A Narrative-Based Evaluation of “Changing Tunes” Music-based Prisoner Reintegration Interventions:

Full Report

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Executive Summary

- In its official mission statement, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) includes the goal to "support rehabilitation by helping offenders to change their lives." The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the strategies used by the charity Changing Tunes in supporting this ambition of helping individuals "change their lives."

- Changing Tunes is a registered charity that uses music teaching, rehearsing, recording, performance, improvisation and composition to promote and support desistance from crime. Changing Tunes can be found in over a dozen prisons across the UK, but also features a "through the gate" model of change. Following release from prison, Changing Tunes participants are invited to remain involved with the organisation through concerts in the community, continuing music sessions and pastoral support.

- A growing body of sophisticated criminological research has highlighted the numerous benefits of arts-based interventions in prison, including improvements in participants' feelings of self-worth and positive impacts on the institutional climates of prisons. However, because of the nature of most prison arts projects, this literature involves almost entirely short-term interventions, and the longer-term impact of such limited involvement is unclear.

- The current study was designed to address the following two research questions: What is the impact of a long-term music project on the ways individuals understand and conceive of their lives after release from prison? And, what are the mechanisms or processes through which this change is achieved? As this is a person-centred evaluation, in both cases, the questions are addressed from the perspectives of the participants themselves.

- The study employed a multi-method design intended to explore the impact of CT involvement from a multitude of angles, including:
  - life story interviewing of former participants now released from prison,
  - a thematic analysis of song lyrics written by *CT* participants,
  - an original analysis of qualitative feedback provided by project participants,
  - observations of prison-based training sessions and post-release performances,
  - focus groups with current prison-based participants,
  - interviews with prison staff and management,
  - interviews with project staff and management.

- The findings supported previous research in demonstrating considerable changes in participants' lives at the level of self-identity. Often angry and isolated, participants arrived at the projects with a limited and *limiting* sense of their own possibilities. They found that the involvement in the music charity helped to "wake something up" inside of them and show them new possibilities for their lives. These changing self-perceptions led to a sense of agency and control, and a vision with hope for their future.

- Our findings suggested that part of this transformation was a *direct* product of musical training as a medium for self-discovery and self-expression. Interviewees described music as having an intangible power for lifting and working through emotions, and they employed their newly learned musical skills as a form of self-therapy for coping with personal struggles. In particular, music's power as a memory aid appeared to benefit the important journey of 'coming to grips' with one's past, and this biographical reconstruction has been found to be crucial in the process of desistance from crime.

- The more prominent finding involved factors that were only *indirectly* related to musical training. Most participants argued that the key to the success of Changing Tunes was through the relationships they formed with their mentors and also with other members of the group within the sessions. The "through-the-gate" nature of these relationships made them especially powerful in the lives of the participants interviewed.

- We conclude that these "direct" and "indirect" impacts influence and strengthen one other. Without the strong interpersonal relationships the work fostered, the musical training may not have carried the emotional weight that it did, and likewise, without the affective "hook" of the musical training, the relationships with Changing Tunes mentors may not have been as valuable or as valued.

- Although not an explicitly rehabilitative intervention designed to target deficits in participants' cognitions or attitudes, we found that Changing Tunes strongly supported desistance from crime by encouraging and growing individual potential through the medium of music.

Introduction

Re-offending by former prisoners has the financial cost of between £9.5 and £12.5bn a year in the United Kingdom, with two out of five adults re-convicted within a year (Johnson, Keen, & Prichard, 2011). Such resettlement failures are themselves costly to society with the average cost of keeping an individual in prison estimated at £37,183 per annum in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2011). Unsurprisingly, then, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) lists in its official mission statement the ambition to "support rehabilitation by helping offenders to change their lives." In criminological research, this life-changing process is understood as "desistance from crime." Research is in the early stages of understanding how this process works and how structured efforts by NOMS or other organisations can either enhance or undermine this process (see Maruna& LeBel, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the strategies used by the charity Changing Tunes in supporting this lofty and admirable goal of helping individuals "change their lives." Changing Tunes is a registered charity that uses music teaching, rehearsing, recording, performance, improvisation and composition to promote and support desistance from crime. Changing Tunes projects can currently be found in more than a dozen prisons in the southwest of England, but the organisation is currently planning an expansion across the UK more widely.

Each Changing Tunes project is slightly different, as each is tailored to meet the needs of the prisoner populations they are serving, but usually a Changing Tunes project involves weekly 2-2½ hour musical tuition sessions, facilitated by a Musician in Residence and serving between 2 and 12 prisoners in group rehearsals. The student musicians usually work towards prison-wide performances or else recordings that serve as milestones and motivators, and each year, the best of this work is entered in the Koester competition for prisoner arts. Following release, Changing Tunes participants are invited to remain involved with the organisation through concerts in the community, continuing music sessions and pastoral support as part of a commitment to a "through the gate" model of change. In the last four years, the organisation has held over 1,000 post-release sessions with ex-prisoner participants, including 29 concerts/events.

Desistance and the Arts: A Review of the Literature

The aim of promoting desistance from crime is a complex one. Although the goal of recidivism reduction is widely shared in society, the desistance pathway is fraught with obstacles and needs considerable assistance and encouragement. Indeed, the considerable structural and psychosocial problems ex-prisoners face have been documented since the earliest days of the modern experiment of imprisonment as evidenced in the Prisoners' Aid Act 1862, the Gladstone Report of 1895, and books such as Maud Booth's (1903) *After Prison – What?* Indeed, as it was bluntly stated four decades ago in the book *Coming Out Cold* (McArthur, 1974, p. 1), "The released offender confronts a situation at release that virtually ensures his failure." The lethal combination of stigma, social exclusion, social learning, temptation, addiction, lack of social bonds, and dangerously low levels of human and social capital (not to mention financial capital) conspire to ensure that over half of all ex-prisoners typically return to prison within a few years of their release (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). The problems of reintegration may be exacerbated by the record-high numbers of individuals being processed through probation and the prison system in the UK in recent decades. This strain on the system of release and parole, combined with recent high-profile scandals in England and elsewhere involving released prisoners under community supervision, give the impression of a resettlement establishment in a period of seemingly perpetual crisis (see Padfield and Maruna, 2006).

The psychological impact of these obstacles to full social reintegration is also well known. Individuals who have been processed through the criminal justice system face understandable problems of stigma, rejection and social exclusion on their return. As a result, many of those caught up in this dynamic will "reject their rejecters" (Sykes and Matza, 1957), internalising an oppositional identity as an outlaw or rebel against an unforgiving society. This ontological stance can justify future criminality on the grounds that society has rejected them first, making any subsequent, individual wrongs understandable as a necessity or even a form of "payback" or justice. In other words, former prisoners decide "If your society doesn't like me, then I don't like your society" (ex-prisoner Bobby Cummines in the documentary "The Road from Crime") creating an oppositional subculture that promotes and supports criminality.

Desistance from crime, then, is thought to involve at some level a transformation at this level of self-identity and self-understanding (McKendy, 2006), which itself is associated

with the appropriation of new prosocial roles unlinked to offending (Berson, 2008; Maruna, 2001; Maruna & Farrall, 2004; McLean, 2008). That is, individuals need to come to see themselves as having positive qualities and having the potential to play a positive role in society (Maruna, 2001). By "re-framing" their pasts (Cursley, 2012a; Walsh, 2008) and re-imagining their potential futures (Burrowes, et al., 2013; Cursley, 2012a; Maruna, 2001), individuals can transform an offending past into part of their journey towards personal redemption and a useful future life (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2009). The study of desistance from crime is then the study of the sociological and psychological dynamics involved in this difficult psychosocial transfiguration.

Putting in place interventions both in and out of prison to enable this internal desistance journey is multi-faceted and risks being self-defeating (Maruna & Farrall, 2004). Individuals in the criminal justice system are overwhelmingly drawn from socially excluded backgrounds characterised by a lack of stability (Cursley, 2012a; McKendy, 2006; Prisoners Education Trust, 2009); school has often not provided a positive learning experience for offenders (Bayliss, 2003; Cursley, 2012a; McNeill, et al., 2011), with many offenders feeling that 'school didn't really teach you anything' (Anderson, et al., 2011, p 49). The recent survey of prison educators (University and College Union and Centre for Education in the Criminal Justice System, 2013) argued that the current policy of payment through results risked a close focus on profit and employability skills without first ensuring that time was taken to facilitate the development of personal change which encompassed increased self-confidence, hope, and self-awareness.

