Music-making for health and wellbeing in youth justice settings: mediated affordances and the impact of context and social relations

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Abstract Young people in the criminal justice system experience significant health and wellbeing issues that often stem from poverty and disadvantage and, in turn, are linked with offending and reoffending behaviour. There is ongoing interest in interventions such as participatory music programmes that seek to foster social reintegration, support mental wellbeing and equip young offenders with life skills, competencies and emotional resilience. However, there is a need for a situated understanding of both positive and negative experiences that shape potential outcomes of music projects. This article reports on a research study undertaken between 2010 and 2013 with 118 young people aged 13–21 years across eight youth justice settings in England and Wales. Using mixed methods we explored the experiences of young people and their responses to a participatory music programme led by a national UK arts charity. Here, we explore the impact of young people's encounters with music and musicians with reference to the notion of 'musical affordances' (DeNora 2000, 2003). We examine the ways that such affordances, including unintended outcomes, are mediated by features of the youth justice environment, including its rules and regulations, as well as issues of power, identity and social relations.

Keywords: teenagers/adolescents, coping/coping strategies, inequalities/social inequalities in health status, medical humanities/arts, social exclusion

The age of criminal responsibility for England and Wales, where this study took place, is 10 years. Common offences for which young people are convicted include violence, theft and handling stolen goods, public order offences, drugs-related and motoring offences (Youth Justice Board [YJB] 2014). Young people aged 10–17 years are managed by the YJB through a network of organisations that provide community-based prevention, surveillance and rehabilitation, as well as secure accommodation for those in detention, while young people aged 18–21 years are managed by HM Prison Service. A small proportion of those convicted enter custody, while the remainder are subject to community supervision.

The youth justice population has declined in recent years but remains significant, with over 33,000 young people having been sentenced in England and Wales in 2013/4 (YJB 2015). Just

under one-fifth of these are female, while a quarter are from a non-White ethnic background. On leaving the youth justice system around one-quarter are not in full-time education, training or employment (Newman *et al.* 2013) and over one-third reoffend (YJB 2015).

Youth crime has been linked with deprivation and health inequality, and youth groups that experience high health, welfare and social needs are more exposed to criminogenic factors (Chitsabesan *et al.* 2006, Farrington and Welsh 2006, Newman *et al.* 2013, de Viggiani *et al.* 2013). Low income, poor housing, living in socioeconomically deprived urban areas, low educational attainment, poor parental supervision and unstable family contexts all represent risks and increase the likelihood that young people who enter the justice system experience complex health and social needs (Chitsabesan *et al.* 2006, Farrington and Welsh 2006). Their experiences of education are often poor, with high levels of truancy and exclusion (Bradley 2009, YJB 2005). Girls and young women exhibit particularly high levels of psychiatric disturbance, self-harm and substance misuse (Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2003, Plugge and Douglas 2006, Tye 2009).

Social exclusion and mental health issues experienced by young people are recognised as increasing the likelihood of reoffending (Ministry of Justice [MoJ] 2008). Arguably, interventions are needed that seek to improve health and wellbeing, foster social reintegration and equip young people with life skills, competencies and emotional resilience (de Viggiani *et al.* 2013). However, developing needs-based interventions for young people in justice settings is challenging, especially in institutional contexts dominated by compulsory rules, regimes and procedures (Hewish and Johnston 2010), where there may be an underlying atmosphere of volatility, threat and fear (de Viggiani 2006a, 2006b).

Music and the arts are increasingly advocated for improving health and social outcomes among young people (Daykin *et al.* 2008). Music is viewed as an accessible and relevant intervention for developing young people's expression, skills and confidence (Arts Council England 2005, Anderson and Overy 2010, Arts Alliance 2010, Baker and Homan 2007, Bittman *et al.* 2009, Daykin *et al.* 2013, Miles 2004, de Roeper and Savelsberg 2009, de Viggiani *et al.* 2013, Wrench and Clarke 2004). Music has been used in justice settings for many years, and while some programmes have been subject to limited evaluation, there is a dearth of research that has examined these interventions in depth (Daykin *et al.* 2013, Miles 2004). Research is often hampered by institutional challenges including security and risk management protocols that engender complex negotiation with gatekeepers (Miles and Clarke 2006).

Participatory music-making may have multiple, sometimes competing, outcomes. Simple notions of participation as a means of generating positive social capital have been challenged by researchers following Bourdieu (1986), who see social capital not as an asset that can be acquired or conferred but as a complex terrain of power that needs to be understood through situated research (Osborne *et al.* 2009). Social inequalities have an important influence on engagement with music, limiting and shaping access to music resources, genres, learning and skills. Furthermore, powerful discourses surrounding gender, ethnicity, race, class, age, creativity and talent mediate experiences of music, often with damaging results (Daykin 2005, Williams 2001). Young people face particular expectations to claim spaces that enable them to identify with their peer group and garner respect and status (Björck 2011). These can lead to forms of musical expression that seem to be at odds with the educational, health and wellbeing outcomes sought by those delivering programmes.

