Inspiring Desistance? Arts projects and 'what works?'

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Abstract

This paper draws principally on a literature review that explored the question of whether Arts projects in prisons can inspire desistance from crime. The review, which aimed to connect the literatures on Arts projects in prisons, on learning in prisons and on desistance from crime, was undertaken to support the evaluation of a major Arts initiative in Scottish Prisons -- Inspiring Change -- which took place during 2010. A brief summary of the findings of the evaluation is also provided. The paper concludes that while it is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect Arts projects in and of themselves to 'produce' desistance, there is evidence that they can play a vital role in enabling prisoners to imagine and to embark on the desistance process.

Introduction

This paper draws on the final evaluation report of an initiative called Inspiring Change which was a co-ordinated programme of arts interventions that ran in 5 Scottish prisons (Barlinnie, Greenock, Polmont, Shotts and the Open Estate) throughout 2010. The programme involved a wide-ranging partnership between its principal sponsors Creative Scotland[1], its coordinators Motherwell College and Learning Centre staff located in prison establishments, the Scottish Prison Service, and participating arts organizations: National Galleries of Scotland, Citizens' Theatre, Traverse Theatre, Scottish Opera, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, National Youth Choir of Scotland.

Inspiring Change aimed to involve about 200 prisoners in a wide range of projects in order to stimulate offenders' engagement with learning, improve literacy skills and demonstrate the potential of the arts to support the process of rehabilitation. Our intention in this short paper is neither to describe the arts projects in detail, nor to report the findings from the evaluation (Anderson, et al., 2011). Rather, given the lead author's longstanding interest in 'what works?' and his experience as an accreditation panel member dealing with more traditional offender programmes, we focus on the third aim of the initiative (supporting rehabilitation through the arts) and examine the question: Can arts projects in prisons inspire desistance from crime? To that end, we draw principally on parts of an extensive literature review undertaken as part of the evaluation, and report briefly some of the data collected.

Arts and Learning in Prisons

Although involvement in the arts is sometimes presented within the criminal justice context simply as a way for prisoners to pass the time, the reality is that the artistic

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[1] Creative Scotland is the national leader for Scotland's arts, screen and creative industries. See: http://www.creativescotland.com/

process is often a challenging one, and one that requires dedication, patience and the learning of new skills (The Arts Alliance, 2010). Our literature review explored the literature across a range of art forms (including singing, instrumental music, creative writing and storytelling, theatre, visual arts and dance), but here we rehearse only the general themes that emerged across the different art forms. The review provided evidence that arts projects often support the development of better relationships between prisoners (Goddard, 2005; Silber, 2010), between prisoners and prison staff (Menning, 2010), and between prisoners and their families (Boswell et al, 2004; Palidofsky, 2010). It also suggested that arts interventions play an important role in improving self-esteem and self-confidence (Cohen, 2009; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Digard et al, 2007; Silber, 2005), in developing communication and social skills (Cohen, 2009; Miles & Strauss, 2008) and in enabling people to work as part of a group (Moller, 2003; Palidofsky, 2010).

Looking beyond these direct benefits of participation in the arts, we also wanted to explore the nature of learning in prisons, and to see what connections might be found between these two bodies of evidence. Unsurprisingly, there were many. Learning is not only about acquiring new skills and practices but is also about changes in people's identity. However, learning identities tend to act as self-fulfilling prophecies; identities feed into, and are fed by, learning experiences (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). People in the criminal justice system tend to have had negative experiences of mainstream education (see, for example, Hurry, et al., 2005) and lower than average attainment; this is a finding that is consistently reported internationally (Hawkins et al, 2000; Morgan & Kett, 2003; Muth, 2006). However, contrary to their negative attitudes towards school-like learning, Hurry, et al., (2009) found that where learning was more contextualized and active, particularly when art and drama were used, prisoners became more engaged and participated in more effective learning (see also Crossan et al, 2003; McGivney, 2001; Tett et al, 2006).

Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding that takes place in interaction with people. Rogers (2003) maintains, however, that many adults with negative experiences of compulsory education struggle to marry their construction of themselves as capable learners in everyday life with their sense of self as (not very) able learners in structured educational contexts. To overcome this, it is necessary to create the right environment and the right relationships to support learning. In particular Maclachlan et al., (2008) identified the importance of supportive relationships between tutors and learners and amongst peers where expertise and support were offered within reciprocal relationships through exchanges of skills and knowledge. Arts activities often prioritise working together, expect that people will help each other as peers, and provide demanding leadership. They can also be a trigger for participants to realise that they lack particular skills as well as the motivation to take action to improve them so that they are able to fully engage in specific projects.