It is primarily in this abstract domain that arts education is thought to have the most impact (see esp. Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2015; Nugent &Loucks, 2011) especially by developing motivation and dispositions toward learning (Clements, 2004; Cursley, 2012a; Dick, 2011; Hughes, 2005; Moller, 2003; Watson & Emery, 2009). Overall, this research suggests that 'engagement in an arts project can be a way of engaging populations resistant to therapeutic intervention in exploring personal experiences and thinking critically' (Hughes, 2005, p 43). In her analysis of 76 studies involving the arts in prisons, Hughes (2005) concluded that arts projects could 'facilitate personal change' through 'improving perceptual thinking and emotional insight' (p 69), summarising the impact of arts projects as follows:

> Specifically, four types of impact are identified: changing individuals' personal, internal responses to drivers or triggers that lead to offending; changing the social

> circumstances of individuals' lives by equipping them with personal and social skills that can help them build different relationships and access opportunities in work and education; changing and enriching institutional culture and working practices; changing wider communities' views of offenders and the criminal justice system. (p 71)

In general, research on the effectiveness of arts-based programmes suggests they may improve individual psychological factors, including giving individuals a sense of purpose and belonging (Berson, 2008; Burrowes, et al., 2013; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Cursley, 2012a; Silber, 2005; Wilson, Atherton, & Caulfield, 2009). Through the arts, participants can experience an engaging opportunity to see themselves differently and hence to begin to formulate the learning disposition necessary to facilitate change (Bilby, Caulfield, & Ridley, 2013; Burrowes, et al., 2013; Watson & Emery, 2009). Participation in the arts enables participants to acquire a sense of agency and self-direction in an environment where compliance is otherwise demanded (Bedau, 2008; Burrowes, et al., 2013; Clements, 2004; Deacon, 2002; Kolstad, 1996; Wilson, et al., 2009).

For example, in their evaluation of a short-term music-based prison project, Cox & Gelsthorpe (2008)explored the impact of the musical tuition on 71 male prisoners' mental health, behaviour and motivation to attend education courses. Data was gathered through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups from both participants and prison staff. Participants reported an increase in confidence and feelings of hope for the future. They said that participation in the arts made them feel differently both about themselves and others. Key findings from Cox and Gelsthorpe's study included possible effects on:

> foundational aspects of selfhood and human capital (the capacity to co-operate, relate to others, negotiate and share, for example). These things can lead to improved outcomes once someone has been released from prison - for example, in terms of establishing relationships, confidence in one's self, and abilities - all of which contribute to the development of social capital (opportunities, connections, and new horizons) (Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008, p 2).

Moreover, arts involvement is said to offer an opportunity to make sense of and re-frame their self-understandings (Anderson, et al., 2011; Baker & Homan, 2007; Casey, 2001; Cursley, 2012a; McKean, 2006). Prisoners' life stories are often used as a basis for drama,

poetry and writing in arts workshops that encourage prisoners to take control of their lives and understand their histories in a new light(Balfour, 2000, 2004; Berson, 2008; Cursley, 2012a; McKean, 2006; McLean, 2008; Scanlan, Care, & Udod, 2002).

Structured performance gives further opportunities for participant development (see for example, Balfour, 2004; Berson, 2008; Cohen, 2012; Houston, 2009; Hughes, 2005; McKean, 2006; Moller, 2003; Purves, 2009; Silber, 2005). First of all this gives participants the chance to work in a positive team with a common goal where all members have to learn to trust one another, sometimes for the first time (Anderson, et al., 2011; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Cursley, 2012b; Johnson, et al., 2011; Silber, 2005). Secondly, it enables participants to experience and overcome challenges(see for example, Anderson, et al., 2011; Balfour, 2004; Cohen, 2012; Cox & Gelsthorpe; Cursley, 2012a; Hughes, 2005; Moller, 2003; Neustatter, 2006; Wilson, et al., 2009). Thirdly, it enables validation and approval of their work by audiences often composed of their peers, prison officers and sometimes members of the public (see for example, Anderson, et al., 2011; Berson, 2008; Freedman, 1983; Houston, 2009; Silber, 2005). Anderson and colleagues (2011) argued that such validation was vital in encouraging the sense of the possibility of change in participants. Silber (2005)referred particularly to how the impact of performance from the prison choir involved affirmation from prison officials, their peers and visitors from the outside, all of which had ‘the most marked effect on them’ (p 266).

Working towards a performance can impose a creative ritual where repetition of work through rehearsal ensures it is performance ready (Abrahams, Rowland, & Kohler, 2012; Anderson, et al., 2011; Cohen, 2012). During the performance, the focus is on prisoners’ strengths instead of their weaknesses (Sparks & Anderson, 2014). Although validation through performance may not totally embrace the concept of the social ritual of reintegration as put forward by desistance theorists (e.g. Maruna, 2011), it can go some way to the re-ritualisation and re-masking needed for a validation of a changed self-perception as offered by Boal (2000). According to Boal (2000) if hidden talents are discovered through arts involvement, passions in the activity are aroused, and the experience is repeated, then the process becomes a habit, enabling the individual to behave virtuously to achieve the desired outcome. Unmasking previously unacceptable working habits to move to a new position of acceptable working habits involves re-ritualisation and re-masking (Boal, 2000; Peters, 2009). This then can establish a pro social identity, argued by Shuker (2010) as essential for

offenders in order to prepare for a life of desistance. Improved creative working habits where a prosocial identity through a technical role is found to be an effective means of working in a team can then result in a better performance. Individuals are then validated by their peers, their tutors and their audience, not only through their creativity and skills but through the working methods they used to arrive at that point (Boal, 2000).

The influence of positive relationships in inspiring change

Considerable research suggests that the formation of strong human relationships, particularly in the form of mentoring or prosocial modelling (see Trotter, 2009) can be influential in inspiring and fostering hope to enable change (Anderson, et al., 2011; Bilby, et al., 2013; Cursley, 2012a; Maruna, 2011). Anderson and colleagues (2011)argued that not only is the quality of relationships essential to help develop the motivation for change, it is indeed the cornerstone needed for desistance. There are several ways in which arts projects can be productive in creating relationships within the arts community, not only where all participants are working towards a final performance, but also where they share their work in a workshop situation (see for example, Clair & Heller, 1989, cited in Silber, 2005, Houston, 2009; Silber, 2005).

Significantly, the relationships established both with the project coordinator and with other participants in prison arts groups were seen to be vital in establishing working relationships, a sense of worth and developing a sense of trust, sometimes for the first time (see for example, Anderson, et al., 2011; Cursley, 2012b; Silber, 2005). Silber (2005) argued that group activity not only counteracted the alienation of confinement, but could fill the group with 'social energy' (Silber, 2005, p 252-3). Clair & Heller (1989) demonstrated that group singing by offenders fostered feelings of belonging and loyalty, providing participants with the tools to relate more appropriately to society at large (cited in Silber, 2005, p 254). Cox and Gelsthorpe (2008) argued that an arts project could both distil each individual's self-perception and create how they are perceived by the rest of the group. In several accounts, the relationships formed and the way participants were being treated in the arts projects combined to make individuals feel like 'a normal person' (Anderson, et al., 2011; Cursley, 2012b; Houston, 2009; Sparks & Anderson, 2014) because they were being treated not as prisoners but as artists (see for example, Anderson, et al., 2011; Cursley, 2012a; Houston,

2009). The resulting development of relationships and status through taking part in an arts project helped participants to develop meaning for their lives (see for example, Anderson, et al., 2011; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Cursley, 2012a; Hughes, 2005; Moller, 2003; Silber, 2005).

The prosocial relationships formed through group activity in arts projects were also seen as being causal in developing social skills in some studies (Clair & Heller, 1989, cited in Silber, 2005, Houston, 2009; Silber, 2005). Group activity not only counteracted the alienation of confinement, with also the possibilities of changing perception, but could fill the group with 'social energy' (Silber, 2005, p 252-3). In a study of a choir in an Israeli prison, Silber (2005) found that working together in a safe environment helped develop trust, confidence, and a sense of responsibility to others. Likewise, Clair and Heller (1989) demonstrated that group singing by offenders fostered feelings of belonging and loyalty, providing participants with the tools to relate more appropriately to society at large (cited in Silber, 2005, p 254). This concept was supported by Cox and Gelsthorpe (2008), who argued that an arts project could both distil each individual's self-perception and create how they are perceived by the rest of the group.

