THE POTENTIAL OF PARADOX: CHAOS AND ORDER AS INTERDEPENDENT RESOURCES WITHIN SHORT-TERM MUSIC THERAPY GROUPS WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Whilst many therapists find the chaotic nature of groups with adolescents challenging, this has rarely been explored in the music therapy literature. This research explores my personal experiences of chaos as a potential resource in short-term music therapy groups with young offenders in South Africa. The study utilises crystallisation, combining grounded theory techniques alongside the use of coloured patterns that depict the data to analyse field notes recorded over 10 years of my work in this context. This supports the development of a preliminary theory. Emergent findings suggest that chaotic experiences enable group transformation alongside the order required for group formation. Predictable musical frameworks, shared music preferences and collaborative music-making strengthened groups through offering boundaries, belonging and affirmation. Intense, dissonant music-making and group conflicts instigated chaos that challenged group members to broaden their perspectives, incorporate diversity and formulate new ways of being together. The paradoxical interrelationship between order and chaos urged group members to balance tensions between compliance and resistance, unity and diversity, creation and destruction, bolstering their capacity to recreate their lives within complex contexts. This study necessitates that music therapists reconsider assumptions regarding our engagement with chaos in music therapy groups with young people.

INTRODUCTION

The Teddy Bear Clinic, based in Gauteng, South Africa, is a Non-Government Organisation that provides protection, court mediation and therapy for children who have been abused, and for their families. In 2001 the clinic established the Support Programme for Abuse Reactive Children (SPARC) as a means of diverting the growing number of "low to medium risk" first-time young sex offenders from the court system through supporting them to develop skills to prevent re-offending (Teddy Bear Clinic, 2019). This holistic programme includes 12 weekly 2-hour group therapy sessions for participants who continue to reside in their home communities. The programme combines conventional diversion approaches (psycho-educational and cognitive-behavioural therapy) with creative programmes that include music therapy. The goals for music therapy are closely aligned to those of the overall process. These incorporate addressing past trauma and dysfunctional family or community systems; exploring healthy means of expressing emotions; developing empathetic social relationships; taking responsibility and fostering hope for the future. Music therapy activities include drumming; group improvisations; music listening; learning basic guitar, keyboard or other musical skills; song-writing and/or performance.

My experience as the SPARC music therapist for over 10 years could be likened to balancing on an unpredictable cliff edge between feelings of exhilaration and affirmation, and bewildering chaos. Experiences of chaos, referring predominantly to moments of intense, overwhelmingly loud and dissonant music-making and/or general uncertainty within the group, context or myself, led me to question the value of this work, or my own competence as a therapist. A brief review of field notes recorded from my work at the Teddy Bear Clinic between 2006 and 2017 highlighted that amidst the chaos, however, it appeared that there were implicit negotiations and explorations contributing to moments of group growth (Oosthuizen, 2018).

Through sharing my intuitions with fellow researchers and colleagues specialising in music therapy work with adolescents in South Africa and Australia, I became aware of common experiences of chaos. In contrast, to my knowledge, this construct was rarely explored in related literature. Only McFerran (2010) explicitly referred to experiences of uncertainty as an inherent factor of music therapy work with adolescents. I was interested in looking more closely at how chaos might be understood and what it may offer in music therapy practice with adolescents, particularly young offenders.

RELATED LITERATURE

Nitsun (1996) coined the word "anti-group" as a means of making sense of experiences that appeared to challenge the constructive work of a group. The acting out of "conscious or unconscious" attitudes such as "fear, anxiety, destructiveness, distrust, aggression, confrontation" or "narcissism" within or towards the group may precipitate experiences of the "anti-group" (Nitsun, 1996,

p. 44). This may emerge through multiple connections and conflicts between individuals, sub-groups, the music and context. The group-as-a-whole also emerges as an entity that enables young people to explore behaviours that might feel unacceptable or threatening to express outside of a group setting (Nitsun, 1996). Explicit manifestations of the "anti-group" may leave both group and therapist feeling out of control, (Nitsun, 1996, p. 144), whereas latent forms such as "passive aggression" also leave group leaders feeling despondent, overwhelmed and incompetent (Bion, 1961; Loth, 2002; Nitsun, 1998; Zeal, 2011).

Nitsun's construction of the "anti-group" closely resembles my own conception of chaos as I have experienced this in music therapy groups. Through this research I understand chaos, whether latent or openly manifest in a group, as encapsulating group conflicts (Yalom, 2005), disconnection or disintegration (Pavlicevic, 2016); anxiety, confusion and uncertainty (Bion, 1961); resistance or distrust (Yalom, 2005); aggression, violence or destructiveness (Holloway, Seebohm, & Doktor, 2011).

In this literature review I consider chaos in the context of the lives of adolescents and young offenders. I further explore how chaos is approached in group therapy and music therapy programmes for young offenders, and in related contexts.

Adolescence and chaos in South Africa

Adolescence is a temporal and contextually situated social construct formulated to represent young people (approximately between the ages of 12 and 18) who are experiencing rapid development mentally, physically, emotionally and socially (Epstein, 2007; White, Wyn, & Robards, 2017). Restrictions and rules regarding age appropriate behaviour and activities are set by caregivers and authorities to protect and guide young people. To some extent, these offer freedom from adult responsibility and opportunities to explore creative possibilities for their lives (Winnicott, Winnicott, Shepherd, & Davis, 1986, p. 162). These restrictions may also infantilise young people and isolate them from the adult world with which they are beginning to identify (Epstein, 2007). Whether contending with the process of maturation (Frydenberg, 2008), the struggle to form an identity in a constantly changing society (White et al., 2017), or the tension between their capabilities and how they are treated (Epstein, 2007), an adolescent is a person coping with numerous stressors. It is not surprising then that Malekoff (2014) describes group work with young people as chaotic, unpredictable, and quite often unsettling.

In addition to the complexities of negotiating identity within multiple and interconnected cultures, young South Africans are challenged to cope with high levels of structural and criminal violence that permeate our society, often normalised through their prevalence (Mathews & Gould, 2017). The large portion of children who have experienced violence are at risk of perpetuating this cycle (Institute for Security Studies and Africa-Check, 2014; DSD, DWCPD, & UNICEF, 2012; Gould, Mufamadi, Hsiao, & Amisi, 2017; Mathews & Gould,

2017; Wilkinson, 2016). Aggression and dissent amongst young people may, in some cases, emerge as a response to economic inequality predominantly divided along racial lines, and a scarcity of resources such as education or employment (DSD et al., 2012; Gould et al., 2017).

