accurately and infallibly, and to improve the identification of recidivist criminals. Its origins are in positivism, a nineteenth century 'science' that measured facial features (length of earlobes, distance between the eyes etc.) on the premise that identification of common characteristics or 'abnormalities' enabled others to 'see' guilt and innocence. At around the same time, domestic photographic portraiture also became popular, and these images also recall nineteenth century professional portraiture. Accurately recording people's images for posterity at a time when previously the only means of

1. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (2017) Report on an Unannounced Inspection of HMP Grendon, 8-18 May 2017, London: HMIP (page 46).

capturing a likeness was to commission a painting, photography was certainly democratic and has become even more so in our self(ie) obsessed times. But it also extended the disciplinary gaze and by being used to identify 'born criminals', whose faces were observed and recorded to indicate criminality, photography simultaneously widened the carceral net.

The deliberately indistinct photographs taken by Edmund of the men at Grendon remind us of those early years of photography and the daguerreotype process. Named after its inventor, Louis Daguerre, it was the first practicable method of obtaining permanent pictures with a camera by producing direct positive images on a silver-coated copper plate. But because the cameras of the late-nineteenth century had long exposure times, which meant that people had to sit absolutely still for up to fifteen minutes, the end products frequently included figures who were blurry and distorted, because they had fidgeted during the shoot. In this project, Edmund asked the men to tell their stories within their own spaces, their cells, and their facial expressions, body movements and hand gesticulations are captured in ethereal and blurred form. Some might see a haunting beauty in them, something that is rarely present in conventional images of offenders. Others will find the images disturbing or discombobulating—we are, after all, accustomed to connecting with people through eye contact and making judgments based on appearance, however fallible this may be.

Contrasting with the pinhole images are the huge, brightly lit flowers and leaves; the result of Edmund picking and pressing everything that grows at HMP Grendon. Much could be read into the symbolism of a decaying flower plucked from carceral ground. For me these images are reminiscent of the common metaphors used to describe a long prison sentence—being frozen in time, left in cold storage, stuck in a state of arrested development. But they also remind us that there is loveliness even in the unlikeliest of places and that there is an intrinsic link between beauty and being just.

Penal aesthetics are, then, much more than the monolithic buildings, bars, razor wire, cameras and other security paraphernalia that typify custodial environments. During a recent research project in a prison in the Netherlands (actually, the one that is rented out to Norway), prisoners described to me the power of nature. As we sat in the prison garden, just beyond a communal association area known as The Park, where 54 mature oak trees stand, one man in his thirties who is serving a 17-year sentence (very long by Norwegian standards) said: 'My parents like that I've grown myself again. This is rehabilitation. No drugs courses. No behaviour courses. Just looking at the trees. I'm better because of the trees'. His words revealed the potential

of nature, not only to transform the environment, but to seemingly reach 'beyond and beneath intellectual cognition' to 'engage directly with the sensual'.<sup>2</sup>

But while the aesthetics of imprisonment might be somewhat softened by the vivid beauty of nature, the third part of the exhibition presents us with the disenchanting appearance of some of the architecture of HMP Grendon. Its buildings date from the 1960s and 70s—not an era known for sensual, empathetic or imaginative institutional design. Here, then, aesthetics are transformed into anaesthetics, functional but indifferent, dulling and numbing the senses. Of course, the penal palimpsest has as many interpretive layers of meaning as one is prepared to uncover, but the banality of the prison buildings as seen, in black and white, through Edmund Clark's lens return us to themes of stasis, monotony and alienation. The colour images, captured as Edmund took circular journeys around the prison grounds, offer something else again. They may be pixilated to obscure information that would be considered sensitive by prison security officers, but the self-censorship clearly has artistic purposes, turning non-descript buildings into graphic art and once again emphasising the blanks, the redactions and the absences that underpin the highly surveilled experience of imprisonment.

In Place of Hate is, then, both a continuation of Edmund Clark's work and, in many ways, a more personal and intimate story than some of his previous projects. His two-year residency at Grendon has allowed him to present the powerful and complex realities of life in a 'therapeutic prison'; itself something of a paradox. Contrasts abound in this exhibition—just as they do at Grendon. Frequently chaotic places, places of dynamic tension and occasional bursts of explosive energy, prisons can also be conducive to stillness, calm and inner reflection—indeed these are among the qualities demanded in a therapeutic community. By submersing himself in the everyday life of Grendon, Edmund has captured a sense of its routine mundaneness and also its occasionally amorphous temporal rhythms. There is a simplicity and directness in all the work on display, but it also jars slightly. The softness of the pressed flowers and leaves sits alongside the impermeable edifices of the boxy buildings made of brick and concrete. We are shown aspects of an environment that is usually hidden, and even introduced to some of the men held there, who Edmund now knows well. But we don't 'see' them; they are there but not quite there. In the work before us, the mundane becomes intriguing and just out of our grasp, while the scarified emotional texture of life in a prison is flattened and stripped of its visceral qualities. In many ways, then, Edmund's work tells us something universal about incarceration.

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2. Hancock, P. (2005) 'Uncovering the semiotic in organizational aesthetics', *Organization* 12(1): 29-50.

# Edmund Clark's Artistic Residency at HMP Grendon:

## Exploring the impact upon residents

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### The Residency

The role of the arts in and around criminal justice is an important topic for academics, practitioners and policymakers alike. There are a range of organisations who bring arts into these settings with a variety of aims from enhancing prisoner wellbeing to reducing reoffending. There is a considerable body of research exploring the impact of arts-based interventions which have sought to engage offenders in artistic endeavours. These studies have highlighted psychological changes in participants, for example lower levels of depression, less anger and decreases in self-harming behaviour,<sup>1</sup> increased self-esteem,<sup>2</sup> sense of achievement,<sup>3</sup> feelings of empowerment<sup>4</sup> and self-efficacy.<sup>5</sup> In addition, these studies suggest that such programmes can increase participant's receptiveness towards and motivation for wider educational activities, emphasising the value of the arts as a pathway to

engaging in other areas of learning and training.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, participation in arts-based programmes may enable offenders to hone their social and communicative skills, developing better capacity for empathy and working with others.<sup>7</sup>

Many of these initiatives have aimed to bring about behaviour change and as such, have been characterised by objectives based upon engaging offenders in artistic endeavours through the delivery of a structured programme of activity. The artistic residency of photographer Edmund Clark at HMP Grendon 2014-2017 was different. Supported by the Marie Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust and coordinated by Ikon Gallery, the aim of the residency was to develop a critical discussion around prison, rehabilitation and criminality. This was to be achieved through Clark creating a body of his own work in response to the prison and helping to facilitate the artwork and creativity of men serving sentences at HMP Grendon.<sup>8</sup> Clark has considerable experience of working in carceral settings<sup>9</sup> and his past his work had