Reed (2002, cited in Silber, 2005, p 254) described how, alongside task mastery, the positive results of the increased ability to express emotion and more socially appropriate behaviour was observed in a gospel choir formed with a group of mentally disturbed offenders. Another group project, a gamelan project in a prison, run by Wilson and colleagues, ran a 'style of facilitation including the ability for participants to shape the learning experience to a large extent' (Wilson, et al., 2009, p 31). Instead of focusing on a model of 'repair' they highlighted the importance of empowering the participants. Wilson and colleagues were not alone in focusing on characteristic outcomes of their projects which were not only rehabilitative but were also aligned to essential requisites of the desistance journey. Many other arts projects in prisons had moments within their projects where not only behavioural differences were noticed in participants but also an enhanced quality in their personal relationships and a rising self-awareness inside the opportunity given by involvement in an arts project to feel like 'a normal person' (Sparks & Anderson, 2014) and being treated not as prisoners but as artists (Anderson, et al., 2011). The new relationships and social status that developed through taking part in an arts project helped participants to

develop a sense of meaning for their lives (see for example, Anderson, et al., 2011; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Cursley, 2012a; Hughes, 2005; Moller, 2003; Silber, 2005).

Summary and Next Steps for Research

Our analysis of the existing literature on the arts in prisons suggests that the impact of the arts is thought to be broad, but abstract. Arts involvement is said to "change lives" by leading to changes in the ways that individuals understand themselves, even though this abstract process is not well measured or captured by the empirical literature to date (see esp. Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2015). Moreover, the process in which this change is thought to happen is complex and unclear.

The link between participation in creative arts and the emotional and practical journey to desistance needs to be based on an understanding of the dual complexity of this process. That is, individuals need to be sustained both socially and culturally so that they are supported in developing an awareness of the possibility of and propensity to change by recognising and developing their potential through new cultural and social networks (Anderson, et al., 2011). Like the characteristics of desistance, the creative process is not about easy progression, as an individual can be in constant flux with both progress and also regression, with hope but also despair (Anderson, et al., 2011; Peters, 2009), but both the creative process and the desistance journey involve individual reflection on success and learning from individual weaknesses in order to develop. The validation that can come from success and encouragement can help an individual to keep faith that life could improve (Anderson, et al., 2011; Baker & Homan, 2007; Bilby, et al., 2013; Cursley, 2012a; Maruna, 2001; Moller, 2003). This hope and belief may be vital for desistance (Maruna, 2001).

However, for all the evidence about the many positive aspects of the arts in prisons on the participants, there is little research to suggest that these changes at the level of the self are then continued after the course ends and also outside prison (Anderson, et al., 2011; Berson, 2008). One of the reasons for the lack of evidence was the difficulty for arts tutors employed for a short project to then connect with their former participants either in prison or once they leave prison and disperse over the whole country (Bayliss, 2003; Sparks & Anderson, 2014).Our analysis of the existing literature on prison arts revealed a dearth of studies regarding longer term arts involvement that continued outside of short-term prison engagements. Most interventions reviewed in the literature were relatively short (e.g., an 8-

week drama course and performance or a three-month creative writing class), and most of the results were appropriately short-term follow-ups and measures of post-completion changes in attitude or behaviour (Cohen, 2012; Daykin, Viggiani, Pilington, & Moriarty, 2012; Hughes, 2005). Relatively little is known about longer-term interventions and broader, more long-lasting impacts on the lives of participants.

Moreover, short-term projects that build to a performance then come to an end after a few months often leave participants' feeling disappointed that the group will not continue (Anderson, et al., 2011; Daykin, et al., 2012). Anderson and colleagues noted that participants in some studies report feeling 'gutted' after courses disbanded(Anderson, et al., 2011, p 44).Ramsbotham(2008) argued for the value of long-term arts projects being embedded in the curriculum which would build a sense of stability and continuity into prisoners' sentences.

Even in such situations, however, involvement in the arts often ends at release. Prison arts tutors normally do not have any input into the re-settlement process, and the positive relationships they may have built up with the arts participants are discontinued abruptly when individuals are released. Further work is needed to explore the role that arts involvement has on supporting relationships (e.g., with families, peers, and the wider community) outside of prison (Anderson, et al., 2011; Berson, 2008). Murray (2014), for instance, writes:

> We know that the biggest protective factors in both preventing offending and reducing reoffending are in our own homes and neighbourhoods, schools and community centres, colleges and workplaces. This is where both 'community justice', and 'community arts', have their heart.

Arts involvement that is a longer-term aspect of an individual's life and continues after release, providing positive input into the re-settlement process, may provide more substantial support towards desistance.

Methodology and Design

The work of the Changing Tunes organisation presents an ideal case study in this regard as the group employs an explicitly “through the gate” approach to its work, with both in-prison and out-of-prison engagement and a continuity of relationships post-release. In order to better understand the complex processes of change associated with arts involvements, in this study, we ask the following questions regarding participation in Changing Tunes prison-based and post-prison rehabilitative projects:

1. What is the impact of a long-term music project on the ways individuals understand and conceive of their lives after release from prison?
2. What are the mechanisms or processes through which this change is achieved?

As this is a person-centred evaluation (Lewis, 1991), in both cases, the questions are addressed from the perspectives of the participants themselves.

Appropriately for a complex social process, however, this study employed a multi-method design intended to explore the impact of CT involvement from a multitude of angles. Triangulation was enabled not only by gaining the perspectives of interviewees in different roles, but also by gaining data from several different sources. These methods included each of the following:

- life story interviewing of former participants now released from prison,
- a thematic analysis of song lyrics written by *CT* participants,
- an original analysis of qualitative feedback provided by project participants,
- observations of prison-based training sessions and post-release performances,
- focus groups with current prison-based participants,
- interviews with prison staff and management,
- interviews with project staff and management.

The qualitative data emerging from each of these methodological strands was entered into a unified NVivo data set and content analysed thematically to better understand the process and outcomes of the CT process and impact from the point of view of participants. Each of these methodological approaches is described briefly below.

Life History Interviews

The core methodology for this study involves life history interviewing of 15 'successful' graduates of Changing Tunes prison-based interventions who still maintained contact with the organisation after their release from prison. "Success stories" are an obvious but under-utilised resource in evaluations. Countless interventions inside and outside prisons purport to intended to "transform lives," yet are evaluated almost exclusively on problematic external measures such as recidivism rates of participants measured in the aggregate. Such measures have been widely criticised for their inappropriateness for measuring risk reduction, and they surely do little to assess the effectiveness of an intervention aimed to "transform lives." Self-narratives, on the other hand, may be limited, but they are arguably our best source of understanding something as profound as "transforming lives." Indeed, the interviews with Changing Tunes participants, lasting between 1 and 2 hours, proved to be rich, insightful and fascinating. Each of the interviews was transcribed and anonymised, removing any identifying information. Transcripts were analysed using NVivo software and a process of analytic induction or "grounded theory".

Lyrical Analysis

A separate, but related, qualitative analysis has begun involving the themes in original songs written by Changing Tunes participants and submitted for consideration for Koestler Awards in recent years. The lyrics of 33 of these original songs were analysed for parallels to the themes in the self-narratives and for any additional insights they could provide to participants' self-understandings.

Secondary analysis of written feedback

Written feedback on the CT projects was submitted by over 200 participants from more than 12 different prisons participating in Changing Tunes. Participants were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions about their experiences with CT and their thoughts for improving the projects (see Appendix A for this questionnaire template).This feedback has been used with the permission of respondents. The wording of these quotes has been kept as

per the author; however the spelling has been corrected where needed. All responses have been anonymised, including the removing of names of facilitators and facilities. Due to the nature of the interventions themselves (the projects are voluntary and do not have a set length of recommended participation), this assessment was not collected at the 'completion' of the project except for those individuals who were transferring out of the prison. Instead, participants were surveyed at various intervals, and as a result their experience with CT ranged from three weeks to over five years.

Observations and Focus Group Interviews

To gain understanding of the work of Changing Tunes within prisons we observed sessions in five prisons where they operate, covering a female closed prison, an open prison and a local prison and then engaged in three focus groups, which involved 30 offender participants from the three prisons. There were two opportunities for interviews of individual offenders of 30 minutes each. Additionally, we observed a concert given by many of these ex-offenders, and informally interviewed participants and audience members there. We also interviewed three Changing Tunes leaders and their Director, an assistant Governor, a Head of Security and three Prison Chaplains. These interviews were deemed necessary in order to facilitate a better understanding of the aims of the organisation and the theories of change involved in the Changing Tunes process.

Ethical consideration was given at all times, with full explanation of the possible future use of our data given to all participants with the option for them to join or leave the process if they wanted to. In order to help interviewees to feel relaxed, the interviews with participants took place in locations which were familiar to them as places where their workshops and performances took place; likewise, the focus groups in prison took place in a relaxed atmosphere at the end of their sessions. In each case, the rationale for the interviews were explained and at all times the interviewee was enabled to leave the interview if they wished and also to refuse to answer any questions they chose to. Their anonymity in any written material was promised. As such, pseudonyms have been given for all Changing Tunes participants in this report, and potentially identifying information has been changed. In the table below, we provide only minimal demographic information about participants, because the population of individuals involved long-term with Changing Tunes is so small that to do

otherwise would be to risk allowing participants to be identified and linked to quotes within the report.