Young sex offenders

Contextual understandings of adolescence and sexuality underlie variations in legal definitions and societal norms regarding the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour (Miner et al., 2006). In South Africa, the legal term 'young sex offender' is applied to people under 18 years old who have participated in illegal sexual activities that include consensual sex with a minor (under 12 years old), rape or molestation, sexual harassment or involvement in pornography (Omar, Steenkamp, & Errington, 2012). Regardless of how it is defined, numerous studies conducted internationally report complex personal, social, cultural and societal factors that may motivate sexual offending. These include personal experiences of abuse, unstable family environments and an internalised culture supportive of violence and abusive behaviour (Magojo & Collings, 2003; Prentky, Pimental, Cavanaugh, & Righthand, 2009; WHO, 2012).

Compared with nonsexual young offenders, many sex offenders report experiences of childhood sexual abuse, tend to struggle more with peer relationships, and have more concurrent psychological disorders (Cuervo, Villanueva, González, Carrión, & Busquets, 2015; Letourneau & Borduin, 2008; Van Wijk et al., 2006) These are young people who have had to navigate through many chaotic life experiences, often lacking adult role models to guide them.

Intervention programmes for young sex offenders

Rothman (2016) notes that the majority of first-time young sex offenders do not commit further sexual offences but are more likely than others to participate in *non*-sexual offences. Further, the criminal histories of many adult offenders began in adolescence or childhood. It is thus pertinent to develop programmes that equip young offenders to explore alternative identities that they can take with them into adulthood (Prentky et al., 2009). Calley (2007, p. 132) suggests that early intervention programmes are "one of the most significant outcome indicators of successful treatment", reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

In South Africa, a selection of first-time offenders who take accountability for their offending behaviour are offered the opportunity of attending a diversion programme such as SPARC (Omar et al., 2012). This diverts young people from the stigma and abuse they may face through the criminal justice system that can negatively impact their emotional well-being and potentially promote further offending (DSD et al., 2012; Steyn, 2005).

Intervention programmes focused on preventing relapse and teaching acceptable patterns of behaviour through cognitive-behavioural therapy alone have had some success with adult offenders (Ertl & McNamara, 1997), but appear less successful in working with young sex offenders (Letourneau & Borduin,

2008). In contrast, there is evidence to suggest that multisystemic approaches to diversion programmes enable change in the behaviour of young offenders over time (Borduin & Scheaffer, 2001; Jaffé, 2010; Kazdin, 1997). These approaches integrate cognitive-behavioural therapy with multiple therapies (including experiential therapies such as music therapy) that address a broader spectrum of goals focusing on multiple dysfunctional constructs that influence offending behaviour.

Experiential therapies are often considered as enjoyable. These programmes can motivate participation; draw from the strengths and potential of participants and address multi-faceted and non-verbal factors underlying an offence (Gold, Voracek, & Wigram, 2004; Longo, 2004; Prentky et al., 2009; Wyatt, 2002). In addition, expressive therapies support young offenders with concurrent learning disorders or disabilities who might struggle to fully comprehend cognitively based therapies (Mishna & Muskat, 2001).

Adolescents and music

For many adolescents, music is important and sometimes experienced as therapeutic (Miranda, 2013; Rolvsjord, 2010; Upadhyay, 2013). Music may serve as a coping mechanism to regulate vulnerable emotional states or young people might use narratives of songs to help them to make sense of their lives (Rolvsjord, 2010). Musical choices and related behaviours enable young people to explore and express their social identity and belonging, also reflecting their willingness or refusal to participate within norms of society (McFerran & Wölfl, 2015; Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2001). Interventions using music may offer a familiar and valuable tool to support young offenders through diversion programmes.

Music therapy for young offenders

There is a growing interest in music therapy or education programmes for young offenders (Daykin, De Viggiani, Pilkington, & Moriarty, 2012). A large portion of the literature documents practices based within residential homes or detention centres in the USA, where medium to long-term group and sometimes individual music therapy is offered weekly or bi-weekly as a complement to multiple therapies (Rio & Tenney, 2002; Skaggs, 1997; Wyatt, 2002). These approaches are either problem-focused in following overall programme goals (Smeijsters, Kil, Kurstjens, Welton, & Willemars, 2011); or serve as adjunctive therapies that support young people through the programme without focusing directly on offences committed (Ierardi & Jenkins, 2012; Rio & Tenney, 2002).

In South Africa, the Diversion into Music Education (DIME) programme and Youth Development Outreach (YDO) Music Therapy diversion programme offer short-term music-based interventions for groups of young offenders (or 'youth at risk') (Lotter, 2011; Woodward, Sloth-Nielsen, & Mathiti, 2007), who remain within their home communities, as with SPARC. These programmes emulate a strengths-based approach, focusing on developing personal, social and musical skills that young people can take with them beyond the programme.

In meeting the most pertinent struggles faced by young offenders, most music therapy or music education programmes including SPARC share similar overarching goals. These include enhancing self-esteem (Baker & Homan, 2007; Ierardi & Jenkins, 2012; Smeijsters et al., 2011); promoting emotional release or expression (Skaggs, 1997; Wyatt, 2002); developing empathy, healthy social skills and relationships (Ierardi & Jenkins, 2012; Skaggs, 1997; Smeijsters et al., 2011); offering creative means for exploring past life experiences (Skaggs, 1997), and supporting reintegration of young people and a positive outlook for the future (Woodward et al., 2007). In addition, some programmes aim to work towards overcoming hostile or offensive behaviours (Rio & Tenney, 2002; Skaggs, 1997; Wyatt, 2002). Skaggs (1997) and Rio and Tenney (2002) describe work with young (all male[1]) *sex* offenders. In these groups the development of healthy social skills was a primary goal. The social value that adolescents ascribe to music strongly affirms the potential of programmes that include music for this client group.

Authors who have documented music and music therapy programmes for young offenders describe utilising a variety of techniques to address goals, aligned with popular techniques used with adolescents (McFerran, 2010). Listening to preferred music of group members builds trust and invites group members to share aspects of their lives (De Carlo & Hockman, 2004; Ierardi & Jenkins, 2012; Rio & Tenney, 2002; Skaggs, 1997; Wyatt, 2002). Learning musical skills, composing, and sometimes performing fosters a sense of achievement and social re-integration through affirmation from others (Ierardi & Jenkins, 2012; Lotter, 2011; Smeijsters et al., 2011). Musical improvisations enable the exploration of social skills and the development of healthy group relationships (Rio & Tenney, 2002). Improvisations also motivate the appropriate release of volatile emotions that may be difficult to verbalise (Skaggs, 1997; Wyatt, 2002). Drumming with groups of young offenders is a particularly powerful tool for developing group cohesion, requiring group members to control their impulses and work together as a unit (Ierardi & Jenkins, 2012; Lotter, 2011; Rio & Tenney, 2002; Wyatt, 2002).