An important aspect of youth justice contexts is that of regular moral panics about the potential for music to reinforce criminality. Hence, music genres often favoured by young people, particularly hip hop and rap, have been associated with misogynist, homophobic, sexist, racist, fundamentalist or criminal values, beliefs and identities (Baker and Homan 2007, de Carlo and Hockman 2003, Daykin *et al.* 2013, Kubrin 2006, Mahiri and Conner 2003,

Miranda and Claes 2004, Tanner *et al.* 2009). The challenge for music facilitators is to navigate these tensions and conflicts, offering positive experiences and connecting with young people and their expressive powers. As a form of social action, music can most effectively challenge limiting stereotypes by allowing participants to tell their own stories (Procter 2004, 2006). Rather than simply empowering participants with new skills or competencies, or reinforcing problematic identities, music-making can therefore generate meaning, knowledge and relationships within specific contexts.

Sociological perspectives have been overlooked in the broader arts and health literature in favour of biomedical perspectives (Daykin 2012). A potentially useful notion for illuminating the social impact of music-making is that of musical affordance. Developed by Tia DeNora (2000) in her ethnographic work on music in everyday life, this notion articulates a dynamic relationship between music and society. It has been used to specify what music uniquely offers, and how it does so within situated action (Ansdell 2014). Rather than participants simply receiving music, or music serving to reflect or depict society, responses to music are formative in relation to consciousness and action. The focus is on what music makes possible, including physical action, thought, emotions and social relations. Musical affordances may be both positive and negative in the eyes of programme managers. Further, they are not automatically accessed: they can be realised only through active appropriation (DeNora 2003). Hence, music does not lend itself to prescription:

> [R]ather music is an emergent, flexible object. Music's powers to help become activated only through the ways that we couple music with other things – postures and physical practices, expectations, beliefs and social relations to name but a few.   (DeNora 2013: 138)

The suggestion that music is a resource for world-building is highly relevant to research in youth justice settings. To explore this requires situated research that takes into account the backgrounds and everyday experiences of programme participants. In this study we aimed to explore how young people in custodial and community supervision settings responded to a music programme. We examined their identification with music, its relevance to their health and wellbeing and its resonance in terms of their lifestyle, behaviour and status. We explored the ways in which their experiences, and the extent to which they appropriated music's affordances, were framed by youth justice environments and social relations.

The music programme

The music programme was led by a UK charity. Fifteen projects were delivered across eight youth justice sites, including two each of secure children's homes (SCHs), juvenile secure units, young offender institutions (YOIs) and community-based youth offending teams (YOTs). Each project was facilitated by two or three young professional musicians who typically provided weekly sessions of ninety minutes to three hours for four to ten participants over a six week period. The musicians were drawn from seven groupings, mostly duos and trios, and occasionally the programme included guest solo artists. They were drawn from different backgrounds but were trained to conservatoire level and were skilled at performing, composing and producing music from a wide variety of genres including jazz, folk, world, classical and pop. They were trained to work with vulnerable participants, including prisoners and children, and they were supervised by the charity's senior project manager. There were more male than and female musicians, but a female researcher, musician or educationalist was always present during sessions. As facilitators, they used active learning techniques to work in small groups,

introducing participants to assorted instruments, including string, percussion, keyboard and electronics.

Research design

The mixed methods research, which used participant observation, interviews, focus groups and questionnaires, was undertaken by four university academics between 2010 and 2013. Fieldwork was facilitated by a senior project manager from the music charity, who worked closely with the principal investigator. The study recruited 118 young people (81 male and 37 female) aged between 13 and 21 years (mean age of 16.64 years) across the eight sites.

Research ethics approval was granted by the National Offender Management Service and the University of the West of England Research Ethics Committee. Research quality approval was granted by the Ministry of Justice. All researchers and musicians underwent enhanced level Criminal Records Bureau checks on a site-by-site basis, as well as Home Office vetting. They were also provided with security briefings and in the secure settings all equipment had to have been approved and checked at each site visit, although there was more flexibility in the YOT and SCH settings.

Research participants were recruited using fliers, posters and informal meetings. They had several opportunities to ask questions about the project and were able to choose whether or not to take part; moreover, they had the option to leave the project at any stage. Informed consent was taken on a one-to-one basis by researchers and, where required, from a legal guardian prior to the commencement of fieldwork. Participants were supported in making their decisions whether to volunteer during the consent process and prior to completion of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. In each site, safeguarding policies were adhered to and support was available for any participant should they need it during the sessions. All personal data from the study have been anonymised in order to protect the participants' identities.

Two questionnaires commonly used to assess wellbeing – the GHQ12 (Goldberg *et al.* 1997) and the Warwick Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale (Clarke *et al.* 2011, Tenant *et al* 2007) – were administered at three time points: pre-programme questionnaires were completed by 104 participants (88%); post-programme questionnaires were completed by 38 (32%). A follow-up questionnaire was completed by 25 (22%) participants 3 months after the programme had ended. SPSS vers. 19 was used to manage and analyse the data; however, the small post-programme sample size and the lack of control groups meant it was not appropriate to use these data to measure intervention effects, such as changes in participants' health and wellbeing. As the quantitative findings are insufficient to inform an understanding of the programmes' impacts, we have not presented the data in detail. However, we have included a discussion of the exercise, which provided useful methodological insight into some of the challenges, dilemmas and feasibility of undertaking research in complex youth justice settings.