Demographic table of ex-prisoner interviewees			
Name (pseudonym)	Location	Status	Post-Prison CT Participant
John	Bristol	Employed	Yes
Jack	Bristol	Employed	Yes
Michael	Bristol	Employed	Yes
Chris	Bristol	Employed	Yes
Devon	Bristol	Voluntary work	Yes
Peter	Bristol	Voluntary work	Yes
Margaret	Bristol	Unemployed(disabled)	Yes
Fred	Bristol	Voluntary work	No (in touch with a CT mentor)
Megan	Cardiff	Employed	Yes
Becky	Winchester	Unemployed(disabled)	Yes
Bryn	Winchester	Self employed	Yes
Bill	Winchester	Employed	Yes
David	Winchester	Retired	Yes
Andy	Winchester	Unemployed	Yes
Vance	Winchester	Employed	Yes

Note that additional pseudonyms are used throughout the report in quoting from individuals involved in focus groups, prison-based interviews, observations and the lyrical analysis. Quotations from members of Changing Tunes staff and management are attributed directly without pseudonyms, but when staff members were mentioned directly by participants in interviews, the staff member names have been removed from the quoted materials (even though almost all of these quotes were complimentary).

Findings: An Original Study of Music and Desistance

As a study of subjective changes in identity, the findings of this research do not involve the usual data presented in evaluations (evidence of recidivism, recall to prison, etc.). As an organisation, Changing Tunes already collects this information. Instead, our focus was on understanding: a) the psychosocial impacts of long-term Changing Tunes participation (that is, what about a person's sense of self or identity changes as a result of participation, if anything), and b) what are the mechanisms in the intervention through which these changes are thought to occur. This section takes these questions in order. The change mechanisms we break down into two parts which we label "direct" and "indirect" impacts of musical training. By this, we mean those processes which are directly related to musical training, as opposed to any other form of social activity (what, if anything, makes musical tuition special or unique as a method), as opposed to "indirect" impacts which are not intrinsically related to musicianship, but have to do with the relationships entailed in the training.

WHAT CHANGES IN CHANGING TUNES?

> They shouldn't be called 'Changing Tunes'. They should be called 'Changing Lives'. I owe them my sanity -- *Jeff, Changing Tunes participant*

Participants we spoke to insisted that their participation in Changing Tunes had a transformational impact on their lives. The nature of this research design does not allow us to interrogate the veracity of such claims (we lack a "before" and "after," let alone a control group to test the hypothesis of cause and effect). Instead, we sought to better understand what interviewees understood when they said their lives have changed – what aspects of their identities, in particular, were transformed.

Most commonly, participants described the process as a "bridge to normal living" or a pathway into hitherto unexplored mainstream lifestyles:

> I got so much help in prison, like, from Changing Tunes, for one. And for the first time, I started to feel like there could be another way of living my life that was much better and far simpler and much less traumatising.

Peters (2009) referred to the need for improvisers to shed their old act, progressively forgetting it, so that they can create a future. Similarly, Changing Tunes participants appeared

to explore a new way of living and also a strategy for escaping the past. Participants routinely said they were inspired to 'be something different,' indeed be part of 'something bigger and better'. This recognition as a person then helped to erase 'a feeling of isolation' as they found identity within the Changing Tunes group and 'felt part of a team'.

Within the lyrics to the original song 'Finding my way', Changing Tunes participant Brian showed the difficulty of moving onwards when he could not change or undo his past, but at the same time he showed in looking towards the sun a determination in looking towards a brighter future, though the final two lines show a measure of despair:

This path feels littered
And bitter with regret
There's just no way my thoughts
Will ever let me forget
My past is burned now
Turn towards the sun
How can I change it all
When it can't be undone

Once settled into a Changing Tunes group, the length of time the participants were able to participate in Changing Tunes was a definite advantage as not only were they able to participate throughout their time in the prison but also when they left prison. This led to individuals feeling understood not just for their musical contributions but as individuals. Fred, a participant, described the 'atmosphere of unconditional love' from the leaders so that participants were able to be 'maintained in [their] growth.' He argued that 'honesty and compassion' were linked to 'sharing and empathy' and that through being in a caring environment it was possible for 'catharsis' to occur.

Changing Tunes tutors said they aimed to empower participants to change their lives, rather than enforcing reliance on them, and this dynamic was clearly appreciated by several of the participants:

You know, I've got to learn to do things for myself.

By taking responsibility participants became agents of their own progress within the group. Being pro-active instead of passive gave them a measure of control over their futures. When participants admitted any responsibilities they had for their past actions, and seriously

assessed the ways they were living their lives, the beginning of transformation towards another way of living could be striking:

> I literally looked in the mirror thinking, 'Is this what you want?' It was as if a voice had spoken, and I thought, 'No, I do not.' (Michael)

The recognition of the difficulty of a journey which required much reflection and mentoring was recognised by several participants, as explained by Jack:

> My self-worth has been...I've been dishonest because I actually upset a person which caused him to retaliate. I would have done the same in the same position. So, it stops, ...all that victim apparatus. Then it gets you to look at yourself honestly and openly... it's so liberating.

John described how he needed to identify the sources of his 'inappropriate beliefs' to comprehend how 'every situation [could] affect future patterns of belief.' He described his previous need to 'people please' which then meant he became tangled up with more and more illegal behaviour, engaging in 'hard jobs' in order to please others in a delinquent subgroup. He gradually realised that the only person he really needed to gain self-worth was himself. In Andy's case, a Prison Governor had pointedly told him he needed to change while there was still time or he would wind up dead. In his case, attendance at Changing Tunes was affirming in its values which confirmed in a practical sense the way that life could be led within a group. A change in another participant occurred when she began to take responsibility after having a daughter.

In each case, the transformation was caused by the participant reflecting on his attitudes and beliefs with a decision to change. The link between this decision and Changing Tunes was succinctly explained by Chris:

> I found out that I was good [at music] and so I suppose when you start changing your attitude and your thinking, your behaviour changes along with it. From being a very negative, pessimistic, self-pity and little child mentality all my life I started to turn into adult and being more responsible and taking responsibility for my actions... I didn't look at what [others] did to me, I looked ...at how I reacted and how I responded.

Steve (Changing Tunes leader) explained that being a part of the community of Changing Tunes helped participants to realise [they] are ‘ not an individual unit’. They begin to realise that ‘if [they] can work in that team, [they] can work in a wider team in society.’ Larry reflected that by working in a Changing Tunes team he understood a new way of working:

> So, I started extending myself out without reward ... [to help in the same way as the help I was receiving and observing that was occurring in Changing Tunes]. ..And then my behaviour was ... reinforced gradually. I had learn[t] a lot of bad stuff and [now I was] learn[ing] a lot on new good stuff and skills.

Consistent with existing research (e.g., Anderson, et al, 2011; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2015), Changing Tunes appears to primarily help to “change lives” by helping individuals understand themselves in new ways – as more than just a sum of their offences, even as ‘artists’ or at least individuals capable of achieving things they had not previously expected (see for example, Dick, 2011; McNeill, et al., 2011).

> What they do is they find a way using music to change your life, and they focus on you. You’re not a member, you’re not a statistic, you’re a person, and you’re treated like you’re a person (Chris).

Moreover, by engaging in Changing Tunes, the participants were accepted as individuals, with their talents recognised and fostered. This motivated the responsibility to learn an instrument or develop their vocal skills, as Margaret, a participant, explained:

> You've got to apply, you've got to keep going when you feel you can't do anymore.

Colin explained something of the developing process of his musical skills:

> I think every time I learnt something and mastered it, I felt good... I think also there is a little bit of self-pride in being able to play something hard: you know that your hard work and determination has come off and you know that it’s an achievement.

The fundamental feeling of achievement was then followed by validating comments by others. A participant who had been bullied in prison, was part of a Changing Tunes performance and suddenly realised he could gain status through his singing:

> They said, "Got a really good voice there mate." And I said, "Cheers." He's never talked to me in a million years. So, suddenly, I'm starting to get street cred through just singing.