McFerran (2010) notes that a music therapy group "is a powerful model of work in adolescence, but it does come with many challenges, not least of which is dealing with the chaos of a group of teenagers making music" (p.45). Few researchers describing work with groups of young offenders have explicated these challenges. It is possible that the restrictive environments of the residential centres in which music therapy takes place limit more chaotic behaviour. For example, Rio and Tenney (2002, p. 93) note that the presence of staff counsellors in sessions was "required to monitor the group to uphold safety rules of the facility".

Chaos in music therapy groups with adolescents

A broader search of the literature that includes research on group music therapy for young people with "behavioural disorders" (McIntyre, 2007; Rickson &

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[1] Over 90% of sexual offenders are male (Cuervo et al., 2015; Jaffé, 2010)

Watkins, 2003), or "at risk" (Snow & D'Amico, 2010), alludes to experiences of challenging behaviour within groups. McIntyre (2007) describes a group of young people referred for behavioural issues in a school who lacked the "ability to cooperate as a group." (p.68). In describing work with "aggressive adolescent boys", Rickson and Watkins (2003) noted the occurrence of disruptive behaviour through the music therapy process.

A therapist's perception of chaos in groups can significantly influence how this is approached. Chaos could be considered as a hindrance to the therapy process that must be addressed, avoided or controlled (Smith & Berg, 1987). Wyatt (2002, p. 82) proposes that it is important to intervene to "redirect behaviour", whilst Snow and D'Amico (2010) state that music therapists facing behavioural challenges in working with "at risk" youth might benefit from learning better management skills such as "enforcing discipline" and "maintaining control" (p. 32).

Some theorists argue that such authoritarian strategies are unhelpful. In acknowledging the difficult behaviour sometimes experienced in a programme developed for young offenders in residential care, Prescott (2001) stipulates that behavioural management strategies such as consequences and harsh confrontation don't "model healthy pro-social problem-solving skills" and "risk replicating abusive environments that the student has survived"(p. 51).

Chaos may be understood as part of a group process that needs to be resolved effectively for a group to move towards maturity (Smith & Berg, 1987; Yalom, 2005). Some music therapy programmes seek to address behavioural goals such as increasing impulse control, anger management or decreasing resistiveness or hostile behaviours (McIntyre, 2007).

An alternative perspective views chaos as a "concomitant, attendant process of collective life" (Smith & Berg, 1987a, p. 637). Chaos in music therapy sessions may stem from the combination of a diverse group of young people with complex lives and ways of constructing and expressing meaning, participating in the potentially novel activity of making music together. It is not resolution but the integration of chaos and order, creativity and destructiveness, conflict and connectedness that represent the healthy functioning of a group (Doktor, Holloway, & Seebohm, 2011; Smith & Berg, 1987a).

If chaos is understood in this way, it is not surprising that I have shared many chaotic experiences with young people in music therapy groups. If this chaos could serve as a resource for the therapy process rather than a hindrance, this aspect of our practice requires more attention.

To address the paucity of research within this area, in this study I explored how chaos might be considered as a resource within music therapy groups with young offenders in South Africa, based on my perspective as the music therapist.

The research question guiding this study is: how does the music therapist understand chaos as a resource within short-term music therapy groups with young offenders in South Africa?

METHOD

Autoethnography[2]

Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) propose that "autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)" (p.273). Autoethnographical research offers opportunities for researchers to draw from the richness of their personal experiences to add depth to the knowledge gained from other forms of research (Ellis et al., 2011). Anderson (2006) defines "analytic autoethnography" as research in which "the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena." (p. 375).

Situated as an analytic autoethnography, this research drew from my field notes, documenting the music therapy processes for 18 therapy groups as part of the SPARC programme at the Teddy Bear Clinic, between 2006 and 2017. These field notes captured my encounters with a diverse range of young people attending SPARC, also reflecting my participation in changes occurring in the diversion programme and my therapeutic approach over time. These explicated my own experiences as a member of both the community of music therapists working with young offenders, and of SPARC (including staff and group members).

Pace (2012) proposed that a flexible, yet rigorous use of grounded theory techniques can be useful in generating theory from analytic autoethnographic accounts, including "autobiographical narratives of past experiences" (p. 7). Charmaz (2006) concurs that, although grounded theory predominantly draws from intensive interviewing techniques, grounded theory methods can be used for ethnographic research.

Grounded theory, according to Strauss and Corbin (1994), involves a cyclical process of data collection and analysis to develop a conceptually dense theory, grounded in the research data. Data is analysed in relation to other data and to the emerging theoretical categories, and this guides the process of collecting more data (Hood, 2007). This offered an initially inductive, and iterative means of developing abstract categories grounded within data (Tesch, 2013). As defined by Charmaz (2006, p. 524), "a constructivist grounded theory seeks to define conditional statements that interpret how subjects construct their realities". Data thus needs to be appraised within context, even whilst emergent concepts may be transferred to other contexts.

Data source: Field notes

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[2] There has been considerable debate regarding the requirements for research to be classified as "autoethnography" (Anderson, 2006). My study does not adhere to all the criteria stipulated by Ellis (2004) and more closely resembles a traditional qualitative study. However, I felt the use of this term was most relevant, particularly due to the autobiographical nature of the field notes on which the study is based.

As someone engaging within SPARC over a prolonged period, I considered my field notes as a valuable source of data informing the research to enable the formation of a substantive theory (Stige, Malterud, & Midtgarden, 2009). I felt that this narrative would produce more meaningful data than a limited number of interviews with past and present programme participants who would have to rely on their memories of experiences of chaos within sessions they attended. Their responses may also diverge from the research focus on my personal experiences of chaos as the therapist. Where group members offered feedback during a process, this was recorded in my field notes.

These data offer my interpretation of group processes. Different researchers might assign multiple meanings to constructs, dependent upon their position and life experiences (Finlay, 2002). As a white and privileged female South African music therapist working with predominantly black male group participants (often residing in under-resourced communities), the meaning I made of experiences may have contrasted significantly to that of group members themselves. I hold a powerful position as a therapist facilitating compulsory groups, where courts may request progress reports. Many of the young people I work with do not speak English as a first language and might struggle to express themselves adequately. These dynamics complicate therapy processes and may implicate research findings based predominantly on my own data and analysis.

As a clinician, my session notes were not originally intended for research purposes but for reflexively distilling my experiences (and sometimes venting intense emotions), guiding my preparation for group sessions, and documenting the process so that I could compile reports for the organisation. They incorporated my observations and intuitive interpretations of group events.

Session notes were not available to group members or colleagues and thus I did not feel restricted in providing an authentic account of my personal experiences. In this regard, it was important to keep in mind the potential ethical implications of using session notes that occasionally recorded negative views towards group members or the clinic for this research. Thus, I have not included contextual information regarding group members or staff, the year in which groups took place, or at which branch of the clinic.