1. See for example-Breiner, M., Tuomisto, L., Bouyea, E., Gussak, D. & Aufderheide, D. (2011) 'Creating an Art Therapy Anger Management Protocol for Male Inmates Through a Collaborative Relationship' *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 56(7): 1124-1143. Smeijsters, H. & Cleven, G. (2006) The treatment of aggression using arts therapies in forensic psychiatry: Results of a qualitative inquiry, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 33: 37-58.
2. See for example Brewster, L. (1983) An Evaluation of the Arts-in-Corrections Program of the California Department of Corrections, William James Association Prison Arts Program. Miles, A. & Clarke, R. (2006) The Arts in Criminal Justice: a Study of Research Feasibility. Manchester: Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, University of Manchester.
3. See for example-Dawes, V. (1999) Julius Caesar: An evaluation of a full-scale production of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar with original music score at HMP Bullingdon, London: Irene Taylor Trust. Lazzari, M., Amundson, K. & Jackson, R. (2005) "We Are More Than Jailbirds": An Arts Program for Incarcerated Young Women, *Affilia*, 20(2): 169-185.
4. See for example-De Viggiani, N., Macintosh, S. & Lang, P. (2010) Music in time: An evaluation of a participatory creative music programme for older prisoners, Project Report, Bristol: University of the West of England. Digard, L. & Liebling, A. (2012) Harmony Behind Bars: Evaluating the Therapeutic Potential of a Prison-based Music Programme, in L. K. Cheliotis (Ed.), *The Arts of Imprisonment: Control, Resistance and Empowerment*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
5. See for example-Cox, A. & Gelsthorpe, L. (2008) Beats & Bars. Music in Prisons: An evaluation, London: The Irene Taylor Trust. Harkins, L., Pritchard, C., Haskayne, D., Watson, A. & A. R. Beech (2011) Evaluation of Geese Theatre's Re-Connect Program: Addressing Resettlement Issues in Prison, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 55(4): 546-566.
6. See for example-Tett, L., Anderson, K., McNeill, F., Overy, K. & Sparks, R. (2012) Learning, rehabilitation and the arts in prisons: a Scottish case study, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 44(2): 171-185. Williams, R. (2004) Narrative Art and Incarcerated Abused Women, *Art Education*, March: 46-52.
7. See for example-Moller, L. (2004) 'Prison Within A Prison: A Burkean Analysis of The Sing Sing Stage Production Of "Slam"' *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 10: 3:181-198.
8. Hereafter referred to as 'Residents'.
9. For example, Still Life Killing Time, Guantanamo: If the light goes out, Control Order House. Please see <https://www.edmundclark.com/> for more information.

raised many critical questions about the concept of control—particularly representations of control and control over time and space in prisons.

Clark's role at HMP Grendon was not one of art tutor or art therapist. He did not oversee studio activity or participate in the therapeutic programme. He organised discussion groups about the art work that residents made on their own, sharing thoughts while procuring art materials. In November 2016 and November 2017, Clark worked with residents to put on art exhibitions in the prison's conference centre. This provided the opportunity for residents to meet visitors, among them arts professionals, and talk about their work. Clark's residency at HMP Grendon culminated in his own exhibition at Ikon Gallery, which opened in December 2017. The Centre for Applied Criminology at Birmingham City University was commissioned to evaluate Clark's residency. This paper reflects upon one aspect of that evaluation—the impact of the residency upon the men serving sentences at HMP Grendon. Prior to describing this element of the study and our findings, we provide an overview of HMP Grendon—a unique institution in the English and Welsh prison estate.

### HMP Grendon

As the only prison in England and Wales to operate wholly as a therapeutic community,<sup>10</sup> HMP Grendon presented an unparalleled carceral space for Clark's residency. The prison is home to up to 235 residents,<sup>11</sup> the clear majority of whom are serving life sentences.<sup>12</sup> Grendon residents present complex needs and psychological disturbance, some have engaged in self-harm and suicidal behaviours, and many have a significant history of institutional misconduct in other prisons.<sup>13</sup> However, Grendon represents, for these men, an opportunity to embark upon a process of change

with the 'supportive and affirmative social climate' of the therapeutic community.<sup>14</sup>

Rapoport's four underlying principles of TCs—*democratisation, permissiveness, communalism, and reality confrontation*<sup>15</sup>—are operationalised within HMP Grendon through several mechanisms. Every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, residents participate in small therapy groups of up to eight people, where all elements of residents' lives are considered and discussed, including childhood, family life, offences, victims, educational experiences, relationships, working life, and incidents or events that have occurred in the prison.<sup>16</sup> As such, HMP Grendon is a living-learning situation.<sup>17</sup> While *permissiveness* enables residents to behave 'as normal' and tolerate each other's perceived deviancy within the community, *reality confrontation* comes to the fore in the small therapy groups, where all behaviours come under scrutiny. Twice-weekly community meetings are an example of democratization at work in HMP Grendon—meetings are chaired by an elected resident and enable ongoing access to the decision-making process for all residents for example issues affecting community life are discussed and voted upon, e.g., the organisation and allocation of paid work. With regards to communalism, all residents take on responsibilities relating to their physical environment and the events that happen within that environment, for example entertainment coordinator, health and hygiene compliance officer, family day coordinator, or drugs strategy advisor.<sup>18</sup>

Narrative is central to HMP Grendon's psychotherapeutic interventions in which life stories are elicited, interrogated, critiqued, and reformed.<sup>19</sup> As Stevens noted following her in-depth study at the prison, 'conventional 'con' self-narratives, those hypermasculine, anti-authoritarian, crime glorifying, risk-taking tales of criminal derring-do, sometimes

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10. For a general introduction to the work of HMP Grendon, see Genders, E., and Player, E. (1995). *Grendon: A study of a therapeutic prison*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
  11. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2017, May 8 – 18). Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Grendon.
  12. Brookes, M. (2012). Recovery within a prison therapeutic community: Setting the scene. In D. Alfred and G. Drennan (Eds.), *Secure recovery: Approaches to recovery in forensic mental health settings* (pp. 156-171). London, England: Routledge.
  13. Newberry, M. (2009). The relationship between offence type, psychopathy and blame attribution among prisoners at HMP Grendon. Unpublished Prison Service Report. Newton, M. (2010). Changes in prison offending among residents in a prison-based therapeutic community. In R. Shuker and E. Sullivan (Eds.), *Grendon and the emergence of forensic therapeutic communities: Developments in research and practice* (pp. 281-292). London, England: Wiley-Blackwell. Shine, J., and Newton, M. (2000). Damaged, disturbed, and dangerous: A profile of receptions to Grendon therapeutic prison 1995-2000. In J. Shine (Ed.), *A compilation of Grendon research* (pp. 23-25). Grendon Underwood, UK: HMP Grendon.
  14. Shuker, R. (2010). Forensic therapeutic communities: A critique of the treatment model and evidence base, *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 49: 463.
  15. Rapoport, R. (1960). *Community as doctor: New perspectives on a therapeutic community*. London, England: Tavistock Publications.
  16. Brookes, M. (2010). Putting principles into practice: The therapeutic community regime at HMP Grendon and its relationship with the "Good Lives" model. In R. Shuker and E. Sullivan (Eds.), *Grendon and the emergence of therapeutic communities: Developments in research and practice* (pp. 99-113). Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
  17. Kennard, D. (1998). *An introduction to therapeutic communities*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley.
  18. Stevens, A. (2013). *Offender rehabilitation and therapeutic communities: Enabling change the TC way*. London, England: Routledge.
  19. Adler, J. M., Skalina, L. M., & McAdams, D. P. (2008) The narrative reconstruction of psychotherapy and psychological health, *Psychotherapy Research*, 18: 719-734. Adshead, G. (2011). The life sentence: Using a narrative approach in group psychotherapy with offenders. *Group Analysis*, 44: 175-195. Lieblich, A., McAdams, D. P. & Josselson, R. (Eds.). (2004) . Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