Michael explained his developing skills in lyric writing:

> I was able to put a number of chords together on the guitar, a practice my Changing Tunes teacher had set me. One day I was just strumming away ...and the song just came from nowhere, sort of a mixture of styles from... Oasis, Pink Floyd. Most of what I wrote on the album is probably to do with the dark and the light of addiction and recovery because that is where I was. I discovered I could write songs

Finally, in addition to (and concomitant with) developing individual skills, Changing Tunes participation was also said to be instrumental in helping individuals open up to others and find inspiration and meaning in their lives. As described by Barbara:

> It's just a session of a few hours but you come here once a month and I go to Nancy, I think once a week or once every other week and it's just I always want to be better...The songs I sing are always inspiring and I am making progress with my voice and at the same time progress with my confidence.

Being a part of a group introduced an increased desire for involvement and a motivation within their lives, as Andy explained:

> And then I feel I want to get back involved with stuff, and do stuff, because I have something to live for.

Being part of a collective was particularly instructive for Changing Tunes participants as many said they had not previously had the experience of working in a team in that way. As Vance explained:

> Learning music, you have to put something into it. You learn that your bit contributes to the whole.

Communication and certain facets of negotiation which included being supported in coping with failure arose naturally out of the process of workshops and preparing for and performing in concerts. Performing together 'kind of brings the emotional contact',

participants said. Gill described how she gathered with a few members of staff and other participants before the performance started which helped to provide her with a sense of identity and confidence.

> And they're there it's you know, it's going to be a laugh, we're going to have a giggle, we're all there together, and we're all laughing.

This ability to reveal some positive work they had been involved in could receive approval by members of their families, which in turn could enhance their morale:

> She said, "You're doing a concert?" I said, "Yeah, I'm doing a concert show." " Ah fair play to you," which brings your morale up so high...

The necessity of being tolerant to other members of the group when performing gave individuals opportunities to learn about communicating in those situations and to develop a sense of self-management. Most participants interviewed felt that by engaging with Changing Tunes 'something changed' for them, often profoundly. The group dynamics within the Changing Tunes community established an expected way of behaving which in some cases continued when the participants arrived home, where sometimes differences within participants were noticed:

> You speak so differently when you come home. Why is it? You are not effing and blinding and everything that you're polite. You're better stay, go live at that church.

Brendan described a very similar experience, which seemed to have permeated his life into a longer lasting change:

> So I am a changed person. My mum loves me coming in singing the day after being here. Seeing me come through the gate singing and whistling. She is like, "You know my son is a good boy now. He used to come in cursing about of people that owed money and giving me abused. He is coming in and helping me." Even the Vicar has commented how much I have changed in my local area

Becky described how taking part in the Changing Tunes group had made her 'far more comfortable with people, far more happy to engage and with a far higher tolerance for all sorts of things.' Likewise, Bryn revealed:

> It's...well, I can mix with a group. And do you know what? Not only don't I need drugs, I'm better at playing my guitar by not having drugs. All this...all this...so, it slowly removes this myth about your drug use. You slowly change...it reinforces these lessons what other people have told you.

Becky described how her attitudes to authority had changed:

> My attitude to, you know, probation and my MAPPA officers has completely changed and ...they even put in evidence ... to say that my life has changed and how different I'm taking the approach towards the criminal justice system.

Finally, Fred also described how his relationships with his family had changed profoundly:

> We've got a proper family relationship a network going there. And you know I felt bad about I did not do that in the past. It really hurts that I have not done that in the past. But it is right now. And I am so happy.

The road to self-management however could be quite long. For those who had just left prison, Steve argued, Changing Tunes not only 'keeps [them] off the streets' but also gave them support to cope with their own difficulties and inspiration through 'seeing other people get on with their lives [who have] come so far and [are] doing so well.' The examples given by Changing Tunes staff of helping others revealed positive and kind interactions which several of the participants modelled in their desire also to help others.

Some had changed their self-identities from being victims to being mentors for others (see also Maruna, 2001). Gaining a sense of self-respect by helping others themselves seemed to be transformational. According to Hugo:

> It made me better, made me a much more fully integrated individual. It gave me a choice and a way out of the cross of self-pity.

Vance mentioned seeking training with the Samaritans. Sometimes the mentoring was by participants who were ex addicts and who wanted to help others who had addiction problems. Michael, for instance, worked with a charity dealing with drug addiction. Reaching out to others stopped individuals from focusing on themselves. One of the reasons given for the motivation behind this was that Changing Tunes 'gave me so much joy and pleasure that I'd

be keen to... I'd feel guilty if I didn't actually attempt to try and give something back right now.'

The testimony given by some of the Changing Tunes participants in the concerts also had its own influence on their growing self-belief, as shown by David:

> I cannot excuse what I did, the stealing, I can't change that, but I am very sorry for that, and I think being able to tell my story [helps me to believe] a little bit more of what I am saying.

John described how taking part in Changing Tunes set in motion a 'change process', stopping him feeling 'fragmented' so that once again he became 'a whole person.' Once well along their transformational journey, there was a sense of disbelief when reflecting on their previous states so that Fred stated, ' Was that really me?' And Darren wrote in his lyrics:

And when I do the things that I haven't done for a while
When I see the things that I've missed, that ends as a smile
Cause I know that I've changed
And my life is rearranged now forever

The changes seemed to be related to a promise of new self-hood, the hope of 'making good' (Maruna, 2001).

MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

As with previous research (Anderson, et al., 2011; Baker & Homan, 2007; Casey, 2001; Cursley, 2012a; McKean, 2006), our findings suggests that arts involvement can provide an opportunity to make sense of and re-frame their self-understandings. We also sought to understand how (i.e. through what mechanisms) these changes most typically occurred in the lives of our participants. Two over-arching categories were identified, involving *direct* and *indirect* impacts of the musical training involved in Changing Tunes. The direct effects were those related specifically to the use of music, whereas indirect effects involved those factors (e.g., the formation of strong relationships with mentors and other participants) that were related more indirectly to the musicianship being fostered. Both are reviewed in detail below.

Direct Impacts of Musical Training

In the academic literature on prison arts involvement (see esp. Anderson et al, 2011), participation in the arts is thought to have a mostly *indirect* impact on individual self-perceptions. That is, arts involvement provides a vehicle for other, more generic processes (e.g., prosocial modelling, social inclusion, self-esteem enhancement) as seen in our analysis above. In other words, these core dynamics, such as strong interpersonal relationships, might just as easily be achieved in other ways (e.g., through sports interventions, mutual aid support groups, animal care workshops, and so forth). In our analysis below, we seek to assess whether there is a more *direct* influence of one particular art form (music) in the desistance process observed among Changing Tunes participants.

We frame this argument within social scientific theory and research on the role of music in human lives. In particular, the ethnographer and musicologist Tia DeNora(1999, p 31) has found in her cross-cultural research that music also plays a central role in the development of identity. She found that her sample used music "to constitute and reconstitute themselves as specific types of agents. … They also turn to music as a device for on-going identity work and for spinning a biographical thread of self-remembrance". In short she argues that "Music provides…a scaffolding for self-constitution" and "the emotional, memory and biographical work such a project entails".

Indeed, cross-cultural anthropology and infant studies suggest that musicality is no less essential to the human condition as storytelling. We know music plays a huge role in the shaping of culture (e.g., in organised religion) and in interpersonal bonding (e.g., romantic pairing). We also know that this attraction to music begins early in the human development process; indeed, the youth cultures we study in criminology are fundamentally infused with music and shared musical tastes (Vuolo, Lageson &Uggen, 2014). Hence, ethnomusicologists like DeNora(1999, p 32) find it curious that "Music – the common sense medium par excellence of feeling and all things 'personal' – has been little explored in relation to the constitution of the self."

Below, we build on DeNora's insights by arguing that if musicality makes up an under-appreciated aspect of human identities and individuality – that is if the human species is also best understood as *homo musicalis* – then perhaps music also plays a role in the desistance process as well. We illustrate our case, first, with two anecdotes.

Music in Desistance Narratives: Two Anecdotes

At the first Changing Tunes concert the authors attended, one of the performers, a recovering addict and former prisoner named Michael who found Changing Tunes and his own voice as a songwriter and singer in prison, performed a haunting, down tempo cover of Lennon and McCartney's "Help." Stripped of its pop beat and accompanied only by an acoustic guitar, the song was rendered almost unrecognisable and was far more powerful than the original. Michael later explained that this chilling re-working of the Beatles song had originally come about purely by accident:

> That all came about because I could not play a guitar. Because when you try and play 'Help,' they were difficult chords. So, of course you're like that. [*Struggles to find chord*] It just slows you down. So, when you've got to [*tries to change chord*] all you can do is go 'fuck!' But then, "When I was younger..." get your fingers moving [*chord change*], "So much younger than today..." Do you get it? So, that is how it came about: just purely because I could not play the thing (Michael).