In prisons, the dominant prisoner culture may be dismissive of learning opportunities but some research has suggested that prisoners' common refusal to engage in learning might be a defensive reaction, especially where their previous experiences have been highly negative (Morgan & Kett, 2003). However, amongst prisoners, the arts are often seen as a more acceptable medium for learning; Hurry et al's study found that young offenders had much more positive associations with art and drama activities than formal education (2005: 7).

There is a great deal of research (e.g. Comings, 2009; Bynner & Parsons, 2006) that shows the importance of enabling learners to access tuition and practice their skills over

a reasonably intense period. However, this repeated practice needs to take place in an interesting and appropriate way; here, in the context of intensively delivered arts projects, sustained interest may be generated by the prospect of a final performance or exhibition. Such situations may provide a context where learning is more likely to become embedded.

In terms of its outcomes, Tett et al (2006) demonstrated that participating in literacy education led to increased confidence in three main areas: psychological (such as increased self-esteem and a growing sense of their potential, ability and achievements), skills related (included being better at communicating; using the computer; reading newspapers and books; shopping) and related to participation in a variety of activities, linked to feeling more independent (such as going to the cinema and museums; standing up for themselves; not needing an interpreter).

In summary, our linking of the literature on arts in prisons with the literature on adult learning suggests that participating in the arts may enable prisoners to better engage in learning, particularly in terms of improving their literacy skills, by helping to change negative attitudes to education through providing contextualised activities that are interesting and fun, in which literacy skills are used in ways that are very different from those experienced at school; by building on and extending the knowledge and skills that offenders already have and helping them to progress; by providing a range of different activities that enables people to work to their strengths in collaboration with their peers; and by increasing confidence and self-esteem through increasing skills and encouraging social interaction through working together on absorbing projects.

Desistance from Crime[2]

Reviewing the two bodies of evidence discussed above led us to conclude that there may be considerable empirical support for the potential contribution of arts-based interventions in prison, particularly in relation to learning. But to what extent does this evidence suggest that such interventions can also play a part in promoting desistance from crime? This section of the paper provides a brief overview of desistance theory and research, as well as considering its implications for models of intervention with prisoners, before finally examining how and why arts-based interventions might contribute to desistance processes.

Against the backdrop of serious and chronic disadvantage and social exclusion that characterises the backgrounds of most prisoners (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002), it is hardly surprising that desistance from crime, particularly for persistent offenders, is a complex and demanding process; their social and personal resources for change are limited. Yet, most offenders do desist at some stage, and the process of desistance has become the focus for an ever-increasing volume of criminological research (for recent overviews of this literature see Farrall and Calverley, 2005; McNeill and Weaver, 2010). In defining or conceptualising desistance, some have suggested that there is a difference between primary desistance, meaning a lull or crime-free gap in a criminal career, and secondary desistance, meaning a change in the way that an 'ex-offender' sees him or herself (Maruna and Farrall, 2004). Essentially, secondary desistance is about ceasing to see one's self as an offender and finding a more positive identity; it is about successfully peeling off the criminal label that criminal justice systems are so effective at applying. Though not all researchers concur that this kind of reconstruction of identity is a *necessary* aspect of desistance for all offenders (see Bottoms et al., 2004; Laub and

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[2] This subsection draws heavily in places on McNeill and Weaver (2010); we are grateful to Beth Weaver for permission to adapt and use that material here.

Sampson, 2003), it is likely to be particularly important for those whose offending has been persistent and who have deeply entrenched criminal identities, and perhaps less important for those whose engagements with crime and justice have been more transitory. It is also important to note the connections between behaviours, attitudes and identities are complex and contingent; sometimes identities change *in advance of* behaviours.

Achieving desistance is often very difficult. Taken together, the research suggests that the process of desistance, again focusing on those who have developed persistent offending patterns, is typically characterised by ambivalence and vacillation (Burnett, 1992). It is not an event, it is a process; a process of 'to-ing' and 'fro-ing', of progress and setback, of hope and despair. Theories of desistance tend to focus on the significance of aging and developing maturity, on related life events and social bonds, or on narrative changes in the offender and his or her sense of self (Maruna, 2001). Most scholars now tend to stress the interplay between these three factors (Farrall and Bowling, 1999); it is not just getting older, getting married or getting a job, it is about what these kinds of developments mean and signify to the people involved and whether they represent compelling enough reasons for and opportunities to change the pattern of one's life.