intertwined with self-pitying justifications to the effect that 'life made me do it'.<sup>20</sup> In the later stages of therapy, new identities and the narratives through which they are given meaning are tested, reflected upon, and approved by fellow residents.<sup>21</sup> HMP Grendon residents leave therapy with redemption scripts<sup>22</sup> or restoried lives, forming part of a toolkit alongside psychological, physical, and social resources—these components all come together to enable better plans for living a good life.<sup>23</sup> This history, structure and culture of HMP Grendon provided a unique space for the artist in residence. Within the following section, we outline our approach to exploring the impact of Clark's residency upon the men at HMP Grendon.

### Approach to the study

Academic literature relating to prison-based artists in residence is very sparse. The largely North-American literature that does exist suggests that prison-based artists can have a positive impact on the offenders who engage with the process and on perceptions of prisons and offenders in the wider community.<sup>24</sup> The evaluation of the first artist in residence at HMP Grendon found that residents began to redefine themselves as artists rather than offenders, the prison environment was enhanced by the presence of an artist in residence and receptivity towards the residency among prisoners was enhanced by their faith in the artist as a professional and the acclaim that came with the work being exhibited to external audiences.<sup>25</sup> However, Clark's residency at HMP Grendon was marked by change rather than continuity. Its aim was broader than that of the previous residency in establishing impact beyond the gate—developing a public discourse about prison, rehabilitation and criminality. As such, we set out to explore how this unprecedented initiative affected the men who spent time with Clark during his tenure. We were particularly interested in the impact that the residency had upon

## HMP Grendon residents leave therapy with redemption scripts or restoried lives, forming part of a toolkit alongside psychological, physical, and social resources...

the residents' narratives in terms of the stories they told about their lives and the ways in which their experiences during the residency formed part of their desistance trajectories—in other words, their journeys away from crime.

Six semi-structured interviews were carried out with residents who were at HMP Grendon at the time of the evaluation. These interviews involved exploring their experiences of the residency, images that had been created by Clark during the residency and where applicable, images created by the residents themselves. Where images were used, they inspired dialogue, giving the participants scope and freedom to construct and share their narratives and explore what the images meant to them. The questions posed during the interviews were flexible and responded to the natural flow of conversation around the images being discussed. These interviews could be described as a visual research method<sup>26</sup> adopting an image-elicitation approach.<sup>27</sup> A research assistant took handwritten notes of the interviews. All participants were allocated non-gender specific pseudonyms. Handwritten notes were typed up after the interviews. We also wrote to and received replies from four residents who were at other institutions or released from prison at the time of the evaluation but who had previously been involved in the sessions Clark ran at the prison. The data from interviews and letters was analysed via qualitative thematic analysis, assisted by NVivo qualitative analysis software.

### Findings

Within this section of the report we outline the key themes that emerged from our analysis of our research encounters with residents. References to notes taken during the interviews and direct quotes from letters are included for illustrative purposes—the nature of the source is noted at the end of each reference and quote.

20. Ibid n.14: 159.

21. Ibid n.10. Stevens, A. (2012). "I am the person now I was always meant to be": Identity reconstruction and narrative reframing in therapeutic community prisons, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 12: 527-547. Wilson, D. & McCabe, S. (2002) How HMP Grendon "works" in the words of those undergoing therapy, *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 41; 279-291.

22. Maruna (2001) *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*, Washington DC: APA Books.

23. For an overview of the Good Lives Model see Ward, T., and Maruna, S. (2007). *Rehabilitation*. Routledge.

24. Caulfield, L.S. (2014). *Final evaluation of the Artist in Residence at HMP Grendon*. Grant report to the Motesiczky Charitable Trust and Grendon Friends Trust.

25. Ibid n.24.

26. Rose, G. (2012). *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. (3rd Edn). London: Sage.

27. Previous research has used the term 'photo-elicitation' – see for example Gariglio, L. (2016). Photo-elicitation in prison ethnography: Breaking the ice in the field and unpacking prison officers' use of force, *Crime, Media, Culture*, 12: 367-379.

## Access to arts materials and resources

Clark had ensured access to arts materials that were not previously available—or which would have been difficult to access without this support. However, it was noted that materials were not simply ‘handed over’ unconditionally. There was an expectation that if Clark provided someone with materials, they would make use of them constructively and were responsible and accountable for them. As such, whilst access to materials was beneficial in enabling residents to engage in their artistic practices, the way in which this was operated was very much in the therapeutic community spirit of Grendon. This living learning situation<sup>28</sup> in which all elements of prison life, even those which might be considered by people on the outside as minor—like the provision of arts materials—are an integral component of the therapeutic environment,

*Paul made the point that without the residency, he would not have been able to fund his art (Interview notes—Paul)*

*Kevin had observed those involved in the residency getting access to new materials. He said he was pleased to see that there was some accountability around this though—Edmund wanted to see what people had produced with the materials, he didn’t just supply them and move on. Kevin said this encouraged people to make use of the materials they had. (Interview notes—Kevin)*

## Rediscovery / development / diversification of technical abilities

Residents noted that the presence of an artist in residence had a positive impact not just on their capacity to continue to practice their artwork through the provision of materials but also in terms of how the residency created a space in which to rediscover old artistic endeavours and develop and diversify existing

practices. The confidence, positivity and future-focus evident amongst these residents links clearly to desistance factors around hope and motivation.<sup>29</sup> In addition, these activities also embody elements of the strengths-based Good Lives Model (GLM) approach to rehabilitation in providing pro-social pathways to the achievement of goals or ‘key primary goods’ such as knowledge, creativity and excellence.<sup>30</sup>

*For the first time I felt free to paint whatever I wanted and because of that freedom I painted portraits, which remain my best works and I went on to win some awards. (Letter, Danny)*

The confidence, positivity and future-focus evident amongst these residents links clearly to desistance factors around hope and motivation.

*Richard talked about a sculpture he had created and what various parts of it represented. He explained that Edmund’s advice had encouraged him to think outside of the box and develop his work in new ways through support, challenge and constructive criticism. (Interview notes—Richard)*

## Expression and reality-confrontation

As noted above, reality confrontation is one of the key principles of the therapeutic community environment where behaviours come under the scrutiny of others and thoughts and feelings are confronted.<sup>31</sup> The artwork created by residents appeared to complement this element of the therapeutic community. Opportunities to develop artistic practices enhanced the range of methods and means through which residents could express themselves through art. As such, it can be argued that the residency has further facilitated achievement of inner peace and freedom from emotional turmoil and stress—a further ‘primary good’ identified in the GLM approach to rehabilitation.<sup>32</sup> However, some emphasised that the artwork they engaged in around the artist in residence was refreshing because it sat outside of the formal psychotherapy and art therapy

28. Ibid n.17.

29. LeBel, T. P., Burnett, R., Maruna, S. & Bushway, S. (2008) The ‘Chicken and Egg’ of Subjective and Social Factors in Desistance from Crime, *European Journal of Criminology*, 5: 131-59.