The process of data collection is illustrative of the general atmosphere and behaviour of staff and participants. Security issues and staff availability meant that questionnaires had to be completed in group situations in which some participants engaged in banter, conferring and joking about their answers. Likewise, the interviews were sometimes conducted with staff present. This is illustrative of the general lack of privacy and confidentiality in the settings. Participants in group situations were lively, sometimes questionning the relevance of the research to the music programme, although some older participants demonstrated a great deal of curiosity about the research, who was funding it and what would happen to the results. Younger participants seemed to have concentration difficulties and were observed to complete the questionnaires rapidly, apparently circling their responses randomly and without careful consideration.

We were therefore obliged to conclude that the scores from the questionnaires are likely to be unreliable and possibly mask underlying emotional and psychological health issues.

Participant observation was undertaken at all the sessions. Researchers participated in group activities as deemed appropriate, to help build trust and rapport with participants. Observations and interactions between the participants and the musicians, including perceptions of the group dynamics and reflections on the process, were recorded in handwritten notes after each session.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with the participants, musicians and staff. Post programme interviews involved 31 participants, five of whom also participated in follow-up interviews three to six months later. The interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to enable thematic analysis (Braun *et al.* 2014, Braun and Clarke 2006) guided by principles of analytic induction (Silverman 2011), using the constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss 1967), being alert to deviant cases and endeavouring to treat the data comprehensively. The analysis followed two emergent lines of enquiry: 'How do young people respond to the music-making intervention within the respective justice setting?' and 'What shapes or limits their responses or engagement?' Three researchers undertook iterative and intensive scrutiny of qualitative data, assisted by data analysis software (NVivo-10).

Findings

Qualitative findings: mediated affordances

The qualitative data provide a rich description of young people's responses to the music programme and the challenges and dilemmas that can arise when working with young people in criminal justice contexts. Here we discuss the data in terms of music's affordances, including those that are not necessarily sought by programme planners, and the ways in which these are mediated by features of the youth justice environment, including its rules and regulations, as well as issues of power, identity and social relations.

Essentially, these participants were able to participate in limited terms given the reality of compulsory detention or supervision. This had some bearing on how they then engaged with the intervention.

In post-project interviews the participants gave generally positive and enthusiastic views about the music programme. Initial coding in NVivo-10 identified 158 positive comments compared with 66 negative comments and 21 comments that could not be categorised as either positive or negative. The participants enjoyed the informality of the sessions, including the banter, the jokes and the opportunity to let go in a relatively safe environment; for example, being able to 'go beserk' on the drums. Music provided a distraction from being in custody. It also offered the opportunity to work productively as a group: 'I've learnt to feel more comfortable around others . . . 'coz people usually tend to be on edge in this prison. Anything could happen' (Fahim, aged 17).

Negative comments focused on aspects of the programme, such as criticism of the range and type of instruments used, or complaints that resources were insufficient. Some were disparaging, including one individual who described the musicians as nerds and another as 'a bit queer'. Some of the youngest participants had very little positive to say about the programme; Quaid, a 13-year-old boy, stated; 'They do shit music, man'. Others expressed regret that they had not become more involved. Olivia (aged 17), said:

> I didn't stay long enough to see the sessions. I thought they were going to be just boring and sitting here and talking . . . But then, when it actually came to the last lesson, it was really good.

These findings concur with the observation data, which reveal a complex process of negotiation, adjustment and relationship-building between the young people, musicians and programme leaders. Generally speaking, those who most strongly resisted this process were the younger participants in the SCHs. The musicians encountered more responsive groups in the YOIs and YOTs, where the participants tended to be slightly older and less emotionally unpredictable. Even some of the most responsive groups contained individuals who seemed to find learning and concentrating very challenging. Staff commented that it was a significant achievement for certain individuals to turn up and stay for the duration of the sessions, even though they had wanted to volunteer at the start. Of those who had seemed withdrawn or failed to turn up, we often established that they had felt 'fed up', 'hungry', 'tired', 'uncomfortable' or 'ill'. We learned of individuals who had been 'in a bad mood', 'anxious', 'too angry' or 'too upset' to participate, invariably due to an issue unrelated to the music programme.

The youth justice environment

Within each site, regimes, roles and available resources impacted on the developing relationships between the participants and project facilitators. The musicians needed to introduce a sense of order and focus into what felt like chaotic environments from the outset. Security issues, such as the need for participants to be escorted to sessions by staff, meant that the participants were often late for sessions. There were frequent disruptions caused by individuals leaving or missing sessions to attend medical or court appointments, because of misconduct or as a result of having been unexpectedly transferred or released. Sessions were sometimes cancelled for security reasons, such as on one occasion when an item of cutlery went missing and everyone had to be searched. A session due to take place within a YOI was cancelled due to an unscheduled lockdown.

Resourcing was also an issue. The classrooms or meeting rooms provided for each programme varied in size and suitability. Some lacked natural light and they were often cramped. Participants sometimes complained that there were too few instruments to go around and no access to musical instruments for practice outside the sessions.

In summary, the youth justice environment, its routines, resources and requirements, strongly mediated the ability of those delivering the programmes to meet their goals. The general atmosphere of transience, disruption and sometimes apparent chaos framed the participants' engagement, meaning that many young people did not take part in the recommended number of six sessions.