Given the significance of these subjectivities, it is interesting, but perhaps not surprising, that hope plays a key part in these processes (Burnett and Maruna, 2004; Farrall and Calverley, 2006). Desistance can, it seems, be provoked by someone believing in the offender; someone who perhaps carries hope and keeps it alive when the offender cannot do so for him or herself. Yet the reality is that the social circumstances (and institutional experiences) of the lives of many prisoners and ex-prisoners suffocate hope.

For such reasons, Maruna (2001) describes the prognosis for many persistent offenders as 'dire' (precisely because of the criminogenic backgrounds, environments and traits that they experience). Perhaps because of their experience of adversity, both research evidence and practice experience tend to confirm that persistent offenders are very often highly fatalistic; to use psychological terms, they often evidence 'low self-efficacy' and an 'external locus of control'. They feel a lack of capacity to determine the direction of their own lives. Yet Maruna (2001) discovered that, *despite* this background and previous outlook, desisters somehow managed to acquire a sense of 'agency' – of control over their own lives. Some prisoners will, of course, have a stronger sense of agency, and will see their involvement in offending as the choice that makes best sense for them. Even then, however, this may be best understood as a kind of 'bounded agency' where the choice only makes sense because of the constraints that surround it.

However, desistance is not just about the acquisition of new personal narrative and a new sense of personal empowerment; far less it is it simply about the acquisition of the new skills that accredited programmes typically focus upon. Desistance requires social capital as well as these forms of human capital that programmes may provide (Farrall, 2002, 2004). The social and structural contexts within which obstacles to desistance are both constructed and overcome (or worked around) are as significant as the subjective elements of the process; the 'objective' and 'subjective' aspects of pathways to desistance interact in complex ways.

There is also evidence that for many ex-offenders desistance is about personal redemption, not necessarily in the spiritual sense but rather in the sense of finding a way to 'make good' on a troubled and troubling past by making a positive contribution to families or communities now and in future (Maruna, 2001). Developmental

psychologists refer to this as 'generativity'; it takes little imagination to see the generative potential that resides in reparative or restorative interventions and processes; this may explain why such interventions   sometimes outperform rehabilitative ones, even in terms of reducing reoffending (McNeill and Maruna, 2007). Engagement in the arts is also intrinsically generative.

Processes of Desistance

A developing strand of the desistance literature is concerned with seeking a clearer account of the processes of desistance, or of the stages of the desistance process. In conceptualizing the first stages of desistance, Giordano et al. (2002) discuss the significance of 'openness to change', while Vaughan (2007: 393) posits an initial stage of 'discernment' where one 'reviews possible choices and puts them beside our multiple, persisting concerns around which one has hitherto structured a life dominated by crime'. Here Vaughan suggests that 'a pre-requisite for change is that the agent is at least willing to consider different options' (p394).

Three Models of Desistance Processes

Giordano et al (2002)	Vaughan (2007)[3]	Shapland and Bottoms (2011)
1. General cognitive openness to change 2. Exposure to 'hooks for change' 3. Availability of an appealing conventional self 4. Reassessment of attitudes to deviant behaviour	1. Discernment: review of possible lifestyle choices 2. Deliberation: review of pros and cons of various options (a comparison of possible selves 3. Dedication: commitment to a new non-criminal identity	1. Current offending is influenced by a triggering event 2. The offender identifies a wish to try to change 3. The offender thinks differently about himself[4] and his surroundings 4. The offender to take action towards desistance 5. He experiences obstacles, barriers, temptations 6. He attempts to maintain change and finds reinforcers 7. He develops a crime-free identity

Giordano et al.'s (2002) suggested second stage in their theory of cognitive transformation involves '...exposure to a particular hook or set of hooks for change' (p1000) and 'one's attitude toward [such hooks]' (p1001). This process is reflected in what Vaughan (2007) terms 'the second stage of *deliberation':*

> 'What gets accomplished here is a review of the pros and cons of potential courses of action and a comparison with sticking in a well worn groove or custom. What

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[3] Unlike the other two models, Vaughan's model is based on an analysis of theoretical developments and previous empirical studies, rather than on original empirical research. Nonetheless, it is an important contribution.