Data selection

In selecting a focus for analysing my field notes, I considered data that would be most meaningful in developing categories related to the construct of chaos as I had experienced it.

Through a process akin to theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I initially selected 3 full group processes to analyse which I had experienced as particularly chaotic across the 18 groups.

These groups were similar in that they included a total of 8 or more male young people of mixed races between the ages of 14 and 17, and the music therapy process lasted for 10 to 13 sessions. I considered these similarities sufficient to enable a meaningful comparative analysis between the three groups,

whilst each group offered variations that might challenge or confirm emergent categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Group 1 was the first I ever facilitated at the Teddy Bear Clinic. A significant portion of sessions included structured, thematic or free improvisations using keyboard, guitar and percussion. As a therapist I was nervous and uncertain of how the therapy process would or should unfold, which potentially accentuated my experiences of chaos. A social worker regularly assisted me as a co-facilitator. This was helpful, but also pressurised me to advocate for music therapy practice, leaving me feeling particularly incompetent after sessions I had experienced as chaotic.

Group 2 took place 5 years after the first. I felt confident to explore different therapeutic techniques and included more verbal reflection in groups, emphasising the creative exploration of the overall diversion programme themes. Along with thematic improvisations, the group spent time writing group songs or stories, reflecting on music we listened to and developing drumming sequences. My feelings of chaos in this group were heightened by staff dynamics and conflicts beyond the group that pressurised me to keep changing my approach within what felt like an unsupportive context.

Group 3 took place 6 years after Group 2. I had developed good relationships with staff that bolstered my confidence as others approached me as a co-expert. Group challenges were tackled collaboratively. My therapeutic approach was eclectic and flexible, guided by group dynamics and negotiations. Based on the interests of these group members, we spent a large portion of time listening to preferred music of group members, and semi-structured or freely improvised drumming. In this context it was frustrating that I still confronted experiences of chaos and ensuing incompetence in my work. However, I was more able to relate these experiences to the lives of the young people in groups and my flexible approach that felt necessary but sometimes accentuated chaos.

Although experiences of chaos were common in all three groups, each thus presented different factors precipitating this, and changes in my approach and response.

Initial coding of data

Group 1 field notes

I began by coding the Group 1 field notes. A detailed line-by-line open coding process grounded codes in the data as opposed to working with preconceived notions (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I coded field notes sequentially, as an experience of chaos sometimes emerged over time or I experienced this as a generalised feeling through a session rather than in isolated instances. Further, it would be interesting to consider what aspects of the group process preceded or followed chaotic moments, within a session and over time.

The initial coding phase involved condensing homogenous conceptual labels into more manageable lower-level descriptive categories that could be compared (Tesch, 2013). I then grouped descriptive categories based on their

similarities, differences and relationships to develop more abstract, higher-order categories that integrated aspects of the data (Willig, 2008).

Abstract categories that emerged from analysis of my Group 1 field notes focused on significant moments within group processes, each describing distinctive interactions between me and group members, moods and energy conveyed through the group behaviour and music. These included moments where the group worked collaboratively (Partnering); moments of apparent disorder (Dissonance), therapist led, structured moments (Structure) and Resistance. A core category, Vitality[3], described aspects of uncertainty, energy and 'loudness' present within and presenting relationships between group moments.

Group 2 field notes

I repeated the process of open coding to organise my data from my field notes of Group 2, also comparing conceptual labels with categories generated through the analysis of the first group (Charmaz, 2006).

There are many ways to code and group data, and each possibility adds different nuances to the findings. In working reflexively, it is important to consider how my own bias in developing concepts might skew the research findings (Finlay, 2002). My subjectivity could deepen findings but also overlook alternative meanings. After all, when I keep asking questions such as: "What am I doing here?", it can be tempting but is perhaps not helpful to find answers too quickly. To explore multiple possibilities and capture the meanings emerging through data as closely as possible (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I remained open to changing, eliminating or expanding codes through comparing these with developing categories. I used visual diagrams and memos to record analytic decisions and integrate the developing theory by exploring relationships and concepts and linking different abstract categories (Creswell, 2009).

Through exploring relationships between and within categories, I initially made inferences as to what my response as the therapist would have been in certain group moments. My experience of literature on clinical music therapy work (for example, Pavlicevic's (1997) description of dynamic form as it occurs in the therapeutic relationship with individual clients), led to an assumption that the relevant therapeutic response in moments of rigidity or conformity within the group's music should be to offer variation. On the other hand, my response to disorder should be to offer stability. These therapeutic interventions would encourage sufficient control and flexibility within the group that could lead towards partnering, through which the group might experience therapeutic growth.

In reviewing my field notes, however, I found that often when group behaviour was coded as 'not together' (contributing to Dissonance), I kept making changes as a therapist. This did not fit with my assumptions. Why did I do this?

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[3] This was based on Stern's (2010) construct of forms of vitality that underlie qualities of emotions or relationships, also reflected in art forms such as music.

Was this simply bad therapy practice? In which case, why was I responding similarly even after five years of experience between Group 1 and Group 2?

I also questioned my assumption that moments of chaos were only a resource insofar as they led toward Partnering, where therapeutic growth occurred. Could chaos (which I often grouped under the categories of Disorder or Resistance) motivate alternative growth experiences within groups?

Group 3 field notes

These questions refined my focus in coding the Group 3 field notes. I selectively coded sessions that had felt particularly chaotic, and one that felt the most meaningful in the group process. Codes were integrated and compared with emergent categories. This extended and challenged the evolving theory by blurring the boundaries between abstract categories.
For example:

> Group 3, Session 7 (line 51): "…for the most part all three guitars *(tuned to different chords)* played at the same time and those on the keyboard put the volume on full and played the wrong notes…it was chaos…BUT – there were two moments where the group really got it." – Coded as "moments of invested participation despite chaos"

Here, a moment of Partnering seemed embedded within what was otherwise a chaotic experience, challenging my assumption that groups move *through* chaos to experience growth and transformation.

To understand codes such as this within my overall emergent theory, I either had to explore alternative relationships between and within emergent categories or more contextual information would be required to situate codes within the current category groups. Whilst utilising grounded theory techniques to segment data into meaningful units initially provided a helpful analytical tool, this process now limited my ability to consider and draw meaning from the data as a whole (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Jacobs, 2008).

Crystallisation: Using colour as an alternative means of revealing patterns within data

Ellingson (2009) introduced the concept of 'crystallisation' as a framework for utilising multiple research genres to deepen findings by approaching and representing data from various angles. Grounded theory offered one means of drawing findings inductively from data. In order to frame these findings within the context of group processes, I attempted a means of visually representing the raw data.