30. Ibid n.23.

31. Ibid n.15.

32. Ibid n.23.

sessions. As such, these residents considered it not part of the therapeutic process but a relief or a break from it.

*I painted a small black/red abstract which I put up in my room. I used this image to explain how I thought I made decisions, that I would have a chaotic lifestyle and make chaotic decisions, the image itself was very chaotic (Letter, Steve)*

*Richard described the work he has done with Edmund as a 'breath of fresh air'—explaining that it takes him away from the therapeutic elements of Grendon, which can be very demanding and draining. (Interview notes—Richard)*

### Narrative Identities

The concept of the narrative identity was prominent in resident's accounts. They described themselves as artists, poets—more than just an offender. Getting involved with the artistic residency further reinforced these new identities, created a space in which they could be explored and contributed towards feelings of confidence. There are clear associations between these findings and the importance of not having a criminal identity—a core desistance factor.<sup>33</sup> In addition, this identity reshaping that has occurred during the residency represents a pro-social means of finding meaning or purpose in life and achieving autonomy and self-directedness—core primary goods. There was a critical awareness of the extent to which other people—notably the public—would be able to overcome the persistent myths and stereotypes about prisoners. Residents welcomed the exhibitions at the prison as an opportunity to meet new people and be seen and accepted artists but acknowledged that these events should be open to a broader range of people. For some, art was an interest rather than an identity, but it was nonetheless valuable and contributed to their sense of self outside the offender identity.

*Carl explained that most of the time, people beyond the prison walls do not have the opportunity to see the artist behind the work. Carl found it difficult to see how boundaries,*

*stereotypes and labels could be overcome if the artist is invisible. Carl was very enthusiastic about the exhibition at the prison. On broaching this topic with him, his demeanour shifted, he began to smile and was visibly proud of his work and his role in organising it, 'It was brilliant. The people were seeing me as an artist not a killer'. (Interview notes—Carl)*

*Whilst Kevin had not been directly involved in creating artwork around the residency, people on his wing had been. He said identity was important, explaining that being known as a poet or an artist instead of his offence had boosted his fellow residents' confidence. Those who were involved identified with something new and Kevin saw the positive effects of this—people with a sense of who they were, and a purpose in life (Interview notes—Kevin)*

### Sharing artistic work with others, building relationships

Some residents spoke of how their art was both a bridge for building relationships with loved ones and a way of leaving a positive legacy for them, creating new and positive memories and experiences. As such, for these residents, it can be argued that the residency strengthened their capacities with regards to building stronger relationships with friends and families—a recognised factor in helping individuals desist from crime<sup>34</sup> and a core primary good within the GLM.<sup>35</sup>

*I get a lot of pleasure out of sharing the things I make with others (Letter—Jim).*

*I started to spend time in the evenings making cards, for family, for friends, even for staff at times (Letter—Steve)*

### Communalism

Opportunities to take on responsibilities relating to the therapeutic environment and the events that happen within it were evident within the activities around the artist in residence. The residents expressed their pride and

33. Ibid n.22. Chiricos, Barrick & Bales (2007) 'The labelling of convicted felons and its consequences for recidivism', *Criminology*, 45: 547-81.

34. Maruna, LeBel & Lanier (2003) 'Generativity behind bars: Some "redemptive truth" about prison society', in de St. Aubin, McAdams & Kim (Eds.) *The generative society: Caring for future generations*, Pp. 131-151, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

35. Ibid n. 23.

sense of achievement in assisting with these events and having contributed to the appearance of the environment through having their artwork put on display within the prison. This enhanced the sense in which they felt they had a stake in HMP Grendon as their home. This provides evidence of the residency facilitating the achievement of a further core primary good—community.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the artwork they created added to the uniqueness of HMP Grendon—they expressed that Grendon does not feel like any other prison but with the artwork, it looked less like other prisons too.

*I have toured all the communities and seen the art, pictures, sculptures that are there is in big part due to Ed and the Trust supplying the much-needed financial support. Without them the place would be just magnolia/grey and not personalised at all. (Letter, Steve)*

*Daniel's artwork was in the community room where the interview was held. He was very confident in pointing it out and appeared very proud of it (Interview notes—Daniel)*

### **Exposure to new perspectives and views**

Some residents felt that being able to discuss their work with Clark had created an awareness of different views and perspectives. They were able to see why someone else would take a different position from them on a topic or a piece of artwork and as such, the discussion groups enabled constructive conversations over opposing and conflicting views.

*...the discussion groups I found fascinating, in some way Edmund was able to give me an empathic understanding of other people's feelings on the subjects we discussed and the material he was able to show us, from photos to short clips of films on his laptop...The only thing I can say about the class itself, I wish they could have been longer but all in all it*

*was a brilliant experience and long may it continue (Letter, Jim)*

*Ed discussed this image (that Steve had created) with me and explained that everyone does this in some way or form, that decision making as an idea is difficult for all of us and that everyone makes the wrong decision at some point in their life (Letter, Steve)*

### **Engagement in an artistic community**

Residents explained that the presence of an artist in residence had brought a group of them together in a new way and created a sense of community—a key primary good<sup>37</sup>—amongst those who were interested in the arts. They worked with each other and with Clark on pieces of artwork and on organising the events around the residency—for example the exhibitions at the prison. They reported a sense of belonging and stated that they had enjoyed helping others to develop their artwork. In this sense, the residency further facilitated desistance through having something to give to others and having a place within a social group—recognised as important contributing factors in desisting from crime.<sup>38</sup>

Residents explained that the presence of an artist in residence had brought a group of them together in a new way and created a sense of community—a key primary good....

*Daniel placed a lot of emphasis on the importance and impact of the discussion group with Edmund. He explained that this was beneficial to the development of his artwork and building a sense of community among the artists on the wing (Interview notes—Daniel)*

*Carl explained his involvement in the creation of the artwork in the community room and how he had enjoyed working with others to create it, sharing his knowledge and skills with them in an informal mentoring capacity. Carl acknowledged that many of his fellow residents had benefitted from Edmund's*

36. Ibid n. 23.

37. Ibid n. 23.

38. Bottoms, A. & Shapland, J. (2010) Steps toward desistance among male young adult recidivists, in S. Farrall, R. Sparks, S. Maruna & M. Hough (Eds) *Escape Routes: Contemporary perspectives on life after punishment* (pp 43-80). London: Routledge. Burnett, R. & Maruna, S. (2004) So 'Prison Works', Does It? The Criminal Careers of 130 Men Released from Prison under Home Secretary Michael Howard, *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43: 390-404.