[4] The Sheffield study is a study of young men's desistance, hence the masculine pronoun.

ultimately emerges is a comparison of selves—who one is and who one wishes to be' (Vaughan, 2007: 394).

Again this seems to require what Giordano et al (2002: 1001) describe as the envisioning of 'an appealing and conventional replacement self'. Vaughan (2007) emphasises that there is an influential emotional component to this comparative process which involves thinking about the reactions and feelings of others and envisaging how one's current self or identity is perceived by others.

In similar vein, Maruna and Farrall (2004: 27-8) explain that:

> 'a lull can turn into secondary desistance when two things happen. First, the person finds a source of agency and communion in non-criminal activities. They find some sort of "calling" -- be it parenthood, painting, coaching, chess or what Sennett (2003) calls "craft-love"[5] -- through which they find meaning and purpose outside of crime... The second part of our desistance formula, like that of Lemert's deviance theory, involves societal reaction. The desisting person's change in behavior is sometimes recognized by others and reflected back to him in a "delabeling process" (Trice and Roman 1970)' (Maruna and Farrall, 2004: 28).

In secondary desistance crime not only stops, 'existing roles become disrupted' and a 'reorganization based upon a new role or roles will occur (Lemert, 1951: 76)... desistance does involve identifiable and measurable changes at the level of personal identity or the 'me' of the individual' (Maruna et al., 2004: 274). It is in this secondary desistance phase that Vaughan's (2007) tertiary and final stage of 'dedication' might be positioned. He argues that to establish desistance, agents must regard their commitment to their new identity as incompatible with ongoing criminality and regard criminality as 'morally incompatible with whom they wish to be' (Vaughan, 2007: 394). Indeed, the individual experiences at this juncture the fourth stage in Giordano et al.'s (2002: 1002) four part theory of cognitive transformation: 'a transformation in the way the actor views the deviant behaviour or lifestyle itself'.

Healy and O'Donnell's (2008) Irish study lends further weight to the foregoing arguments. The authors studied Irish male probationers who were in an early stage of the change process and who were comparable in age with the SPooCS sample. They found that while their narratives contained a high level of motivation and modest goal aspirations in relation to the acquisition of employment or in reference to relationships, they contained little evidence of agency or generative concerns consistent with notions of secondary desistance. Healy and O'Donnell propose that their findings therefore support the view that, at least in the early stages of change, whilst ex-offenders do not necessarily possess a strong sense of agency, the development of social bonds may be intermediate goals that indirectly lead to desistance. The authors suggest these goals in turn forge new commitments, which then perhaps invoke a sense of an agentic self, result in a new identity and a focus on a different and possibly more altruistic set of goals.

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[5] Maruna and Farrall (2004: 28) explain that 'much criminal behaviour is maintained by rewards that are extrinsic (status, riches) or fleeting (the buzz of a drug). The discovery of an alternative, intrinsic rewarding pursuit can be a necessary, but not sufficient component of the successful abstinence from such highs'. The authors offer the example of from Sennett (2003) who referred to his own cello playing in his adolescence as an example of 'craft love', describing the manner in which this activity provided him with a pleasure in itself, for itself and a sense of self worth which wasn't dependent on anyone or anything external.

The most recent, and perhaps most complete, elucidation of this process has been provided by Bottoms and Shapland (2011), drawing on the findings of the Sheffield desistance study of male young adult recidivists. Their model involves a seven-stage process in which current offending is influenced by a triggering event; which leads to the wish to try to change; which leads the offender to think differently about himself or his surroundings; which leads the offender to take action towards desistance. However, these fledgling attempts to desist may be threatened by obstacles, barriers and temptations, so the desister must find reinforcing factors (from within himself or more likely within his changing social relations) to maintain the change which, if successful, may ultimately enable with the establishment of a crime-free identity.