The role of staff

The staff operated as gatekeepers for the project and were in a powerful position to influence the young people's views as well as to control their access to music activities. Within the YOTs, key workers accompanied the participants to sessions, while in the custody settings, education, welfare and security staff members were always present. The gatekeepers were generally in favour of the programme and of the research. They facilitated recruitment, approaching and encouraging volunteers to take part and evaluating the participants' suitability in terms of security and mental health issues. The staff also ensured the smooth running of the sessions and helped to deflect tension and disorder. In some settings, the participants clearly welcomed the reassuring presence of a staff member whom they trusted. The musicians and researchers benefited from the staff knowledge of participants, especially in relation to attitudes and behaviour that were difficult to interpret. The staff often encouraged the musicians, for example, by feeding back information to the project team that particular participants had conveyed to them how much they had enjoyed the sessions, despite perhaps having not given this impression at the time. Overall, we observed some great examples of rapport and empathy on the part of site staff.

The presence of staff also had the potential to inhibit or distract participants or could compromise their privacy. Some staff appeared to be resistant towards the music project or to rank it as low priority. Hence scheduling clashes were common, despite reassurances during planning that there would be none. On one occasion, a staff member entered a session five minutes after it had started, announcing that all the participants were required to leave to take part in a football match. Occasionally, the staff displayed negative body language, seeming eager for the session to finish or joining in with disruptive banter. Managing staff engagement was a delicate matter of diplomacy for both the musicians and the researchers.

In summary, the role of staff as gatekeepers strongly mediated programme delivery. Most staff were generally supportive of the young people's participation, and some vulnerable participants clearly benefited from their presence. However, their enforcement role created an inherent lack of privacy that may have limited participants' expression. Where staff did not support the programme they had many opportunities to disrupt it or deflect the young people from engagement. The musicians delivering the programmes needed to develop sophisticated diplomacy skills in order to negotiate these scenarios.

Musicians: creative engagement and reflexivity

Although they were relatively close in age to the participants, the musicians, who were mostly under 25-years old, came from very different social backgrounds from the participants. This was reflected in different musical experiences. Few participants had been exposed to learning music or playing an instrument, or of attending live music events or performing before an audience. Some participants were reluctant to handle the instruments that were presented for them to try. Participants were more likely to have had experience of computer-based mixing and rapping and some expressed a strong investment in rap and hip hop as being the only valid forms of music with which they would engage.

The musicians displayed various levels of reflexive awareness when responding to the challenges of facilitating the workshops. Primarily, they needed to establish successful relationships with participants, based on rapport, mutual respect, trust and cooperation. They also had to liaise and negotiate with staff and gatekeepers to meet their expectations and fit in with the various regimes, protocols and schedules. They (and the researchers) needed to be flexible, compromising and adaptive, and to do a lot of waiting around in order to fit each site's requirements.

In terms of engaging the participants, the musicians needed to create a positive and enjoyable process through which to facilitate active learning about music, song composition and performance, that would in six sessions lead to the production of a professionally recorded CD. The musicians therefore had to establish rapport very quickly, set realistic expectations, manage group dynamics, cope with disruptions and make the best use of scarce resources (space, time and equipment), while balancing the sometimes conflicting needs of the participants.

The musicians employed various strategies to engage each group. Participant-centred approaches were used, such as encouraging participants to handle instruments right from the start and engaging them in energetic clapping, humming or word-association exercises. While performing for the young people seemed to establish a level of credibility, the more successful musicians engaged the group by keeping introductions and demonstrations brief, quickly bringing participants to the centre of the music-making process. These musicians didn't spend long on their own performance. Instead they used it as a quick introduction before explaining to the participants what they would be doing and encouraging them to give it a try, without offering too much explanation. They gave instructions as they went along, to which participants were often able to respond quickly. The participants responded in different ways, with some

showing interest by being vocal and expressive from the start. Others remained quiet, passive and occasionally withdrawn.

The musicians sought various points of connection, endeavouring to build rapport by bringing themselves to the same level as participants. They used first names, listened intently to participants, and tried to convey the sense that they were not there to judge or discipline participants. In this regard, 19-year old Brendan commented:

> They treated you like a normal person, not like a criminal ... Some of the govs in here, they see it as, like, 'you're a criminal', like, 'an' we don't care' ... They were friendly ... and, they brought in quite a few instruments ... They trusted you as well ... For all they knew, they could get broken ... They sparked your day, like ... [and] it made you feel like you're somewhere else.

The musicians used a number of strategies to create connections with the young people. One of these was self-deprecating humour. For example, at the end of one workshop, a musician mimicked a gorilla to convey voice projection, which created laughter in the group. Gender identification was also used to establish rapport. The musicians used their own gender and sexual identities to relate to participants. For instance, in the male secure unit, two male musicians joked with a small group of participants about ex-girlfriends, while in the female secure unit, one of the female musicians encouraged a participant who was pregnant to sing by suggesting to her that it could benefit her unborn baby. During this exchange, the musician referred to her own pregnancy experience. The project did not overtly challenge gender stereotypes or views about sexuality: the musicians welcomed any sign of engagement. They did actively support the individual musical preferences of young people, such as supporting female participants who wished to play instruments. In general, however, girls were less keen to perform and were more likely to express a preference for singing rather than playing, in which they were encouraged. Other gender differences were observed. For example, girls seemed to relate to different types of song lyric from those preferred by boys, who seemed to identify more strongly with rap and hip hop genres than girls. In song-writing sessions, boys sometimes produced lyrics that expressed normative forms of masculinity, such as idealised notions of gang life, violence and misogynistic relationships with girls. While finding ways to develop trust and rapport, the musicians needed to tread a fine line and essentially to bracket their values and experiences as appropriate:

> While the group waits ... the musicians are playing around. Someone asks what song he's playing. They reply, 'Stir it up' by Bob Marley. Participants chat among themselves saying they could smoke a bong and sit back and listen. They ask the musician if he smokes weed. The musician doesn't reply, but they are watching his face. (Site C)

The musicians needed to balance being alert and responsive to the participants' expressed interests with introducing unfamiliar music styles or genres. Some participants expressed a strong preference for rap and hip hop, voicing rigid beliefs about how music should be performed and favouring digital technology over live music. In one male YOI, the programme introduced music mixing and DJing equipment. We observed that this use of music technology was limited as an engagement medium. It was not conducive to group work: the participants spent a lot of time watching and waiting their turn and becoming distracted and restless.

Peer influences evidently had a bearing on the participants' expression of musical preferences, which in turn reflected existing class, ethnic and gender divisions. Their choice of genre seemed to reflect their perception of a hierarchy in which 'Black' music forms were privileged.

However, not all participants had a preference for rap music, which came through during the interviews when it emerged that some wouldn't express this in the company of their peers. A certain frustration with this need to guard against declaring a preference for the 'wrong' music came across in 17-year old Terry's interview in a YOI:

> They play all this rap shit. I think, 'fuck that'. I can't listen to this. It drives me crazy in my cell . . . It's a big thing because imagine, yeah, you're a new prisoner, yeah? You're from my area, yeah? You listen to rock, yeah, and I listen to rap . . . yeah, no offence, but you'd get bullied for that . . . Most of the people in here all listen to the same thing . . . they all swap CDs. But, you see, the other people, especially the white people . . . When they're out there, they never listen to any of this rap shit. They come to jail, they think they're Black. Start playing all this Black music and walking with their trousers around their arse, and I think, 'Why do people – certain people – try to change when they're in jail?' It pisses me off to see people do that.

Some groups were vociferous about the style and genre of music they wanted to work with. A small number wanted only to rap to backing tracks and were reluctant to explore alternative styles of music. The musicians gently challenged the participants' standpoints. In one session, the participants had refused to even touch the percussion instruments that were offered, insisting that rap could not be performed with live instruments. The musicians agreed to use an electronic backing track and the participants became increasingly engaged, vocalising along with the track. Once they had warmed up, they didn't seem to object to the musicians joining in, playing along with musical instruments. When the backing track ended, the musicians continued providing a live backing and the participants didn't stop but continued rapping for several minutes. Later, during interview, the most resistant protagonist reluctantly conceded that live instruments could be used for rap. Another participant, Ethan (aged 18), also commented:

> I liked the way we were using proper instruments to make a rap/hip hop beat, when most of the time you'd use software. It's hands on, isn't it? It's all just human made music. I love using the software to make songs and that, but it's just nice to physically be able to play an instrument . . . I thought those drums were wicked.

Although some participants appeared reluctant to shift their standpoint on musical style or genre preference, others were able to recognise that their experience with the musicians had broadened their horizons: 'Before I came in jail, I used to listen to a set of music, like. But now I'm very versatile, like' (Eric, aged 19).

Lyric choice was a key point of tension. Participants were prohibited from using swear words or seeming to glorify violence or criminality. Groups frequently tried to push the boundaries and gauge staff responses, deliberately suggesting lyrics they knew would be provocative and unacceptable, as in the following extract from a YOT session:

> The musician asked Johnny what he was into . . . He found a rap group he liked and we all watched the video on the screen . . . They were all standing in a big group and the rapper would come to the front and rap about life on the streets and committing criminal offences to survive. This included drugs and guns. When the video finished, the participant went out for a break and we chatted about the video. Everyone commented on how shocking it was. This gave the musicians a chance to regroup and come up with a new strategy for the rest of the session. (Site H)

In general, rather than laying down rules and discouraging expression, the musicians sought to divert participants away from stereotypical imagery and inappropriate use of language by encouraging them to explore alternatives and, where possible, to try to draw on their own life experiences and feelings:

> Eddie said he was struggling a bit to come up with lines. The musician asked him to come and sit next to him and start by just telling his story. Every time he said something, the musician asked him to write it down. Eddie was concerned, at first, that it didn't rhyme, but the musician reassured him that it didn't matter just yet, that they could make it work afterwards, and that it was important just to get his ideas down first. Eddie started to tell the musician his story, writing it down as he went. When he got stuck, the musician would ask him how it made him feel, and he world write down his responses . . . Once he had everything he wanted, the musician looked over what he had written and helped him construct his lyrics, line by line. They seemed to work really well together, and Eddie seemed really proud with what he had achieved by the end of the session. (Site H)

In summary, programme delivery was strongly mediated by the qualities, attitudes, skills and reflexive awareness of the musicians leading the sessions. They needed to negotiate a social divide between themselves and the young people, which revealed itself through different musical experiences, skills and sometimes entrenched preferences. They needed to gain participants' trust and encourage them to try unfamiliar activities, encouraging vulnerable participants and building rapport by finding points of connection while avoiding a collusion with proscribed behaviour and language. Gender and sexual identities provided a resource in this respect, hence the project did not overtly challenge gender stereotypes in relation to forms of musical expression. The strongest point of tension seemed to emerge between preferences for live versus digital music. The musicians who were most successful were able to creatively embrace the young people's preferences and hear their stories, resulting in some interesting musical fusions as well as some cathartic moments and moving original pieces.