*residency and stated that he would like to see the establishment of a prison-wide arts group (Interview Notes—Carl).*

### **Inspiration, accessibility and support without pressure**

The way in which Clark had managed his artistic residency drew much praise from the residents. They observed that there wasn't any pressure to get involved, that was a decision that was down to individual residents. Clark put on regular sessions and if people wanted to come, they came. If they didn't want to, there was no judgement or criticism. He was described as someone who opened doors to opportunities without creating dependency. He was considered approachable, creating his own work whilst responding the residents' strengths and needs but without an agenda. Clark's belief in the residents was highlighted throughout our research encounters with them—they valued his opinions and appreciated the time that he devoted to enabling and facilitating their work. Some residents had been wary of him at first because of their fear that as an 'artsy' person he would be pretentious and would misunderstand them, but it was clear that these boundaries were soon broken. In this way, the residency contributed towards desistance because being believed in and communicating the belief that people can change and have something to offer to society and others is a key factor in desistance from crime.<sup>39</sup>

*He'd always be about his office in education you could go to whenever he was in and he'd always make you feel welcome and be really encouraging...When I arrived at Grendon there was an artist in residence, but we only saw her once every two weeks and it was quite disjointed in the way it ran. When Edmund took over, everything changed. He was working in the prison once or twice a week. (Letter, Danny)*

*Richard explained that he initially had some scepticism about Edmund in relation to his*

*motives and what he was doing at Grendon. However, he explained that this view quickly changed, and Edmund was now a much respected and well-regarded member of the Grendon community. (Interview notes—Richard)*

### **Prison and the arts — general observations and thoughts**

All residents expressed their frustrations about the lack of resources and support for arts in prisons. There was a recognition that at HMP Grendon, they had benefited from the artistic residency but that people in other institutions were not so fortunate. Residents also noted that key to enhancing awareness of the power of art was opening prison art up to a wider audience of people.

**There was a recognition that at HMP Grendon, they had benefited from the artistic residency but that people in other institutions were not so fortunate.**

*Carl was very passionate about the value of arts in prisons. He referred to prisoners at other establishments and made the point that Grendon was the exception, other prisoners did not have the same arts resources or opportunities as men at Grendon. He summed this up by saying, 'The whole prison system is missing the point as to how powerful art can be' (Interview notes—Carl)*

*Paul stated that the wider public—not just people from the 'arts bubble' needed to be able to see prison art and speak to prison artists if arts in prison were to receive more funding and support (Interview notes—Paul)*

### **Final Thoughts—Making the case for artists in residence**

As described in this paper, Clark's residency at HMP Grendon has brought a range of benefits and impacts for the residents involved. This encompasses established desistance factors including hope and motivation, having something to give to others, having a place within a social group, not having a criminal identity, being believed in and building relationships. The residency has also opened pathways for the pro-

39. Rex, S. (1999). Desistance from Offending: Experiences of Probation, *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 36: 366–83. McNeill, Batchelor, Burnett & Knox (2005) *21st Century Social Work. Reducing Reoffending: Key Practice Skills*, Edinburgh, The Scottish Executive.

social achievement of a range of goals or primary goods identified within the GLM—notably knowledge, excellence, agency, inner peace, friendship, community, finding meaning and purpose in life and creativity.<sup>40</sup> This residency—occupied by a high calibre artist with a reputation for asking challenging questions about incarceration and an aim to develop critical discussion around prison, rehabilitation and criminality—has complemented the therapeutic regime at the prison and facilitated the process of identity reconstruction for the artists he worked alongside. Clarks’ residency has built upon and surpassed the outcomes of the previous residency.<sup>41</sup> As such, these benefits demonstrate that there is a case to be made for supporting artistic residencies in carceral settings. There are of course significant challenges to such proposals given the constrained funding environment and the difficulty in gaining public support for initiatives that enhance the wellbeing of prisoners. However, the key to tackling such challenges may lie within the arts.

The public rely heavily upon media representations of prison and ‘official’ images created

by the Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service and their providers. Prisoners are an invisible population. They mostly go unseen—and with the exception of events like the Koestler Trust’s annual awards and exhibitions<sup>42</sup>—so does their art. It is easy to demonise and exclude those who are invisible<sup>43</sup> and deny support for initiatives that will enhance their lives. However, some images have the potential to challenge official discourses. The images created by Clark and the residents during the residency are examples of such counter image, and in turn counter narratives—alternative ways of looking at prison and prisoners<sup>44</sup> (Brown, 2014; Schept, 2014). Through prompting reflection upon lives lived out behind prison walls, these images have the potential to facilitate a re-humanising of the residents at HMP Grendon and prisoners more generally. As such, perhaps it is time to begin incorporating images into our evidence base in calling for support for artistic residencies in carceral settings. They may speak louder than words or numbers.



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40. Ibid n. 23.

41. Ibid n. 24

42. Please see <https://www.koestlertrust.org.uk/> for more information about The Koestler Trust Awards and exhibitions.

43. Cheliotis, L. K. (2010) The ambivalent consequences of visibility: Crime and prisons in the mass media’ *Crime Media Culture*, 6: 169-184.

44. Brown, M. (2014) ‘Visual Criminology and Carceral Studies: Counter-images in the carceral age’ *Theoretical Criminology*, 18: 176-197.

Schept, J. (2014) ‘(Un)seeing Like a Prison: Counter-visual ethnography of the carceral state’ *Theoretical Criminology*, 18: 198-223.

# Interview with Edmund Clark

*Edmund Clark was the Artist-in-residence at HMP Grendon (2014-18).  
He is interviewed by Michael Fiddler, University of Greenwich.*

**Edmund Clark is an award-winning artist whose work has been exhibited internationally. Much of his work has explored carceral spaces. This has ranged from E-wing of the former HMP Kingston that housed elderly life prisoners (in *Still Life: Killing Time*), to the naval base in Guantanamo Bay (in *Guantanamo: If The Light Goes Out*).**

Our conversation took place shortly after the opening of *In Place of Hate* at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham. This was an exhibition of Edmund's work created throughout his residency at HMP Grendon.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation of the residency is discussed earlier in this special edition by Professor Elizabeth Yardley and Dan Rusu, whilst Professor Yvonne Jewkes provides a commentary on Edmund's work.

**MF:** I was fortunate enough to see your show at the Imperial War Museum.<sup>2</sup> One of the pieces that really stayed with me was *Orange Screen*<sup>3</sup> and the idea of ekphrasis<sup>4</sup>—it was a term that I hadn't come across before—to elicit these visual memories, visual images. I was wondering, prior to your work that led to *Still Life: Killing Time*,<sup>5</sup> what were your first visual images or memories of imprisonment?

**EC:** Prior to *Still Life: Killing Time* I had done work in prisons to a certain extent already. I had made the *Baby Fathers*<sup>6</sup> series, of which some was done in a Young Offenders Institution. I had also done commissions for various publications. So, I'd been into

Feltham, Holloway. I'd visited a couple of prisons. I had some experience.

**MF:** Before that then, before your first-hand experience.

**EC:** The popular imagery of prisons that I was aware of was through popular culture and television. So, *Porridge*—that incredibly misleading representation of prison, Prisoner Cell Block H and prisoner of war programmes like *Colditz*. I'd seen photography taken in prison by people like Chris Steele-Perkins. I'd seen his work about a Russian prison.<sup>7</sup> I think I might have seen Danny Lyon's work about a prison in America.<sup>8</sup> From the 60s and 70s. Chris Steele-Perkins might have been a bit later than that. Maybe the famous Van Gogh painting.<sup>9</sup>

I also grew up in London and was familiar with the architecture of Victorian prisons like *Wormwood Scrubs*, *Wandsworth* and *Brixton*.