Desistance and Rehabilitative Interventions

Drawing on these and other studies, a body of scholarship has emerged which, following Farrall's injunction that practice should become 'desistance-focused', seeks to interpret desistance research for practice (for example, see Maguire and Raynor, 2006; McCulloch and McNeill, 2008; McNeill, 2003, 2006, 2009; McNeill and Weaver, 2010; Porporino 2010; Weaver and McNeill, 2010). This work tends to stress (albeit to varying degrees) six central themes:

1. Since desistance is an inherently individualised and subjective process, approaches to intervention must accommodate and exploit issues of identity and diversity. (Weaver and McNeill, 2010).
2. The development and maintenance not just of motivation but also of hope become key tasks for workers (Farrall and Calverley, 2006).
3. Desistance can only be understood within the context of human relationships; not just relationships between workers and offenders (though these matter a great deal) but also between offenders and those who matter to them (Burnett and McNeill, 2005; McNeill, 2006).
4. Although we tend to focus on offenders' risk and needs, they also have strengths and resources that they can use to overcome obstacles to desistance – both personal strengths and resources and strengths and resources in their social networks. Supervision needs to support and develop these capacities (Maruna and LeBel, 2003).
5. Since desistance is about discovering agency, interventions need to encourage and respect self-determination; this means working with offenders not on them (McCulloch, 2005; McNeill, 2006).
6. Interventions based only on human capital (or developing offenders' capacities and skills) will not be enough. Interventions needs to work on social capital issues with communities and offenders (Farrall, 2002, 2004; McNeill and Maruna, 2007; McNeill and Whyte, 2007).

These messages have had particular salience in those Anglophone jurisdictions within which 'what works?' initiatives have had the greatest impacts (see Raynor and Robinson, 2009). Such initiatives typically involve implementing risk-need assessment tools and accredited, 'evidence-based' programmes (usually of a cognitive-behavioural nature) aimed at reducing reoffending. In England and Wales, attempts to implement this kind of approach represented a rehabilitation experiment on a grand scale but with somewhat disappointing results. Though the reasons for these results are complex and contested (see Raynor, 2008, McNeill, 2009), some have suggested that conceptual limitations underlie the 'what works?' model – at least as implemented in some jurisdictions (see Ward and Maruna, 2007). Crucially, 'what works?' puts the intervention itself at the heart of the process of change. By way of contrast, desistance-

based perspectives stress that the process of change exists before and beyond the intervention (McNeill, 2006, 2009; Porporino, 2010). Interventions and programmes, in desistance-based perspectives, become an element of a rehabilitative process which is itself part of a wider enterprise called desistance. It has therefore been argued that thinking about supervision needs to be 'embedded' within an understanding of desistance (McNeill, 2006) – and, more recently, that desistance itself is not the ultimate concern (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). People do not simply desist, they desist *into* something. Desistance is perhaps best understood as part of the individual's ongoing journey towards successful integration within the community.

Inspiring Change and Desistance

Though space prevents us from fully reporting our methods and findings here (see Anderson, et al., 2011), a brief summary of our findings about desistance does shed further light of the issues raised in the discussion of the three literatures reported above. In interrogating the data we collected with desistance from crime in mind, there are two important caveats to note. Firstly, given that the participants were still in prison (and some faced very long sentences) at the point of data collection, we were and are not able to say anything about the impact of the projects on their behaviour in the community; in this sense, we can say, little or nothing about primary desistance (i.e. desistance as measured in behavioural terms). Secondly, the focus of the data collection was on the experience and impact of the projects and not on desistance from crime *per se*. It seemed more sensible, and more defensible therefore, to focus on these processes and impacts in the present, rather than on 'mere' aspirations about future behaviour after release. In essence, this means that the data that we have to present is data about the extent to which the processes and impacts of the projects seem to have contributed to 'secondary desistance' (i.e. desistance as evidenced in signs of a developing positive non-offending identity).

We found evidence that, for many participants, the projects allowed their participants to become more open to one another and to change processes; that they secured significant commitment to collective efforts; that they challenged self-centred thinking; and that they encouraged participants to reflect on their future options. To this extent, the projects may have played a significant role in encouraging a more mature outlook, and more mature relationships amongst participants.

Across the range of projects, we found evidence that, although they were not focussed directly on building positive social ties (for example, around family or work), many participants were encouraged to reflect upon the impact of their offending and imprisonment on their families; that this motivated them towards change; that performing or exhibiting their work – and thus better aspects of themselves – to and for to their families was very important to them; that some acquired skills which they felt they could use for work or develop further in training; that others identified life skills that they have developed; and that some planned to develop new and more positive social networks linked to arts organisations or activities in the community.