Group dynamics and behaviour

While seeing participants enjoy themselves was rewarding, their exuberance quite often gave way to unruly behaviour and sometimes shouting, often led by dominant personalities. In such instances, the musicians struggled to assert themselves while individuals talked over them and distracted others, seeking to draw them into banter and sabotage. Once or twice, aggressive behaviour was observed, such as within a SCH where individuals kicked doors, hit walls and used verbal threats towards staff, and occasionally fought with other participants. These events were stressful for the musicians and the researchers, who felt threatened and feared for the safety of the equipment.

Light-hearted banter, which was common within all groups, occasionally developed into teasing and bullying. This was difficult for the musicians to handle, especially when site staff responses seemed ambivalent. There were many instances where music provided a tool, affording forms of consciousness and action that would not be endorsed by the programme providers. The following example occurred in a female juvenile secure unit, where electronic sound beam technology was introduced:

> Sarah had a real dislike for the bird noise, which she said haunted her . . . Jess quickly interjected and said that she liked the bird sound . . . During the rest of the session . . . she kept playing the bird noise over and over again, and it seemed like she was deliberately trying to torment Sarah. (Site D)

The musicians responded to sabotaging behaviour by directing their attention towards those who were engaged, while ignoring or deflecting attention away from disruptive individuals. Working in pairs allowed one musician to 'hold' the group, while the other could take time out with individuals who were not engaging. Quieter participants sometimes had to wait for musicians to respond:

> Brett picks up a guitar and sits next to the musician, saying 'You're going to teach me guitar'. The musician doesn't pay attention because he's trying to organise the order of the song they are working on. Brett puts the guitar down. Later, he picks up the guitar again and shyly has a go at it. The musician is helping another participant. He tells the musician that he doesn't know what to do with his fingers. The musician shows him the tab. It seems, at last, that Brett gets the chance to play the guitar after having asked shyly so many times before. (Site A)

The musicians used body language and seating arrangements to mitigate disruption. When individuals appeared to find sessions to be intellectually, emotionally or physically demanding, they readjusted their aims; after each session they would review progress and plan for the next session, endeavouring to set appropriate goals while maintaining a productive edge. They responded to the least engaged by finding meaningful alternative activities for them. Some younger participants progressed slowly, giving up easily if a task seemed either too difficult or futile, or seemed withdrawn, distracted or lacking motivation and energy. Successful musical engagement strategies drew on participants' behaviour as a musical resource:

> Ellie was particularly distracted, as she was following a Facebook conversation with a boy on her phone. Despite being asked several times to put her phone away, she said she couldn't help it and had to respond. Soon she was sharing the boy's comments with the group. The musician used this to start writing some song lyrics. Every time she came out with something, he made a note of it. The other musician very quickly came up with a tune and they tried out their first few lines. They sang it back to the participants and they seemed really surprised. Very quickly, the musicians dropped the cover song they had been working on previously and, with both participants, composed verses about a boy 'Facebook stalking' a girl. It was really well done . . . They went over it a few times, going over time by 20 minutes, but eventually they managed to get both participants singing along. (Site H)

In summary, the complex behaviour we observed further demonstrates the point that music is not like a prescription drug that can be understood in terms of a dose-response relationship. Rather, musical affordances, including speech, thought and action, are actively appropriated by participants in situated contexts. The music activity allowed the young people a certain level of exuberance and spontaneity in what were otherwise extremely restrictive environments. They responded in various ways, sometimes crossing lines drawn by adults, and occasionally showing unproductive anger. Here again, the skills and aptitudes of the musicians emerged as a critical mediating force. The more successful facilitators used a complex array of strategies to manage group dynamics while addressing the needs of the most vulnerable participants. At the heart of this was musical creativity, hence difficult kinds of behaviour were often transformed into musical materials, resulting in activities and outputs that gave pleasure to participants and observers.

The complexity of music goals

The participants were strongly focused on the outcome of a professionally recorded CD, of which they had high expectations. This tangible goal enabled the musicians to push the programmes along and created focus and motivation for the participants. Several highly engaged groups insisted on working through scheduled breaks to complete their songs ready for recording. The promise of the CD was an asset the musicians could use to keep the groups focused on the task. Participants' motivation was enhanced to some extent by a 'celebrity' discourse, with the idea that their discovered talents might launch them to fame. This may have influenced one participant, who refused to record his lyrics, voicing mistrust and fear that his work could be misappropriated. The goal of fame was often encouraged by staff, who, along with participants, seemed less likely to pick up on the more pragmatic aspiration of music as satisfying 'ordinary' work, even though this was exemplified by the musicians with their portfolio careers.