Yet, slowing the song down also revealed meanings that Michael had only half understood previously even as a lifelong Beatles fan:

> But then, when you slow it down, you hear the lyrics and realise what it is about! And the amount of times I heard that song! But I thought, 'You have just basically written my life story in a song' – "moral inventory", "twelve steps" all in that one little song, "Help". That is absolutely astounding. So, that happened with the recording in the prison.

The phrase "you have just basically written my life story in a song" was something we heard in various ways from almost all of our interviewees and first made us curious about the notion of music contributing to self-identity construction. Certainly, Michael's deep-seated feelings about the lyrics were unmistakable in his performance of the song, but he also returned to the "Help" lyrics on several occasions in his interview, as if he felt the song did a better job than he could at conveying his own story.

A similar pattern was found in our interview with a Welsh, female ex-prisoner we interviewed named Megan. Megan had a self-narrative that was strongly characterised by redemptive themes (see McAdams, 2006). No matter how dark the subject matter was that she was describing (and indeed she had suffered some terrible abuse at the hands of an ex-partner) she was able to turn it into a positive for her future. In a particularly poignant scene, she had to give custody of her children to her mother in Wales:

> So we were living in a squat, me and my three kids. It was awful. I just thought: I couldn't. This is really bad. So I phoned my mum and I said, 'Look I know you don't want to talk to me, but my kids are going to be removed if you don't come and get them.'

Yet, this turned out to be a very positive move for the children who remain close to their grandmother for her assistance during this nadir episode in Megan's life. Likewise, when Megan eventually got imprisoned for drug sales and possession, she framed this as they key turning point in her life:

> In fact it was the best thing that happened to me. I've said that before. If that hadn't happened to me [three year sentence], I would not be here today. I'd be dead somewhere.

The 'here' for Megan is a professional job as a care worker. She has been reunited with her children who are doing well in school, and is living a stable and drug-free life. However, As

powerful and moving as her story is, it is one she has told many times (as she stated, "I've said that before"). Megan has had considerable experience of sharing her story in twelve step-based mutual support groups, and also is training to be a drugs addiction counsellor herself.

As such, she did not once become emotional when conveying a life story that was filled with poignant memories. Surprisingly, that changed when she was asked a question not about her traumatic past, but about her involvement in Changing Tunes, and why she thought that work was so important for her.

> MEGAN: I keep coming back to that the music was therapeutic for me, because you see, I didn't have any TC [therapeutic community] treatment or AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] or any treatment at all [in prison], but I worked through my emotions by listening to music, by performing music. You know. A lot of the songs that I picked to sing, they really meant something to me as to where I was at at that time."
>
> ***SM: Can you give me an example?***
>
> MEGAN: Well, 'If Tomorrow Never Comes' [*voice cracks*] – Sorry. I'm gonna cry. That was about my kids. [*Begins crying, audio recorder is turned off and the interview ends*].
>
> ***SM:*** *[Resuming the interview after a break]* ***Sure, sorry about that.***
>
> MEGAN: The music is powerful, that's proving it, sorry. I get very emotional.

In these two anecdotes, familiar songs, written by others, appeared to hold more powerfully emotional truth for the individuals than did the telling of their own stories, although the power of these lyrics was clearly tied directly to their individual autobiography. That is, in both cases, the songs worked to trigger meanings, memories, truths and hurts that the individuals experience as deeply personal to themselves.

Music, Emotion, and Memory

Changing Tunes staff musicians, although not trained in music therapy, clearly appreciated this power of music to reach participants on a deep emotional level, although they struggled to explain the process:

> Because music has that power to just kind of immediately do something to the emotions you know kind of flick a switch. And like, so for example, with songs you can have words written down on the page or be spoken as a poem. But set those same words to music and all of a sudden it has got just this other dimension which everything kind of takes off, and takes you to another place somehow. So, I think there is something unique about music. … It taps into something which kind of bypasses your kind of rational thinking and go straight to a deeper level of the individual (Musician/Tutor).

Changing Tunes participants likewise tried to articulate this abstract power of music that defied articulation:

> BECKY: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I'd choose music every time, really. I have trouble with drama. I mean, I'm not a fantastic guitarist. But to me, music moves me a bit more. Music is the inner vibrations, and you know, the way the body reacts to it.
>
> ***JC: Have you ever played a song or just a piece of music which really did press things for you, sort of the emotional reaction?***
>
> BECKY: Loads. Everyone does, to be honest. Everyone does (Sonia).

Another participant expressed this using a familiar cliché:

> I recently learned a piece, a song, it's called *Only Hope* and it's a beautiful slow piece that I sing. I've always believed inside every one of us, there's a song, the song inside your heart, and it's trying to get out. (Devon)

Several participants decided that the best word for describing the power of music was the evocative but somewhat vague notion that music is "spiritual":

> You know the benefit of Changing Tunes and what it offers really is music you know, it's a universal language like you know and it's actually a spiritual experience for many people (Paul).

Although as one interviewee explained, this word was not being used in a religious sense:

> Because music is, because music is a spiritual experience.… I don't mean that from a religious thing. We weren't practising hymns although I would have actually done

> that just as an opportunity to engage in some music and to get out of cell. So I figured that. But yeah, it is spiritual, you know, music is a sort of you know as emotional impact doesn't it? Like, you know it's just cool at the end of the day, I don't know (Bryn).

This ephemeral power of music is nicely captured by one of the lyrics of the song "Something 'bout the music" written by a Changing Tunes participant:

Woman comes among us
Joins the songs of praise
Feels a peace around her
Stands there amazed
Hungry for a saviour
To give her life instead
Something 'bout the music in her head

Although clearly drawing on religious language and imagery, the song's refrain "Something 'bout the music in her head" locates the source of her salvation less in traditional religions than in her own internal musical discoveries.

Other participants described the power of music in slightly more concrete terms, focusing on music's ability to provide a therapeutic and prosocial outlet for working through emotions. As DeNora (1999, p 29) writes, individuals "use music as a resource for the conduct of emotional 'work', and for heightening or changing energy levels."

> I can let all my feelings out through music instead of doing something stupid arguing with people. You know, but just be really good (Oscar)

Likewise, one participant wrote in their self-assessment form:

> It gives a chance for prisoners to express their most deepest feelings without outbursts of raging anger.

Part of the emotional power of music derives from its nature as a "temporal medium" triggering memories from past times. According to DeNora (1999, p 48):

> This is the first reason why it is a powerful aide memoire. Like an article of clothing or an aroma, music is associated with a particular moment and a particular space, music heard again provides a device for unfolding, for replaying, the

> temporal structure of that moment, its dynamism as emerging experience. This is why, for so many people, the past 'comes alive' to its soundtrack.

This temporal quality can be illustrated in the narrative of another research participant, David, the oldest participant in the research who discovered Changing Tunes when serving a long-term prison sentence:

> I'm getting on in years, I'm 58. You know, so he's given me the slower songs, but then last time, right at the end, he said, 'Do you want to have a go at this?' And I looked at it and it was Frank Sinatra, 'My Way'. And I thought, 'Oh, this is not good this.' So I did, I sang it, you know, and listened to it. The problem there was that it's one of my mum's songs, my mum's, and unfortunate…well, not unfortunately, you know, but I got very emotional right at the end. … That's never happened to me before.

The last time he had heard the song was at his mother's funeral. Likewise, the memories evoked by a song from *Phantom of the Opera* reminded Harry of the times he had heard the song with his girlfriend who later committed suicide. 'So I have a connection ... whenever I sing it that gives me that connection with her and that's as spiritual as it gets with me.' As DeNora(1999, p 49) argues, music appears to "provide a grid or grammar for the temporal structures of emotional and embodied patterns as they were originally 'experienced.'"

Our interviews, then, provide considerable support for DeNora's argument that music can be a powerful cultural resource that actors can mobilise for the work of self-construction and hence facilitate the cognitive shift away from a criminal identity. In particular, several of our interviews suggested that individuals began to understand themselves and their lives differently *through* the medium of musical engagement. That is, the internalization of the songs themselves (and not just the process of learning and performing music in a group) helped sustain individuals' identity changes.

As a parallel, consider the ubiquitous role of music in religious worship. What role is music playing in the process of religiosity? One argument might be that the singing of hymns and carols is simply a way to bond members of a congregation together by interacting collectively in an enjoyable, communal fashion, and that this group bonding subsequently strengthens individual commitments to a religious institution and hence to religiosity. A

further, more radical argument is that what we call religiosity or spirituality has in itself a musical component. That is, the repeated singing of the hymns itself may be important because it directly influences religiosity, strengthening and sustaining religious beliefs. This second argument is more in line with our finding here.