Guided by my *intuitive* sense of the distinctive expressions of vitality conveyed through abstract categories, I used different colours to highlight sections of data from Group 3 that seemed to characterise each abstract category. The

colours I chose to use accentuated my personal experiences of the vitality of group moments. For example, I coloured moments of Dissonance (denoting strong, intense feelings) red, as opposed to the more flowing experiences of Partnering that I coloured in blue.

As I worked through my field notes I added new colour highlights to differentiate between moments that did not seem to fit neatly with my existing abstract categories. I formulated 6 major "theoretical concepts" to delineate group moments including: Partnering, Organised Contributions (a more structured variation of Partnering), Structure, Organised Chaos (resistance and group conflict), Dissonance and Inspiration (transformative experiences emerging through chaotic group experiences).

The development of theoretical concepts relied both on the emerging theory up to this point, and the authority of my voice as a researcher with many years of clinical experience within this field (Jacobs, 2008).Thus, I felt this alternative way of looking at the data was sufficiently systematic.

I used the colour wheel to indicate potential relationships between group moments. For example, Organised Contributions, suggestive of both Partnering (coloured blue) and Structure (coloured yellow) was coloured green – a combination of the yellow and blue.

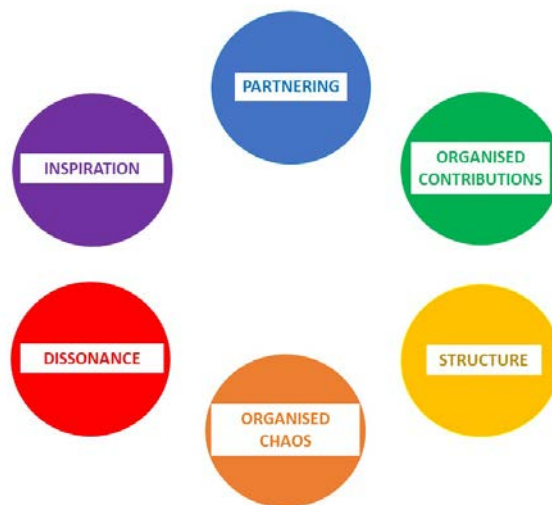"Vitality" remained a core category differentiating and connecting group moments.

Figure 1: Theoretical concepts and assigned colours

Table 1: Highlights for Group 2 process

Once I had highlighted moments through a group process, I regrouped conceptual labels, clarifying and separating codes based on the group moment in which they occurred. This added contextual depth to findings.

Ellingson (2009) notes: "Juxtaposing different ways of knowing through crystallisation reveals subtleties in data that remain masked when researchers use only one genre to report findings"(p. 10). The colour highlights provided a visual overview of the movement and connectedness between moments within sessions and through the process. As I had used specific colours to denote related experiences, I could also use the colour wheel to consider connections and differences between theoretical concepts. I considered movements around the colour wheel, and possible links between opposite colours. For example, highlighting Structure (yellow), Organised Contributions (green) and Partnering (blue) revealed patterns of movement from very structured group work until group members became able to partner without requiring pre-set structures. Movements between Structure (yellow) and Inspiration (purple) enabled me to consider the spontaneity that group members showed over the process.

Assimilating codes, categories and patterns

Through an iterative process of moving among the raw data, coloured highlights and emergent theory, I explored relationships between group moments that seemed less clear. I was especially interested in why moments I had coded under Dissonance sometimes remained static or moved towards Organised Chaos, but at other times suddenly appeared to "jump" to contrasting moments of Partnering. In this sense, my field notes had accurately captured my experiences of unpredictable shifts in groups.

For example, some highlights from Group 1 (also showing the conceptual label at the beginning of each highlight):

Session 8:
T NOT GOING WITH GM ENERGY
IMPROV. GM NON-COMMITTAL

Session 3:
T NOT FITTING WITH GM MUSIC
GM NEGOTIATE WITH T

Both Session 8 and Session 3 include a similar code: "T not going with GM energy", and "T not fitting with GM music", which occur during a moment of Dissonance (highlighted in red) and would have been grouped together under a descriptive category: "T not fitting with GM". However, Session 8 moved towards Organised Chaos (orange), where the group's response towards the activity was non-committal and resistant. In contrast, in Session 3, the group members and I worked to find a common rhythm through the dissonance that initiated an experience of Partnering (blue). The movement toward Partnering seemed motivated by fragments of Inspiration or Partnering imperceptible by myself, embedded within the Dissonance.

Similar patterns of Inspiration or Partnering within Dissonance or Organised Chaos presented a paradox, an interrelatedness of apparently contradictory group experiences (Miron-Spektor, Gino, & Argote, 2011). For example:

> Group 1, Session 10 (line 24): "…the music was very quiet, tentative and kind of all over the place, but there was a kind of beauty to it. It was as if the group was saying: "Hey, we're not together, but we're OK.""

These moments appeared to initiate significant transformation within groups.

I used theoretical sampling to select additional data from groups I had facilitated in the past that may challenge or affirm my emergent theory. I selected a group that had not felt chaotic, one with younger participants and another with fewer group members. My approach to the data at this point was deductive rather

than inductive (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I selectively coded instances I intuitively considered as describing moments of Dissonance and Organised Chaos that moved towards Partnering. Patterns that emerged supported those of the first three groups analysed.

At this point I considered that in terms of my own experiences of chaos within work with groups of young offenders, my theory was saturated to a degree. Whilst the category "Vitality" helped to differentiate, connect and describe group moments, an emergent core category labelled "Paradox" subsumed contradictory relationships between these theoretical concepts.

RESULTS

Group moments as forms of vitality

Stern (2010) suggests that "dynamic forms of vitality are the most fundamental of all felt experience when dealing with other humans in motion." (p. 8). Forms of vitality that include movement, space, time, force and intention, offer us a sense of being alive, and are integral to how we create and remember our life experiences, and how we will adapt to new situations. They occur across modalities, which is how we can relate emotional, bodily or social experiences with the flow or intention of a piece of music, for instance.

My interpretation of the data highlighted how music therapy groups directly drew young people into a space in which they could engage with forms of vitality (De Nora & Ansdell, 2014; Stern, 2010). The uncertainty and rapid movements between varied expressions of vitality accentuated my overriding sense of chaos within group sessions and processes. Malekoff (2014) concurs with experiences of uncertainty within groups with young people, adding that rather than being pulled into confusion and anxiety we can step aside and consider patterns and possibilities that might emerge, revealing the real potential of a group. Through my analysis, I found that group moments highlighted different patterns of vitality expressed within groups. Analysing each moment separately assisted me to develop an understanding of the transformative potential inherent in rapidly changing group experiences. In this section I explore group moments and the categories and properties underlying each.