As the groups moved towards the final, intense stage of CD recording, engagement increased. During many recording sessions, every participant would be jamming away with an instrument and the room would be filled with a cacophony of rhythmic sound. From the apparent chaos, many coherent musical pieces emerged. However, the recording process intensified frustration for some participants:

> The discussion lasted about half an hour to 45 minutes . . . He (Kamil) kept trying to say it was the wrong kind of music. What they had produced was a bit sort of reggae and jazz – it wasn't the kind of song that he could rap to. The flow for him was completely wrong . . . There were times when he got really frustrated and started swinging on his chair a lot . . . I was sitting next to him. I didn't feel in any danger, but I did think it was all going to kick off and they were just going to walk away . . . Eventually, they used a track from one of his CDs and he was quite happy with that. It was hard work discussing back and forth, and it seems that the participants really felt that they had been cheated. They were taking the recording very seriously. (Site E)

Most participants were able to contribute to the CD recordings by playing, rapping, singing or writing lyrics. Even those who made a minimal contribution worked hard to keep quiet during recordings, which everyone generally took very seriously. Recording and producing the CD did take up a valuable two of the six sessions, which meant that time was tight for the more creative groundwork and team-building, especially given the transience of the group membership. Consequently, it was not always possible to involve everyone in the recording process. Some younger participants in the SCHs found group decision-making to be extremely challenging, and spent a good deal of time refusing suggestions:

> The musicians tried to entice them one last time, asking if they wanted to record the song they had written in the first session. But they were absolutely not interested. (Site F)

For some participants there was sometimes anxiety about how it was all going to work out, and they became increasingly agitated as they moved towards the last sessions. With one group, time ran out to complete all the tracks, so it wasn't possible to include every composition on the CD.

The participants were keen to hear the final CD recordings, and these occasions usually involved intense concentration as well as laughter and supportive comments. Orla (aged 17) commented: 'I think it is good. We did a good job between us, to be honest with you'.

Hearing the recorded tracks engendered a strong sense of achievement for many participants. Thomas (aged 17) said:

> Having the CD at the end, it makes me feel I'm like … I'm actually getting somewhere … I've achieved something … I'm try'na do the best with the time I've got to spend in here.

Likewise, Lamin (aged 17) said:

> It built my confidence … 'Cos I'm a shy person, you see, an' talking in public ain't my thing. But, you know, rapping in front of people, performing, really motivated me …, brought back confidence in me. Listening to the tracks we made … I was really happy. 'Cos I've never laid a track down, you know? I was really happy. … Some of the boys here are talented, an' it was just a pleasure, just a privilege, you know, making a track with them.

A small number of participants expressed disappointment with the final CD, a couple rejecting it completely. Other participants felt that the experience had inspired them to take music further: 'It made me realise, when I get out, I gotta go to a recording studio and have singing lessons' (Ollie, aged 17):

> They gave me a lot of … inspiration to wanna do live stuff. An' get out there an' do that … Definitely, live shows with a live band, yeah. That's something not everyone can do. So it's definitely something I wanna do when I get out. Definite. (David, aged 19)

This section illustrates the importance to the programme of goal setting as well as the challenge of matching goals with young people's diverse skills, interests, ambitions and fears. It also shows the way in which goal formation is mediated by context, including discourses surrounding creativity, talent and fame that in this case were unquestioned by adults in supervisory positions, even though the musicians themselves represented a more realistic example of successful working musicianship.

Musical affordances: creativity and transformation
Across all the research sites we observed many small changes in participants' attitudes, behaviour and general demeanour during music sessions. Hence, although the programme was very short and unlikely to produce significant health outcomes in the way it was delivered, these observations point to the possible value of access to music in youth justice settings. We observed participants becoming enthusiastically engaged, generating ideas and actively supporting each other. Visible changes in participants' body language were observed as they became more relaxed, smiling more readily and being more amenable to taking part in activities such as foot tapping, clapping, dancing or singing. Some groups became better at turn-taking and listening. They formed supportive connections, congratulating others' performances and giving gestures of encouragement when confidence was low:

> Fahim didn't seem very convinced [about the sound of his voice]. Simon jumped in and tried to explain that his voice really stood out … especially compared with those who merely copied other artists and styles. He tried to reassure him, telling him he was finding his own style and was doing something fresh. (Site B)

Some participants seemed to grow in confidence when they found themselves performing for the first time:

> Ollie really got into the song, adding lots of 'oohs' . . . . He sang really powerfully at the
> end and went really red with all the energy and power he put into his singing. It felt like
> he really got into the song and overcame his shyness. He even got a big clap at the end.
> (Site C)

Others became increasingly positive in their attitudes towards the musicians, some describing
them with admiration as inspirational. As sessions progressed, many participants managed to
identify with a specific task or interest – whether lyric writing, singing or rapping, playing an
instrument or even just directing, which they were able to develop through the programme.
The musicians helped the participants to hone their skills and work collectively on song lyrics,
style and musical arrangement. Some highly proficient individuals brought along accomplished
lyrics they had developed between the sessions. Several singers and rappers – some of whom
had initially appeared shy or reserved – acquired confidence at performing in front of their
peers, and seemed to thrive on the attention they received from the musicians. While existing
talents were affirmed, some discovered new abilities:

> He was just messing around, but he actually did a really good beat . . . The musicians
> seemed quite impressed with him, because it was actually quite a difficult rhythm to do.
> And he had never played drums before. It was quite impressive. (Site E)

When composing songs and lyrics, the musicians encouraged the participants to create a story
by drawing upon their backgrounds and experiences. This was dealt with sensitively, given
that many had experienced traumatic life events or difficult childhoods. They achieved this
partly by exploring ideas with participants one-to-one, establishing where individuals would
like to take their stories. Some individuals, with encouragement, brought out poignant reflec-
tions on their lives and the reasons they got involved in crime:

> It was something that I just wanted to get out. So I just knew I needed to come here, and
> just get it out, basically . . . to write about the area I live in, and then . . . about, like, back
> in the day, how I was to what I am now. (Eddie, aged 18)

Some songs touched on challenging life experiences and losses:

> Elisa became emotional when talking to the Jan [a musician]. She said the song reminded
> her of someone she was really close to who had passed away. She left the room for quite a
> while. When she returned, it was clear that she had been crying. She didn't want to talk
> about her feelings or what was going on, but she was happy to work alone with Jan to cre-
> ate her own song. (Site D)

The participants were often aware of the potential for music and lyrics to affect their mood.
One group decided to make changes to a song because the initial version had been too
depressing as it reminded them of being in prison. Some participants were articulate and
expressive, producing complex lyrics and raps that were rich in metaphor and symbolism.
Others were adept at using rhythm to afford meaning:

> Most of the time, I would write about how I'm feeling or what's in my head. I wanna find
> a suitable beat . . . Like, if I wanna write something about what's going on in life, I might
> find a mellow beat, an' write lyrics to that. (Naadir, aged 16)

In summary, musical affordances in the context of this study included changes in attitudes, behaviour, feelings and thoughts, musically expressed by participants. The opportunity that the project afforded for young people to work productively together, mitigating the general atmosphere that could be macho and threatening, was greatly valued by some participants. Where they were most successful, the activities seemed to increase young people's confidence as well as their knowledge and skills, in some cases offering real hope for a differently imagined future where creativity has a part. That said, the mediating factors that we have discussed here: the transience of youth justice environments, their regimes and requirements, the role of staff, discourses surrounding creativity, social divisions, power relationships and, most important, the skills and aptitudes of the musical facilitators, meant that programme impacts varied across the participants studied.

Conclusions

This study highlights the complexities of undertaking research with young people in the justice system, showing how its logic, regimes and rationales impinge both on research processes and on young people's engagement with participatory music-making. Drawing on the notion of musical affordances (DeNora 2000, 2003), we suggest that affordances, which can be both positive and negative for young people, are strongly mediated by context and social relations that need to be understood in situated research. The findings illustrate the ways in which music-making led by professional musicians can serve as a personal and collective resource for young people in justice settings. Although the programme as it was delivered was too short and fragmented to lead to measurable health outcomes, the observational data point towards the potential value of music in complex youth justice settings. Among its affordances are new experiences, broadened horizons, enjoyment, learning, expression, supportive interactions, pride and achievement. The programme helped many young people cope with their surroundings and offered a safe means of securing attention and recognition from adults and peers. It offered a space in which participants experienced respite from stigma as well as limited control within very constraining environments. The music project provided the opportunity for some young people to reflect upon their identities, recognise abilities and engage in a creative process of learning in a group. For a small number of participants the programme served as an incubator in which they discovered and claimed ownership of a strong musical identity that they were beginning to project forward into a changed, more positive, imagined future.

Not all the young people chose to appropriate these affordances in ways that would be approved of by programme providers. The data show that music has the potential to create conflict and feelings of exclusion and failure as well as confidence. Hence, music can be used as a tool to reinforce hierarchies and to reject or assert power and control over others. The data suggest that normative behaviour, forms of expression and identities were conveyed through lyrics and song choices as well as behaviour. Social status was evidently an important value associated with genre preference; hence, being identified with gangster rapping conferred social legitimacy, even if the participants held a wider range of musical preferences.

Music emerged as both important and double-edged in this research. Its cathartic effects helped individuals to manage complex emotions, although for some this meant stirring up difficult memories and feelings. However, not all the young people involved in this project could relate to music; hence, the beneficial qualities of music-making are not inherent or pre-given. Music for wellbeing and personal development is not a form of medicine that can be simply prescribed. What works in one context may be inappropriate in another. This study has shown how contextual factors, environmental conditions, the values, roles and beliefs of adults

surrounding programme delivery, the effects of social inequalities and the impacts of peer group dynamics can shape young people's appropriation of musical affordances.

The reflexive skills of musicians delivering such programmes are critical in this regard. Music leaders need a high level of reflexive awareness to be able to navigate these processes sensitively. In this study, successful interactions were those that enabled young people to create meaningful music that transcended social differences and received ideas about creativity at the same time as forging positive relationships and trust. The musicians needed to facilitate these processes while negotiating contrary demands and fluctuating power relationships in often chaotic, poorly resourced and oppressive environments.

The project data, including quantitative data not reported here, are described more fully elsewhere (de Viggiani *et al.* 2013). A key strength of the study is its detailed examination of music-making as a nuanced social intervention in youth justice contexts. It offers a situated understanding of the meaning and potential of music interventions, as well as their challenges and limitations. The study findings may have been reported differently had we had been able to successfully triangulate the various data sets, perhaps showing changes in wellbeing scores attributable to the programme. However, as discussed, the quantitative data were not deemed to be sufficiently robust for this type of analysis. Furthermore, longitudinal research would have revealed whether the meaning and impacts of the programme affected young people's lives in the longer term. Systematic or comprehensive follow-up research was not possible due to the difficulties of tracking participants once they had left the justice system. Further research is needed to understand the mediated affordances of music for health and wellbeing in youth justice settings.

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Acknowledgements

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