Further, for many prisoners, participation in the arts projects seemed to constructively challenge and disrupt negative identities that they had internalised, and which they felt were sometimes communicated to them in the criminal justice system and in society at large. Because of their commitment to the projects and the prisoners, the arts practitioners established trusting and respectful relationships with participants; in so doing, their negative narrative identities were often disrupted and challenged. The public successes of the participants' efforts – in performances and exhibitions before

audiences of significant others – opened up new personal and social identities (as artists or performers) that confirmed the possibility and viability of change in one's character and identity. Drawing on recent developments in desistance theory (Maruna, 2010), it may be that performances and exhibitions provided a kind of ritual where an esteemed audience recognised and celebrated often unexpected and unaccustomed achievements. It seems significant that these audiences comprised both professional and authority figures, and family members – both the public and the private 'audience' of the prisoner's performance. Part of the function of certification rituals is that they confirm not just to the audience but to the participant the authenticity of their achievement. The potential of such experiences in terms of encouraging nascent belief in the possibility of progress or change is easy to see.

The timescales for and resources available to this evaluation did not allow for the longer term follow up required to produce more conclusive evidence about the links between participation in the projects and primary (or behavioural) desistance; in any event, the links between the projects and post-prison outcomes would necessarily depend on the extent to which the progress begun in the arts projects was followed up in other aspects of prison regimes and resettlement processes.

Conclusions: Desistance, Learning and the Arts in Prisons

This limited and brief account of some of our findings raises a number of issues in the light of the three literatures reviewed above. As we noted at the outset, given the complexities and difficulties of the desistance process, particularly for those involved in persistent offending who tend to have a wide range of background needs and to face significant resettlement problems, it would be unrealistic to expect relatively brief involvement in an arts project in and of itself to somehow 'produce' desistance. Indeed, the much broader project of trying to develop a desistance-supporting form of sentence planning (or offender management) within (and beyond) prisons is highly challenging, although several jurisdictions are now confronting exactly this challenge. The nature of imprisonment itself seems to run against the grain of desistance by limiting agency and responsibility, delaying maturation, damaging social ties (and sometimes building anti-social ones) and cementing criminalised identities. Although this would tend to suggest that the first principle must be to use prisons as sparingly as possible, where imprisonment is necessary the challenge is to create whole regimes (not just formal offender management or resettlement processes) that foster hope, motivation and responsibility, that maintain and develop positive social ties (and that enhance offenders' personal capacities to sustain positive roles and relationships, for example as parents), and that help to build new pro-social identities and social networks and contexts in which these new identities can be embedded, nurtured and sustained.

The literatures reviewed in the first section of this paper suggest several ways in which arts-based interventions might usefully play a key part in this process. As we have seen, such interventions can help to build better relationships between prisoners and between prisoners and staff, they can engage prisoners in educational and personal development processes, they can help prisoners to recognise and develop their existing strengths and their positive potential (rather than focusing on 'deficits'), they can build self-esteem and self-confidence, they can both use and encourage peer support and team or group work, and they can encourage participation in other forms of learning.

Putting this in the terminology of desistance theory and research, arts-based interventions offer more than 'just' the development of the skills of offenders; they may enable them to at least begin to think differently about themselves, their families, their

relationships with their peers, and their relationships to the prison regime and the opportunities it offers. More generally, they may help prisoners to 'imagine' different possible futures, different social networks, different identities and different lifestyles. In and of themselves, arts-based interventions are unlikely to deliver the concrete, realisable sentence and resettlement plans which many prisoners will need to tackle the full range of needs, issues and challenges that they face; but they may help to foster and to reinforce motivation for and commitment to the change processes that these formal interventions and processes exist to support. They may also play a part in bringing positive social contacts and networks *into* the prison-based process.

In the end, to measure arts-based interventions and accredited offending behaviour programmes by the same yardstick may be to miss the point. Arts-based activities and interventions are not intended or designed to directly address specific 'criminogenic needs'. For prisoners, just as for everyone else, they are first and foremost an opportunity to engage with our own humanity and with our potential for growth and development. In this sense, access to artistic expression in prison is, in some senses, as much a human rights issue as a pragmatic or instrumental one about best how to engage people in changing their lives for the better. Nonetheless, our analysis of the literature and of our own data suggests that, whilst arts-based interventions may be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for supporting desistance in and after prison, they can play a vital role in enabling prisoners to imagine and to embark on that journey.

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