Group Moment 1: Structure

Higher-Order Categories	Properties
Therapist-led	T (Therapist) takes a directive lead; T verbally reflects for GM (Group Members)
Structure can connect	T attempts to connect to GM; Familiar draws GM together
Energy levels convey a range of responses to structure	GM relax within familiar activities; low energy in familiar; high energy and enjoyment in familiar
Choice to contribute	GM don't always contribute in familiar

Particularly in the beginning of the therapy process, a significant proportion of sessions appeared to be highly structured. These moments denoted therapist-driven activities that were familiar and/or easy to participate in. They included structured drumming, a greeting ritual or moments where I as the therapist offered reflections about the process. Structured moments seemed to set a clear foundation for group processes. Based on my interpretations, group members felt relaxed or even energised by experiences of participating together in known activities. However, they lost energy and expressed boredom if not enough change was offered.

Group moment 2: Organised Contributions

Higher-Order Categories	Properties
Therapist challenges and supports contributions	T (Therapist) mediates between individual and group; T initiates more challenging/free activities; T accentuates contributions of GM; T encourages GM to contribute; T considers way to reflect alongside the group
GM (Group Members) increase involvement	Partnering emerging – T and GM; GM begin to contribute; more dominant GM emerge; differentiation amongst GM; GM more comfortable to share verbally; increasing creativity and musical awareness
Mostly positive energy and focus	Energy and focus in challenging structured activities; Energy and enjoyment when GM contributions affirmed; restlessness/low energy
Uncertainty in beginning to initiate	GM uncertain/tentative; GM conform; incongruence between perceptions and reality

Organised Contributions balanced sufficient structure to contain the group with space for group members to increasingly explore unique contributions and try out new ideas. Individuals might contribute a beat to a drumming sequence, an idea for an evolving story-line or a reflection in response to questions I asked. They may be asked to play a piece of their preferred music or choose preferred activities.

Organised Contributions, according to my analysis, were predominantly characterised with an increase in energy as contributions were affirmed and the group invested more. My session notes also sometimes describe tension between the restlessness of those pushing to increase their contributions and those who were more uncertain and sometimes retreated.

Increasing contributions of individuals, negotiations and mutuality in groups led towards Partnering at times.

Group moment 3: Partnering

Higher Order Categories	Properties and dimensions
Therapist supports GM	T encourages contributions; T musically/verbally supports GM process; T offers variations; T mediates between individual and group; T as witness
GM spontaneous and creative contributions	GM contribute varied ideas; GM spontaneous; GM use group for exploring experiences and future possibilities; loose groove in music;
GM collaborate	GM partner – inclusivity; GM partner – negotiation and challenge; Mutuality and intimacy; GM tentative
Investment	GM invested in process; GM express enjoyment
High, positive energy	High positive energy; loud playing

Partnering denoted peak therapy experiences initiated by group members. Group members both contributed and collaborated in an inclusive and flexible space. Individuals took leading or supportive roles, influencing "one another equally in controlling or giving direction to some aspect of the music." (Bruscia, 1987, p. 446). Through the data it appeared to me that group members had high energy, expressed intense enjoyment, connectedness and investment in the therapy process. *All* group members tended to increase their contributions (which meant different things for different individuals), also trying out variations. My role was negotiated with group members, and often involved supporting tentative contributions or witnessing.

I noticed that the group energy during *active music-making* in Partnering seemed distinctive. The spontaneity and immediate involvement of everyone moving in time and space as a unit seemed a transformative experience

(Pavlicevic, 2014) that could not be achieved through a group discussion, for instance. Music-making was often very loud, although there were moments of sustained quieter music, offering a sense of calmness, without any loss of energy.

While group members were working closely together, the resultant music during Partnering often appeared to have a very "loose" groove and could sound quite dissonant. For example:

> Group 3, Session 10 (line 90): "It was this crazy thing of the resultant music not always sounding very organised or together, but everyone was in it, the intention was there…everyone seemed to be having a great time – all focused on the same goal."

It was my experience of the vitality expressed through the group that differentiated peak moments of Partnering from the struggle inherent in moments of chaos, that include Dissonance, Organised Chaos and Inspiration.

Group moment 4: Dissonance

Higher-Order Categories	Properties and dimensions
Disconnection	Frustration – T and GM; incongruence between T and GM; GM disconnected; split in group; GM resist T
Attempts to initiate change	T directive; T encourages contributions; T encourages connectedness; T reflects with/for GM; GM attempts to work together
Uncertainty and struggle	T feels incompetent; GM struggle to participate; GM uncertainty; Chaos as overwhelming and confusing; outside dynamics contribute to the chaos of sessions
Lack of investment	GM lack focus; GM little verbal reflection; GM conform; rigidity
Release	Enjoyment and freedom; chaos enables expression of intense emotions
Different energy levels reflect group's willingness to engage despite chaos	High, restless energy; low energy/heaviness; persistently loud music

Moments of Dissonance captured my experience of uncertainty within me and the group. I often felt incompetent as the group therapist, whether the group expressed intense enjoyment or distress within these moments..

I aligned the musical qualities of Dissonance in groups to what Bruscia (1987) described as "over-differentiated" ("distant, highly contrasted and incompatible") (p. 426), and/or apparently "random" ("an unlimited range of

change possibilities, a lack of focus, and an absence of any efforts to preserve, maintain, or repeat previous materials") (p. 431).

In my analysis I observed different expressions of Dissonance, including:

1. *Non-participation:* An overarching sense of uncertainty and/or anxiety in combination with non-participation. Group members lacked focus or expressed boredom. The group energy felt low or heavy. Attempts at making music were dissonant and not sustained.

2. *Messing around:* Group members tried out instruments, relationships or responses to therapy groups with little regard to the group process or consequences of their behaviour. Whether they acknowledged their disconnection from the group or not, most group members expressed enjoyment of being free to do what they wanted.

3. *Mayhem:* The group appeared to be entirely out of control. This included persistently loud playing that appeared to me as aggressive and fragile simultaneously. There was no clear rhythm or beat. My data often described a split in the group at this point between those who burst out playing impulsively and those who receded or stopped playing entirely. The verbal response to this music was usually as intense as the music itself.

Group moment 5: Organised Chaos

Higher Order Categories	Properties and dimensions
Frustration and struggle	T frustrated; difficult external factors impact group; frustration/anger expressed through music; music chaotic
Attempts to motivate change	T strong lead; T encourages contributions; GM contribute towards process
Group splits	Incongruence between T and GM; Excluded GM recede; some GM note enjoyment of music
Uncertainty	T uncertain how to contain group; some GM tentative
Resistance	GM resist T/participation; GM not partnering; conflict between GM; Dominant GM control sessions – disempower others; rigidity in music
Tension	Low, stifled energy; extremely loud music; high energy/intensity

Organised Chaos highlighted group led resistance and testing of power dynamics with a resultant feeling of disorder. Group conflicts took precedence over other aspects of the process. Tension within groups was often intensified through

exceptionally loud and dissonant music. The energy of the group was either high or felt stifled, appearing to me to express frustration, anger or aggression.