**MF:** So, how, having worked on these projects, up to and including Grendon, how might that have changed now? Is there a singular visual image that encapsulates imprisonment for you?

**EC:** A window with bars on it. Looking out through bars is the image which comes to mind as one that I've seen, that I've photographed, that I've seen photographs of. Physically being on the inside and looking out is the visual encapsulation of the experience of incarceration, isn't it? You're on the inside, everything is out there and you can't get there.

1. The exhibition included 1.98m2 (a lightbox displaying wild flowers picked by the artist within the prison grounds. The internal dimensions of the lightbox - the titular 1.98m2 - refer to the size of a cell at HMP Grendon); *Vanishing Point* (five widescreen video panels - oriented vertically - depicting journeys undertaken by staff and prisoners throughout the prison); *Oresteia* (three large CRT televisions played scenes related to the Greek tragedy *Oresteia* as adapted for psychodrama. Staff represent the play's characters as perpetrator, victim or witness whilst prisoners responded to their actions. The televisions were arranged in a small circle of chairs used for therapy - taken from HMP Grendon - that also allowed visitors to sit and watch); *My Shadow's Reflection* (bedsheets - again, taken from the prison itself - were suspended from the gallery ceiling. Photographs were projected onto them: images of pressed flowers, architectural forms, pinhole portraits of prisoners and staff).
2. *War of Terror (2016-17)* [Exhibition]. Imperial War Museum, London. July 28, 2016-August 28, 2017.
3. Edmund Clark. 2016/17. *Orange Screen* (video extract). [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.edmundclark.com/works/orange-screen/#1>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].
4. Ekphrasis is a literary description of a visual work of art.
5. Edmund Clark. 2008. *Still Life: Killing Time*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.edmundclark.com/works/still-life-killing-time/#1>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].
6. Edmund Clark. 2002. *Baby Fathers: new images of teenage fatherhood*. [ONLINE] Available at: [http://www.gbymn.org.uk/gbymnp/babyfathers\\_booklet\\_sample.pdf](http://www.gbymn.org.uk/gbymnp/babyfathers_booklet_sample.pdf). [Accessed 18 June 2018].
7. Magnum Photos. 2018. *Russian Prisons*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://pro.magnumphotos.com/C.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&LBID=2K1H86NWK8IR&IT=Document01>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].
8. Phaidon. 2018. *Danny Lyon looks back at his powerful prison photos*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/photography/articles/2015/august/17/danny-lyon-looks-back-at-his-powerful-prison-photos/>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].
9. Vincent Van Gogh.org. 2018. *Prisoners Exercising (1890)*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.vincentvangogh.org/prisoners-exercising.jsp>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].

**MF:** With the three year residency at Grendon, what were your expectations of being an artist-in-residence in a Category B prison?

**EC:** They were partly shaped by having made *Still Life: Killing Time* on E Wing at HMP Kingston, Portsmouth, where I worked over the course of about 2 years. I had some expectation of what the physical experience of being in prison would be like. I didn't know what to expect in terms of facilitating work and engaging with the men to make their own work. I had previously run with Young Offenders but beyond that I didn't know what to expect.

The therapeutic environment was a big unknown for me so I tried to go in there with as open a mind as possible.

**MF:** What were the mechanics of being an artist-in-residence? For example, in some of the interviews that you've done, you talk about the difficulty of getting a camera into a secure environment. Was that a similar experience in this instance?

**EC:** At the start the big difference working at Grendon, in terms of the process, was carrying keys. That was quite a substantial shift in my role compared to working at HMP Kingston where I never wanted them and could operate on the wing without them. It was essential at Grendon because I couldn't really operate without it but I was aware that it made me something else. I felt different being a keyholder. I wonder if the prisoners would have viewed me differently if I hadn't carried keys.

**MF:** Would you have preferred not to have had them?

**EC:** I think, initially, I would have done, yes. I've become inured to it now. Now that I've established relationships and people know and have seen what I'm doing, I don't think it makes that big a difference to the prisoners. But when I first started, I was very sensitive to that. I find the act of carrying keys and having to deal with the infrastructure oppressive. I took a hand tally counter in one day and counted just over 200 key turns in a normal day. That's a physical experience. It's also a mental experience. Because there are so many bars, gates and doors, you're doing it all the time. And it's not something that becomes second nature because there is always the risk that you will leave one unlocked. And that has consequences. So, that is an experience that I do find quite oppressive.

Getting used to the way all the different wings operate—getting to understand the democratic

permission giving process—took a while. I went in there thinking I was going to coordinate and work across all the wings and realised that wasn't really going to be feasible. It took time to come to terms with the place. Regarding ordering materials, I had no notion of how that was supposed to work in terms of the security process. So, actually, it was the men, who told me how it had been done before. I had no guidebook to the institution or the role.

**MF:** Was that freeing?

**EC:** It was initially quite an isolating experience. Being in that place, by myself, in the evening, trying to sort everything out, not really understanding how the place worked.

**MF:** And did it take some time?

**EC:** It took months to really get my head round it. It sounds incredibly simple, doesn't it, ordering materials. But prisons are bureaucratic places. And with those institutional structures, often each time a new person comes in they actually reinvent bits of it in their own way. So, I reinvented the process in my own fashion. Where to order from, what paperwork to use and so on. Never mind getting to understand the dynamic and process on each wing in terms of the therapeutic situation.

**MF:** Did the men that you were working with in the prison have expectations for your role?

**EC:** I think everyone had expectations for my role based on the predecessor. She is a painter. So, that was the role people projected on to me and expected me to fulfil. You're an artist-in-residence—you paint, that's what you do. I think the men were slightly more circumspect because I was dealing directly with them. There was a learning experience on all sides as I explained that I am a photographer and I work with film and I make videos and do all this other stuff. The first few times I'd take a camera out and start taking photographs people would stop me and say 'what are you doing, do you have permission for that?' That was fine. People had to learn what I did, by just seeing me doing it. There is a performative element to being an artist-in-residence in a non-art focussed institution, perhaps especially in a prison.

**MF:** Across the three years, were there particular goals that you had in mind or did you have a theme for year one that you would then see evolve?

**EC:** I was clear that one thing I had set myself was that I was not going to do what I had done before. So, I was not going to re-do *Still Life: Killing Time*. That was

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very clear. I was going to work in different ways. I saw it as an opportunity to explore my creative process, my practice as a photographer, as an artist. And to look at different ways of making work, of responding to the environment.

I was initially interested in ideas of archives. I remember envisioning that my role could entail making an archive of work about Grendon that would be the legacy of the residency. I was really interested in researching the history of the prison and was expecting to find this kind of archive. And, frankly, it doesn't exist. The archive exists in the minds and case files of the people who have worked and lived there.