For many of the individuals we interviewed, a three-minute pop song, written by someone unknown to them, can somehow articulate their whole "life story." We argue that this is because these songs have meaning beyond the words in the lyrics, truths that are conveyed in the music itself that can reach aspects of one's self that stories alone cannot. A life process as profound as desistance from crime may require a transformation at this level of identity as well as that which can be easily articulated in a spoken narrative. In other words, to desist from crime, one might not just need to change their story, but they may also need to change tunes.

Indirect Impacts of Changing Tunes

As interesting as these discussions of the direct effects of musical involvement were, they were distinctly overshadowed in our findings by more *indirect* effects involving the relationships developed in Changing Tunes work. This section details those aspects of the work, first by providing background into the nature of participant self-reported relationships prior to coming to Changing Tunes, then contrasting these with those relationships during and after the intervention. These findings strengthen the evidence from previous research (e.g., Cohen, 2012; Anderson et al, 2010) that participation in arts interventions can lead to improved interpersonal relationships for prisoners and ex-prisoners.

Difficult Social Relations Prior to Changing Tunes

Changing Tunes participants often described personal histories of acutely difficult personal relationships including abuse, abandonment and isolation, often exacerbated by their incarceration. In several cases, difficult and sometimes abusive relationships in childhood permeated participants' later difficulties in forming positive relationships in childhood. For instance, Fred described having just one friend and said that the two of them became

'isolated'. Chaotic parenting where parents split up and difficulties with a relationship with either parent were also common. Jack explained the relief when his abusive father went to prison for 11 years as 'luckily for me I didn't have to spend that time with him. Vance said he had erased from his memory his years from ages 8 to 14 because he had suffered so much physical abuse in that time.

In some cases, interviewees reported that difficulties in their relationships started at school. David felt his being an only child was a problem in a very small village as he did not easily learn how to relate to other children. Andy found school difficult because he could not relate to other young people his own age and preferred talking to adults. Chris was always moving as a child and so never wanted to get close to people because he knew he would have to leave them in the end. Jim described how he would escape from his 'residential school' and go back home to his parents which upset his mother. He felt he was trying to escape a situation and at the same time trying to gain a measure of power, but was not sure how to succeed, or exactly what he was trying to escape from.

During these early years, sometimes close relationships were formed through crime, leading to additional trouble and turmoil in their family relationships. Although some interviewees said that their parents broke off relationships when their lives grew chaotic, not all family ties were broken. Michael explained how his inability to form relationships and the deterioration of his life meant that he ended up living in a squat. In this case he contacted his mother who came and took his children away and looked after them for four years.

There was pain in any physical or emotional dislocation from their parents. One described the pain of seeing his mother upset when he returned home after three years. Sometimes songs performed at concerts seem to have acted as a way of reflecting the pain that this break with parents indicated:

> There was one song on one of the CDs that I sung which was from a young girl who got nine years in prison for something that she did with her boyfriend. I can't remember what the charge was; it's irrelevant really. But, anyway, she was very frightened and scared and she'd fallen out with all of her family. It was fairly much about that, how she was feeling about that and there was reference to her family, her mother in particular and how frightened she was(Becky).

Unsatisfactory relationships in adulthood had a variety of symptoms and rationales. Sometimes complex and intimate relationships had been formed at a time of emotional immaturity. Several of our interviewees reported difficulty forming relationships, as well as having to cope with domestic violence or a partner's infidelity.

In prison, the sense of loss often became acute as revealed poignantly through lyrics by Changing Tunes participants. In 'Turn off the light,' for example, Aidan stoically describes difficulties his coping with abandonment:

So turn off the light as you're leaving
Turn off the light and go home
Turn off the light as you're leaving
'Cause I just want to be alone

Later lyrics make clear that these efforts were masking deeper hurts in Aidan's life:

It's always hard when someone says goodbye
Pure salt diamonds roll down from your eyes
Try and smile with a mask on my face
God only knows I can't stand this place

Within prison, it was clear that participants were often reliant for their emotional health on having someone who cares for them outside prison. Contact through visits, phone calls and letters was then essential. The dependence on letters in prison in order to maintain a relationship, and to see it as some proof of still being loved was very clear with Colin's lyrics 'Progress', as seen particularly in the following stanza:

When you write me a letter
Please hurry to the post
My life, it doesn't get better
Than hearing from those I miss the most
I'm hoping from day to day now
For the flower that's taped on
And you who puts it on then
You're the reason I wrote this song

Splitting up with partners could lead to further depression, or as one interviewee said, 'kind of hating myself.' They were self-critical and unforgiving of their younger selves' inability to make stable relationships. Analysing his nineteen year old self, for instance, Jim reflected that his inability to form a proper relationship with either the girl or her family meant that he 'never grew up.' Problems at a period of immaturity could sometimes escalate

into aggressive behaviour through the complexities of the new extended family they found themselves a part of through their partners. This left much resentment, in Lee's case because

> There was a lot of hatred between me and my ex's family. They really hated me, no reason for it. And I really hate them because what they used to do, they put dog poo through my letterbox. And all sorts but I can't really do nothing because, I mean her brother is a body builder. If I did something to them, they'd do twice as much to me.

The influence of drink and drugs had very negative effects on various participants' relationships. Reuben described his violence after drink caused people to become frightened of him. It also had an adverse effect on his health leading to blackouts. David reported how drink replaced his failure to have a relationship with a woman. He put this down to his not getting his priorities right. His lack of a clear sense of identity inhibited him further and so he turned to prostitutes. Vince explained how drug dependency took 'a higher priority than [his] relationship and [his] partner.' The poor quality of the relationship with their children's mother determined the dysfunctional nature of the relationship with their children.

Relationships through Changing Tunes

> I think my aim is to see the person I am working with differently from maybe how others have seen them either in court or in the press or in that person's own mind, and to see something that I believe is true about them. … They are a worthwhile person regardless of what they have done. I would try to draw...that innate value out of them in a way which makes it more obvious first of all to them and then to other people. *Gareth, Changing Tunes leader*

In stark contrast with their often troubled family relationships, the relationship with Changing Tunes staff was without exception reported as being very positive. Yet, interestingly, considering that so many of the CT participants experienced abusive or at least dysfunctional upbringings in their families of origin (several were raised in care or by guardians), the comparison between Changing Tunes and "family" emerged time and again in the interviews and focus group discussions:

> [Changing Tunes staff] and I chat like brothers… It is the whole family aspect. They are there to look after you (Fred)

> Changing Tunes is a family. It is a privilege to be part of the organisation. It is a part of a family (Margaret).

> Changing Tunes has a family element. It gives you support when you are feeling low and picks you up. It gives structure and you have to be there. In prison it was about doing something you couldn't do before. Then when I came out of prison in Changing Tunes there were two or three people who believed in me, and [Changing Tunes staff] was one (Peter).

Changing Tunes' presence in prisons was much appreciated. Interviewees frequently mentioned 'trust' as being the key aspect of their relationship with Changing Tunes staff and appreciated that "barriers are all broken down to a large extent. "If a session was cancelled, Changing Tunes leaders either came to participants' rooms personally to explain the situation or else sent participants a personal letter. The trust that participants felt in their Changing Tunes mentors helped them to feel they could be open because, as one said, "You can never have a disagreement with [a Changing Tunes staff member]. He will agree with everything that you want to know, talk about. There are no problems." Adrian explained how participating in Changing Tunes in prison "totally changed the prison experience," providing validation and affirmation:

> You know the atmosphere was great and I think you see people's confidence build as well and it's nice to boost for my confidence. ... And you got people coming up to you in the days afterwards saying, 'That was really good. And you should keep doing stuff then.' So that kind of positive reinforcement really I think is really good. (Bill)

Changing Tunes sessions provided a safe space in which participants could relate with people and know that they would be valued. New entrants to a Changing Tunes session had to overcome their apprehension of the leaders and the way the session may be run. Gillian described having to 'overcome that barrier' when she first came into the group in prison. Another remembered being invited to come up on the stage in the first class:

> I was very nervous and I thought, "I can't sing in front of anybody, no way." And within months, I was standing on a stage singing to the whole prison and all the officers. You know, and it was at that point I think, after that, I thought to myself, "Actually, I can do anything...if I can do that!" (Peter)

Once overcoming the fear, a common theme emerging was that Changing Tunes helped to fill the longing for individual recognition. Annie summed up the fulfilment of this longing in terms of being accepted:

> Changing Tunes helped me to feel like a person and that's the difference. Like, they really have this sort of connection with people where they just...they don't care that you're a prisoner or a criminal or whatever. You don't have to be anything other than you which was a bit of a revelation. (Bryn)

Jack described how during his first session, he knew "it was genuine" when his Changing Tunes mentor asked him to come up on the stage, "because up to that point it's just a promise." The phrase 'just a promise' perhaps reflected the experience of being promised much which had not come into fruition. It also indicated the importance of participants being made aware of leaders' integrity and the organisation before they could relax into the sessions. One participant (Margaret) described the sessions as "presenting something [she] was longing for." Another (Bill) described the relief of "feeling free for the first time in jail," and another feeling "the relief of peace for the first time in a long time."