Holloway, Doktor, and Seebohm (2011, p. 9) describe "destructiveness" as "a *propensity* within the psyche, and within relationships between people", that may include open acts of aggression or violence, may be expressed as "sulking, boredom or withdrawal", or may even be "experienced as far too potent and toxic by the individual to be ever given vent – and what we may see on the surface is "passive-aggressive", overly compliant or a completely dissociative response to the external world." Organised Chaos encapsulated clearly *directed* (organised) destructive actions towards individuals (including the therapist), sub-groups or the group as a whole. In moments of Organised Chaos I questioned my capacity to contain the group.

The colour highlights for Dissonance and Organised Chaos reflected some moments when groups appeared caught up in chaos that may have temporarily stalled the therapy process. However, I noticed that chaotic group experiences periodically allowed for the emergence of Inspiration within the group.

Group moment 6: Inspiration

Higher Order Categories	Properties and dimensions
T supports GM	T supports and affirms GM contributions; T encourages contributions
Change in group	T initiates change; GM move towards partnering; Increasing investment; GM explore new ideas
Uncertainty	T uncertain; GM tentative
Not all together	Some GM not connected with the group; some tension in the group
Positive release/increasing eagerness	Some GM high energy, eagerness; GM relaxed
Powerful experiences	Sharing powerful experiences

Moments of Inspiration described predominantly group-led moments that instigated a potential for transition within chaotic moments. Some group members remained resistant or disconnected from the group, whilst others began to explore alternative contributions. These shifts were often tentative, fleeting, and unexpected. Group members sometimes reflected surprise or a profound connection with the music.

If recognised and supported by myself and the group, Inspiration on occasion preceded Partnering.

From group moments to group movements

In considering patterns of vitality within rapidly changing group experiences, I explored not only separate moments but also movements between these moments. I considered movements from Structure through Organised Contributions to Partnering as these seemed to convey a conventional group therapy process. I also considered movements through more chaotic group experiences.

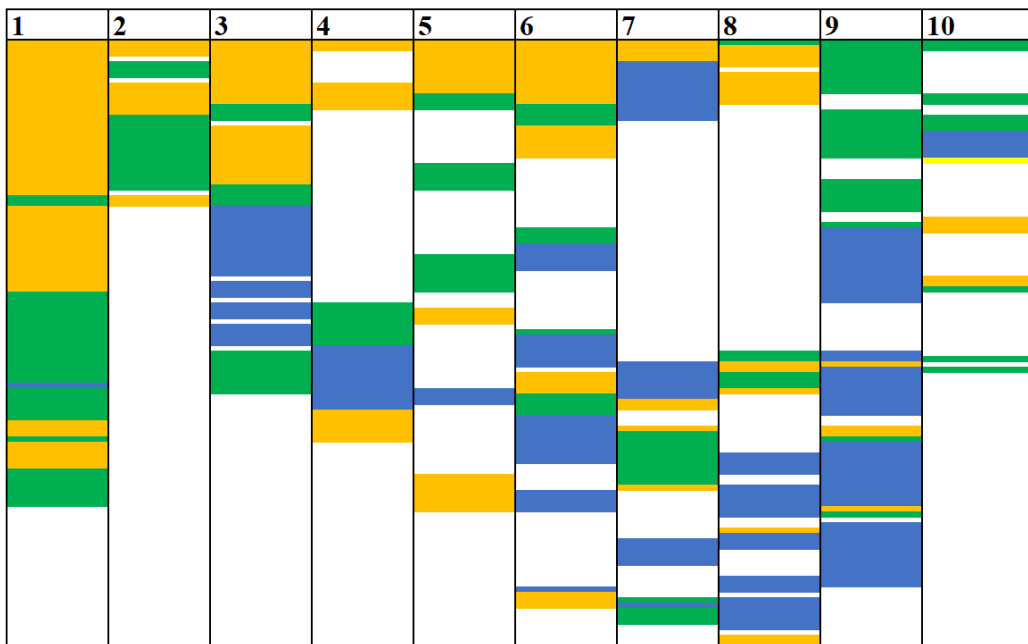## *Group movement 1: Structure, Organised Contributions and Partnering*

Table 2: Group 1 highlights for Structure, Organised Contributions and Partnering

An ordered movement from moments of Structure to Organised Contributions towards Partnering appeared to be common in groups analysed. In Group 1, for example, I began the first session by introducing a simple repeated drum rhythm that everyone could play. Group members later chose instruments and took turns to introduce a beat within a musical structure that framed and supported their ideas, offering space to move towards increasingly spontaneous contributions and moments of Partnering. Although this is not a linear process, I observed similar progressions from Structure to Partnering within one session and over time. This was most prominent in early sessions and key to the formation of a group.

If chaos is an aspect in groups that needs to be managed, avoided or resolved, I could say that *despite* the unpredictability of these short-term groups, groups were able to work through chaotic experiences to reach their optimal potential for therapeutic growth through partnering for short periods of time.

Is it realistic or helpful, however, to focus on working *through* the chaos that permeates the everyday lives of many young people towards more "ordered" participation? Would this not be reflective of behavioural approaches Letourneau and Borduin (2008) suggest have been less successful for work with young