**MF:** How did you arrive at the new formal techniques that you ended up using? Was there a period of experimentation?

**EC:** I didn't make work for a while. I was coming to terms with the place and with the role of facilitating and providing. That was my focus, initially. There were really good practising artists there who needed materials.

I do recall bursts of activity with a camera in a fairly conventional way. I felt that I needed to make work but wasn't sure how. I took time. I spent time looking at the environment and reflecting on the processes in the prison. The experimentation was going on in my head, thinking about a new way to look, new ways to make work and to reflect Grendon. The big shift for me was when I started to look at the outside of the buildings as sculptural forms that reflected my reaction to the carceral space.

**MF:** In both *Vanishing Point*<sup>10</sup> and the black-and-white photography of these sculptural forms, you present the buildings in a vertical orientation.

**EC:** Yes, it is all vertical. I very deliberately framed and, in some cases, cropped those forms as tightly as possible. They're uncomfortable in the frame. That was deliberate. I wanted to shoot the *Vanishing Point* film vertically because I wanted to visualise that in a way which was as close as I could make it to how we see normally, perspective-wise, proportionally. It's to give that sense of a person moving through space. It's how we walk. It's giving a confined view. It's just the space immediately in front of you. If you walk along almost looking at the ground, you have that tunnel vision. You're not looking around. You're not looking at the expanse around you. You're fixed on a path in a limited space with a restricted view on a circular, repetitive journey.

**MF:** Moving on to *In Place of Hate*, how important was it to bring the space of the prison into the gallery?

You've got physical dimensions in 1.98m<sup>2</sup>,<sup>11</sup> you've got objects taken from the prison.<sup>12</sup>

**EC:** I think that was really important. Most of the discourse around prison and prisoners and criminal justice is very reductive, stereotypical and fixed on binary notions of good and evil. I was clear from quite early on that I wanted to use the gallery space as a place to confront an audience with aspects of the prison experience and that is absent from media discourse, including physical and material elements. A space to create connections with prison that the general public do not normally get to make.

Bringing in elements of the prison environment—particularly of what happens at Grendon—was key to that. I didn't want to literally make it like a carceral space though.

1.98m<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Edmund Clark, courtesy Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

The installation 1.98m<sup>2</sup> is a lightbox shaped so that you can enter it and stand inside or outside. It's covered with flowers that have grown inside the perimeter at Grendon that I've picked and pressed between sheets of prison paper towels under books in my office.

They're fragile and very delicate. Some have rotted. The interior dimensions of the lightbox are the dimensions of a cell at Grendon. That's quite a problematic contradictory experience. You are looking at these beautiful delicate things which you're looking at, yet the space you are walking around or inside is a prison space. It's introducing that carceral space into a gallery in as nuanced a way as possible.

The ring of chairs, which are taken from Grendon, is an installation on which to show a film called the *Oresteia*. This is based on the Greek tragedy and is a collaboration with the psychodrama department in the prison. People can sit and watch the films on monitors which are on the chairs next to them, the chairs they

10. Vimeo. 2018. Edmund Clark – *Vanishing Point*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/257474758>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].

11. Video clip: 1.98m<sup>2</sup>. 2018. *In Place of Hate*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.edmundclark.com/works/in-place-of-hate/#4>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].

12. Detail from *Oresteia*. 2018. *In Place of Hate*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.edmundclark.com/works/in-place-of-hate/#7>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].

see on the screen. It's a very simple thing, a connection with the men they see on screen. But also other visitors. You go into the gallery sometimes and if it's quite busy there are 5 or 6 people sitting in a circle watching these monitors. The visitors have to engage with each in the gallery space in quite an intimate way. That's another connection which I think is quite important.

### Detail from *Oresteia*



Edmund Clark, courtesy Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

The bedsheets in the projected installation *My Shadow's Reflection* are really important. That notion of the shroud—that whole notion of the intimacy of where you sleep—that's really as close as I can bring the gallery visitor to touching a prisoner. Those are the sheets that men in Grendon have slept between. I think that physicality is really important. It speaks about the people there, as well as the experience of incarceration and therapy. Physically, it brings the visitor closer to the incarcerated.

### *My Shadow's Reflection*



Edmund Clark, courtesy Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

**MF:** As I mentioned earlier, I went to see *The War of Terror* at the Imperial War Museum and I visited it a couple of times. I was walking through the gallery and in one of the rooms and—as you know—there are blueprints...

**EC:** On the floor, yes. Architectural floorplans.

**MF:** And it was the summer holidays, so there were some children in there. And there was one little girl playing hopscotch across the lines.

**EC:** Interesting.

**MF:** So, I was wondering if, particularly with *In Place of Hate*, if anybody had been using the space that you've established in unusual or unexpected ways.

**EC:** I don't know to be fair. It's nice to hear that about someone playing hopscotch on a control order house floor plan though.

**MF:** It stuck me as being a really powerful juxtaposition.

**EC:** I think one of the good things about putting that work on in a gallery is that it does permit us to cross boundaries, to bring elements of a prison into an art space.

We were talking yesterday at the symposium<sup>13</sup> about how effective it would be if prisons were open to the public to visit. How that would radically change peoples understanding of prison and what goes on in prison. And in one small way, that's what I've tried to do with my residency. We have put on exhibitions of the men's work in the prison and invited people from the outside to come in. Also, using the gallery space at Ikon to take elements of the prison out into a public environment where people can sit on the chairs from a prison, touch the bedsheets that men sleep between. That kind of physicality and conceptual proximity, I think, is really important. And it does something that doesn't happen on our screens or in our papers. It's an experiential thing. The installation *My Shadow's Reflection* is designed so that as you move around the space you will walk in front of a projector and your shadow will fall on the bedsheet. It will fall on an image of the prison environment, of a plant, a flower, a leaf or on an image of someone who is resident there or works there. That is about trying to identify with the men at Grendon while or after learning about their own narratives of crime. For many of them, they are histories of extreme abuse and addiction, violence and chaos. And trying to understand that, were it not for the privileges that I have had in terms of the education, support, family, stability in my life which has informed my decisions, I could be there. We could all be there. You could be there. Any visitor to the gallery could be there, but for the circumstances of their life. And that, the image of the offender—particularly the violent offender, the sexual offender—as a monster that is tacitly and sometimes overtly present in much media discourse about criminality (and perhaps culturally ingrained) is actually potentially a monster that is in all of us. I am suggesting through the shadows that

13. Ikon Gallery. 2018. Symposium Edmund Clark, *In Place of Hate*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.ikon-gallery.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Edmund-Clark-Symposium.pdf>. [Accessed 18 June 2018].

visitors make in the installation that the image of the 'other' that is generated by the reductive binary discourse of good and evil around criminal justice is wrong. Everyone is on a spectrum. Some of us are more likely to offend for a range of reasons but we all have the potential given the wrong circumstances. My Shadow's Reflection is in me.

The men at Grendon are coming to terms with that image of themselves and understanding what they've done and transforming that image of themselves. The rest of us have to understand that we have that capacity as well. And if we understand that, then we understand the experience of incarceration and rehabilitation in a very different way. Using the materiality and recreating the spatial experience of incarceration in the gallery is another way—particularly through the pinhole imagery—of suggesting that it's not a binary situation.

