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The Arts in Prison

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.¹ 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’.² Yvonne Jewkes argues imprisonment can suspend the life course resulting in a hiatus to accounts of personal life.³ Tia DeNora identifies music consumption as a technology of the self: a means of expressing identity and constructing personal narrative.⁴ 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.⁵ 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’⁶ 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 environment⁷—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 2017.⁸ 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’.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ DeNora's reading of music as a way to express identity echoes Erving Goffman's conception of identity as negotiated through performance.¹² 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*¹³ Tia DeNora explicitly aligns her work with Goffman's¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.*¹⁶

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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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 stigma¹⁹ 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,²⁰ supporting DeNora's contention that music provides a 'grid or grammar'²¹ 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 ^{22,23} 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'.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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*'.²⁷ 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 Hesmondhalgh²⁸ 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.²⁹ Missing somebody is consistently identified as the most painful aspect of imprisonment^{30,31,32}. 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.³³ 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'*³⁴ music also features in contestations of power.³⁵ Tales of *'window warriors'* tormenting hapless prisoners, directing them to sing *'Baa baa black sheep'* have passed in to prison lore.³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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 prison³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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'.⁴⁰ These experiences suggest a greater complexity to Goffman's process of 'disculturation',⁴¹ 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'.⁴² 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

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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.⁴³ 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'*.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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's⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ The active construction of alternative narratives which envisage life beyond prison and away from criminal activity are key to these processes.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ 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).

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DeNora⁵² 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 imprisonment⁵³ and a challenge to psychological survival.⁵⁴ 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*.⁵⁵ In the prison context, where negative experiences of education can cast a long shadow,⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ By allowing a means for reconstituting identity music can be thought of as a freedom practice⁵⁸ a necessary component for formulating narratives of desistance with all the potential that implies.⁵⁹

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'*.

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

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