Additionally, participants said that the network of contacts Changing Tunes provided participants acted as both a safety net and also as a support group to help in various kinds of way. Sometimes a member of staff may have a contact with someone in the participant's church, or in another case there was a network between Changing Tunes staff and staff at the AA meetings attended, or a contact between a mentor and a sponsor.

Continuity of Relationships Outside Prison

One key difference between Changing Tunes and other prison arts-based interventions is the through-the-gate nature of the work. When participants left prison, members of staff from

Changing Tunes staff took great care in contacting them in a sensitive manner and at the right time as explained by one participant:

> If they had contacted us right away, I think that would have been too soon because you want to have time with your family, etc. And I think they obviously considered that ... If it had been too long, then I would have felt that maybe those ties would have broken down or I would have thought they had forgotten me. So I think a month or six weeks was quite a nice time. And it was a really pleasant surprise (Chris).

Relationships with their mentors became more deeply entrenched as a result of these outside post-prison contacts. Once part of the Changing Tunes processes, participants explained that they always knew that help was available:

> Now she may not have her work phone on, but the moment she gets that message, she will send me a text back (Becky).

Interviewees also appreciated that staff were making 'special trips just to work with me' on these occasions.

However, members of Changing Tunes staff also had to be skilled not only in knowing the time to offer help but also the time to withdraw. They showed understanding in knowing that participants 'had to take the lessons ...and apply them in real life,' so there was awareness that it was up to each individual 'to put that advice into action.' Sometimes, one-to-one meetings were just enabling the other person to talk over a period of weeks and months, until they were ready to move forward. This required patience. One Changing Tunes mentor said he often worried to himself that he was wasting the project's resources by spending so much time with a single individual who seemed to relapse over and again:

> I asked myself 'Am I wasting the money of the donators?' But I stuck with him and gradually he managed to find his way out of the pit he was in.

There were occasions, however, when withdrawal by a mentor was the only solution. A member of staff explained how one member of his group had gone back on drugs:

> I mean there's one chap who is a recovering addict and he's gone a bit AWOL at the moment. I'm not going to keep chasing him. He knows my number, he knows where

I am. He knows that helps there, so it's not callous in a way because it won't work if I force it.

Participants were aware of the written and unwritten rules of Changing Tunes and there was evidence from the interviews that sometimes the desire to be part of the group and to keep contact with the mentor was so strong that it helped recovery from addiction. For instance, Jack stated that he started drinking again on his release from prison, but made sure that he did not pretend otherwise to his Changing Tunes mentor because 'he has been so good to me,' His Changing Tunes mentor, however, did not give up on him and helped Jack work toward sobriety again. Jack credited part of his motivation to change to 'the pleasure [and] the change of music and the relationship I had with [Changing Tunes staff].'

Relationships between Changing Tunes participants themselves were disallowed outside the training sessions (without express permission from the organisation and this was given only in highly unusual circumstances). However, participants described a sense of community inside the organisation, nonetheless, and they described the "sense of positive interaction" in Changing Tunes training sessions as the reason why they continued with the organisation. The fact that members of staff focused on individuals and their development engendered a sense of self-worth. Moreover, the creative, musical relationships between participants in the Changing Tunes sessions did not differentiate between those who had been in prison and those who were volunteers. This was valued in a profound way, as Megan explained:

It's like you find yourself to each other.

A sense of "family" in the support and acceptance given by members of Changing Tunes staff perhaps helped to supplant previous unstable family lives of participants and also helped to make a bridge between the dehumanising influence of prison and coping with life outside prison again. The recognition participants were given as people was important in the work of Changing Tunes staff. David reported that the experience in the session made him feel 'human again' and 'suddenly you feel like a person again .... and that is really important.' The care the Changing Tunes mentors showed the participants also extended to their response to the musical progress. Changing Tunes' focus on encouraging individuals to work together in a team to create meant participants learnt to appreciate the effort of others so that. Peter stated, "I appreciate what people do for me a lot more." Bryn, who described

himself as an isolate before contact with Changing Tunes reflected that “Feeling part of a group, and feeling accepted was of enormous importance in my life.”

Conclusions

In summary, then, the changes involved in Changing Tunes participation seemed to ‘occur’ at the level of self-identity. Often angry and isolated, participants arrived at the projects with a limited and *limiting* sense of their own possibilities. They found that the involvement in the music charity helped to wake something up inside of them and show them new possibilities for their lives. They were challenged both by the learning of new musical skills, but also by a variety of social skills required to work “in harmony” with others in a group. They found this experience of self-mastery, especially involving public performances, to be transformative, and they reported a sustained increase in feelings of self-confidence and personal self-worth. These changing self-perceptions led towards a sense of agency and control, and a vision with hope for their future.

Our interviews suggested that part of this transformation was directly a product of musical training as a medium for self-discovery and self-expression. Interviewees described music as having an intangible power for heightening emotions, and clearly used this new skill as a form of self-therapy for working through personal struggles and identity issues. In particular, music’s abilities as a memory aid appeared to benefit the important journey of ‘coming to grips’ with one’s past, and this biographical reconstruction has been found to be crucial in the process of desistance from crime.

However, the more prominent finding involved factors that were only indirectly related to musical training. Indeed, most participants argued that the key to the success of Changing Tunes was through the relationships they formed with their mentors and also with other members of the group within the sessions. As one interviewee said

> It just needs to be encouraged with loving people. ... Music was the hook but [*Changing Tunes mentor*] was ‘the guy’.

Similar testimonies about the importance of relationships created as part of Changing Tunes could be found throughout the interviews.

Importantly, these "direct" and "indirect" impacts are not in competition with one another. That is, it is not the case that *either* Changing Tunes works through the power of music or else it works through the power of relationships. Presumably the two factors influence and strengthen one other. That is, without the strong relationships, the musical training may not have carried the emotional weight that it did, and likewise, without the affective "hook" of the musical training, the relationships with Changing Tunes mentors may not have been as valuable or as valued.

Importantly, Changing Tunes mentors do not work to repair any deficits in participants' thinking styles or personalities. The intervention is not targeted at reform or moral education in any direct way. Sessions do not focus on dealing with their damaging life stories or rewriting future scripts away from "criminal" thinking patterns. Instead, the organisation seeks to encourage potential through the medium of music.

As such, Changing Tunes demonstrates Boal's (2000) theory of how to encourage virtuous behaviour. Boal emphasised the necessity of encouraging potential to arouse individuals' passions until the new attitudes and tasks become habits. Taking individuals with little to no musical experience and helping them find the ability to perform in front of a public audience, helped develop the motivation to learn and grow, a necessary pre-requisite of any change taking place. The positive outcomes in the sessions, when a skill was mastered, a new melody accomplished with new techniques or a new song successfully learnt alongside harmonies, meant that positive outcomes were striven for by the participants and acknowledged and validated by the leaders and other participants. Concerts given by both ex-prisoner and prisoner participants gave stronger affirmation and validation supporting and encouraging the changes taking place both through the music and also in the often newly found positivity of action and attitude. This, alongside personal mentoring supported by the Changing Tunes leaders then helped to support them in the faith that their lives could improve, a belief that is vital in development of desistance. Participants were then supported in understanding new possibilities through new pro-social cultural and personal networks, another characteristic of desistance theory (Anderson, et al., 2011; Bilby, et al., 2013; Burrowes, et al., 2013; Cursley, 2012a; Maruna, 2001; Shuker & Sullivan, 2010).

Crucially, this support was maintained "through the gate" with former prisoners receiving support and encouragement as needed on the outside as well as inside prison. The incorporation of musical tuition in the resettlement process is highly unusual, internationally,

despite the widespread popularity of arts-based tuition inside of prisons. Moreover, Changing Tunes staff had to strike a delicate balance between wanting to reach out to released ex-prisoners and at the same time not creating a relationship of dependency. This was largely achieved as a result of the medium of intervention on offer. Participants were not passively receiving welfare assistance from Changing Tunes; rather the intervention that carried on through the gate was one of empowerment, self-initiative and personal challenge. If participants could be said to become “addicted” to the work of Changing Tunes, this addiction was a purely healthy one, based on a love of learning, personal growth and achievement. In this way, the organisation is a model for desistance-based criminal justice interventions.

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