**MF:** One of the ideas that particularly comes through with the pinhole camera is the idea of the visible and invisible coming together.

**EC:** I knew that I needed to confront the idea of disappearance and invisibility of the prisoner in the criminal justice system in the work. I had been told that I must not make images which identify prisoners. And that's for good reasons: for the protection of victims and victims' families, and also—in some cases—to protect the men when they get out. I understood that, but at another level that is an extension of this idea of invisibility and the absence of humanity once you've committed a crime and gone into prison. That led me to try and devise some form of visual strategy for making work which could confront that idea and the censorship of individual and was valid in its conceptual approach to the therapeutic process as well. That led me to experiment with a pinhole camera which is a technology which I've never used before. I was aware that it often involved long exposures. So it's about time. There is no lens. It's just, literally, a very small hole in a dark chamber to let light in so the images are often fluid and not sharp. That threw up the potential of making images of people which were indistinct.

I was also interested in that because it struck a chord with me in relation to notions of the Panopticon prison where all cells can be seen. The prisoner thinks they could potentially be seen at all times and moderates their behaviour in that environment. Anyone

that's read Foucault<sup>14</sup> will know that extends into how society works. Anyone that's read Deleuze's<sup>15</sup> Postscript on the Societies of Control will understand how that then relates to how we internalize and start shaping our own forms of behaviour. That was interesting for me because I see Grendon as a sort of psychological / psychotherapeutic Panopticon. People ask to be sent there. They go to be seen. The intense group therapeutic experience involves revealing a lot about themselves, dealing with their criminality in front of everyone else and exposing their histories. That's potentially a very traumatic experience. The communal dynamic of the prison is one where every waking moment of the day your behaviour is being held to account by your peers and you are holding their behaviour to account as well. Interactions on the stairs, on the landings, in the dining halls are all part of that

experience of learning to deal with your behaviour and live with other people in a responsible way. You are under observation all the time. That notion of a Panopticon-like existence was something I wanted to bring out.

The pinhole camera related to that because I actually don't think in an original Panopticon design you would necessarily see everybody. When you imagine an architectural structure where you have light in the middle and you have a series of cells around the outside with windows, where the

light is coming in from the back of the cell, often all you're going to see is a shadow, a silhouette or a presence. And I was interested in the possibility that the pinhole camera would create images which were like that.

Another aspect that appealed to me about the pinhole camera is that it is a camera with no lens. I'm not mediating or making the image. They're not photographs taken by me. It is literally just the light bouncing off the subject onto the sheet of film. For me, they're not even photographs. They're impressions of conversations. They are images made by the people standing in front of the camera. They shape their own image at Grendon which obviously relates to the process that they are going through in therapy.

On another level, I was also reflecting the history of photography in relation to criminal justice, particularly the idea of where the mug shot came from. The pinhole images are in black and white and show heads and shoulders and torsos. That's a very deliberate reference

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14. Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish* London: Penguin.

15. Deleuze, G. (1992) Postscript on the societies of control, *October*, 59, 3-7.

to Bertillon and his work at the beginning of what has become the mugshot photograph.

**MF:** *Portrait parlé* or 'the speaking portrait'.

**EC:** In relation to contemporary discourse around criminal justice, very often the last image that is seen of a person before they go to prison is the mugshot. That remains imprinted on everyone else's minds of what a criminal is. That's how you see a criminal: through a mugshot.

We make the pinhole images in a group situation. I put the camera up in a room with a group of men who take it in turns to stand in front of the camera for two exposures of about 6 minutes each. During that time I will ask them questions and other people in the room ask them questions about why they're there, what they've done, what the experience of the prison is like, what other prisons have been like, what therapy is like. Sometimes it's quite light-hearted. Sometimes it gets really quite heavy. It's up to the person how they want to react and what they want to talk about. As they talk, they move and that creates a blurred during the long exposure. Normally I do two exposures of each person. Often for the second image, I would encourage them to move more, to make a shape, to create some sort of form if they wanted to.

Now, the images are quite troubling. They're quite ghostly. They're faceless. You can't identify people. And that was problematic for me initially.

**MF:** How so?

**EC:** I thought it was literally perpetuating the image of the Other: an unidentified mugshot of a monster. It was what happened when I took the images back to the men and into the full wing community meetings that I understood what the photographs represented and why they the process made sense. One man said *'that shows how I feel in therapy...I just feel lost. I feel overwhelmed, faceless.'* Men started to talk about the images as an extension, as a reflection, as part of the process they were going through in therapy and as part of the experience of therapy. The images provoked or enabled men to talk in terms of how they 'see' themselves. Part of the point of going through therapy at Grendon is to understand what has

happened and that involves how you see yourself. The value you see in yourself. Your ability to understand who you are. To see that you are moving, you're changing, that you're evolving and ultimately to think how people outside might see them. In some cases to come to see and come to terms with the monster inside. Men started to talk about these images in relation to those ideas and the experiences they had encountered in their lives and at Grendon.

**MF:** In some respects it's a dual process of the pantopticon and the synopticon.<sup>16</sup>

If the panopticon is the few watching the many, the synopticon is the many watching the few. If you have a group interacting with an individual like that, the observation works in both directions.

**EC:** It is. That I think is clearly a reflection of the representation of criminal justice and prisoners. The many watch the few, but in an incredibly binary, stereotypical way, when we should be watching ourselves and understanding each other.

**MF:** You've mentioned that you will be sending out My Shadow's Reflection to opinion formers. Have you had feedback?

**EC:** I will send copies to criminal justice opinion formers, policy makers and commentators. Who knows what response I'll get. I haven't sent out that many copies yet. I will be giving a copy of the book to men and staff at Grendon that took part in the

work as well. I want them to have something that outlasts my residency that they may think is beautiful or at least a memory of part of their process. The book includes three types of images in the exhibition installation of the same name—the pinhole presences, the black-and-white architectural/sculptural images and photographs I've taken of plant matter that grows inside Grendon.

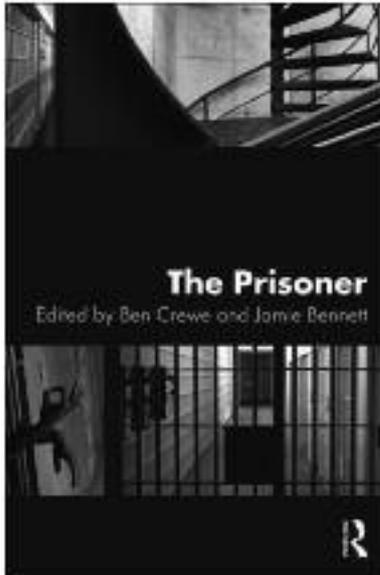
**MF:** Is there a response you'd like?

**EC:** I don't know. It would be nice if it created some kind of feedback. All I can hope is that when it lands on the desk of a policy maker or an opinion former they have the time to look at it and engage with it. Perhaps in some way it will change how they see, how they understand. Maybe it will bring them a little bit closer to their own shadow's reflection.

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16. Mathiesen, T. (1997) The viewer society: Michel Foucault's 'Panopticon' Revisited *Theoretical Criminology* 1, 2, 215-234.

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