offenders? If considered as an inevitable, and even necessary part of therapy groups, moments of chaos in groups required closer consideration.
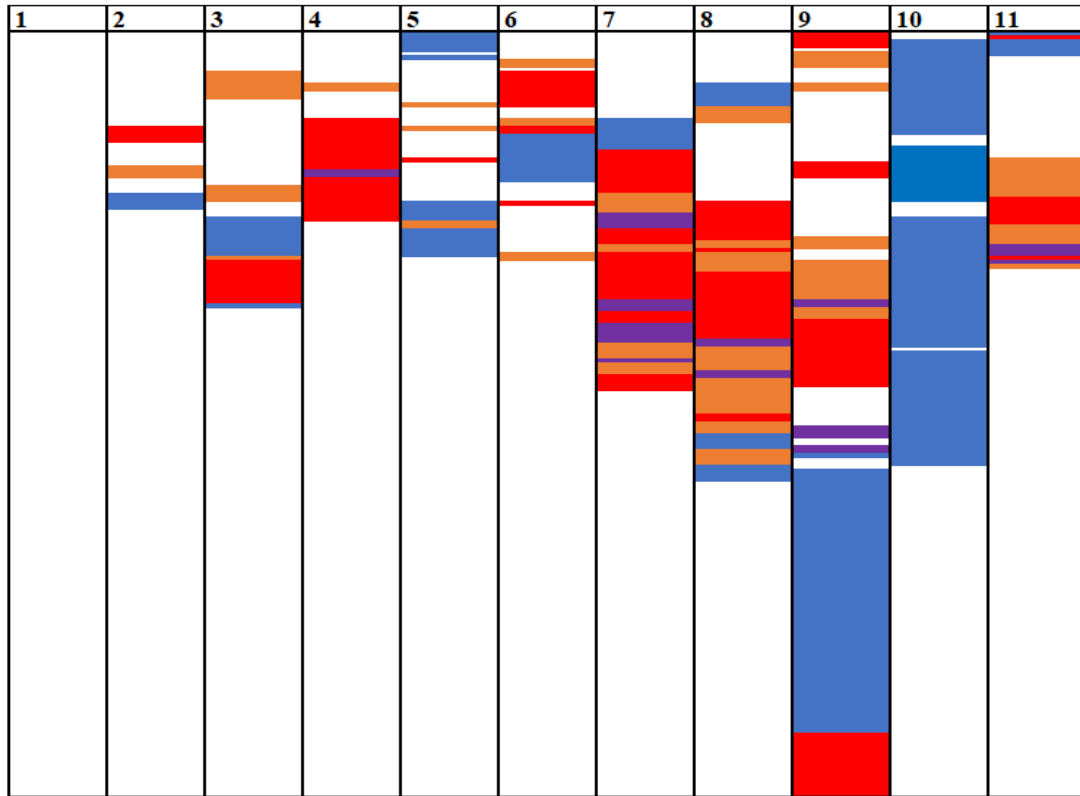
Group movement 2: Chaos and Partnering

Table 3: Group 3 highlights for Organised Chaos; Dissonance; Inspiration and Partnering

In contrast to the ordered movement from Structure to Partnering, mapping movements from Organised Chaos and Dissonance to Inspiration and Partnering presented less predictable patterns. My analysis of the data showed how prolonged moments of chaos were sometimes intermingled with moments of Inspiration or Partnering, possibly highlighting how a group worked through cycles of chaos in a way that led towards individual and group maturation (Yalom, 2005). Chaotic experiences of Dissonance and Organised Chaos, however, sometimes seemed to appear concurrently with Partnering, providing an exhilarating, transformative but simultaneously confusing experience.

Overall, ordered and chaotic movements were woven together throughout all 3 group processes. Comparisons between attributes of contrasting and yet connected group moments and movements affirmed the paradoxical relationship I experienced between order and chaos as key to group growth, in alignment with a paradox theory of groups (Smith & Berg, 1987).

DISCUSSION

The paradox of group formation and transformation

Concerning what might be the flourishing of a group Smith and Berg (1987, p. 145) note:

> Of particular importance is the issue of group growth. Were it not for the development of patterns (traditions, rules, conventions) that give coherence and wholeness, there would be no form to set the stage for the transformation that is the heart of growth. The very shaping that restricts is the shaping that makes change possible…
>
> …A group also needs new ideas, new possibilities to go along with its stabilising forces. If it is unable to coordinate the new, the group will quickly die. While it builds mechanisms to provide stability, the group must also create the possibility for incorporating novelty. That is, it must have a way of destabilising itself, even in the midst of its investment in remaining stable.

Paradox theory of groups draws from complexity sciences, viewing the group as a complex set of individuals that impact the group in significant ways as they negotiate the tension between the polarities of order that forms and chaos that transforms a group (Stevenson, 2013). Formation and transformation are of equal importance, exist simultaneously and persist over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011). A recognition of the interrelatedness of these destructive and constructive group forces can stimulate the creative capacity and resilience of young people (Nitsun, 1996; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Stevenson, 2013).

Based on intensive work with small, long-term adult groups, Smith and Berg (1987) considered multiple paradoxical dilemmas unfolding within and between individuals and the group as a means of understanding group processes. Even within less predictable short-term music therapy groups with young offenders, the current study concurred with some of these constructs, experienced within group moments and the process over time. Through exploring relationships between ordered and chaotic moments and movements within groups, I considered paradoxes regarding choice, community and creativity.

Group paradoxes: Comparing contrasting group moments

Choice: Balancing compliance and resistance

Young people are required to navigate through a vast number of choices regarding future vocations, potential friendships, life partners or forming identities separate to those of their parents, for example (White et al., 2017). In South Africa, these choices are situated within challenging and often contradictory political, social and economic environments. Young people need support to become reflexive

choice-makers, able to take responsibility and consider their potential to contribute and thrive within the future (White et al., 2017).

A compulsory group, such as those at the Teddy Bear Clinic, has to balance the need for young people to "feel in control of their fate" along with working through the required diversion material (Malekoff, 2014, p. 103). Rather than implementing non-negotiable rules or inflexible therapeutic goals, facilitators might best engage group members through developing collaborative relationships (Prescott, 2001; Rolvsjord, 2010). Malekoff (2014, p. 56) stipulates that "…when control is turned over to the group, and when the group worker gives up his/her centrality, then mutual aid can follow and members can then find expression for what they have to offer, something valuable to contribute to the group…that's what real empowerment is all about."
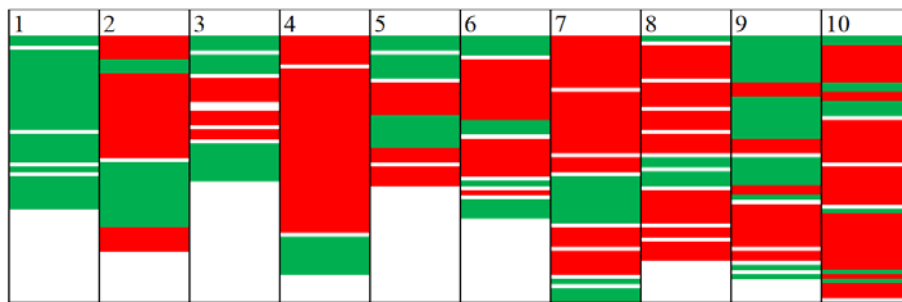

Table 4: Group 1 highlights for Organised Contributions and Dissonance (emphasising group choices)

Contributing to an overall sense of chaos, my highlights indicated that all three group processes vacillated between moments of conventional participation (Organised Contributions), and Dissonance. This unpredictable movement seemed to denote choices made by group members regarding whether to participate and how to use the group space to meet their needs, sometimes through simultaneously diverging from and participating in the group. For example:

> Group 2, Session 2 (line 100): In a group moment I had described as chaotic and messy, "Tapiwa said he'd been able to play out all his sad and difficult feelings and release them."

In my field notes, structured activities offered boundaries that motivated group members to participate without feeling too pressurised. Smith and Berg (1987, p. 105) suggest that "experiencing the constraints of boundaries gives one the chance to work out how one is going to deal with them". Group members were generally familiar with the structure inherent in musical frameworks, that appeared to contain their participation without feeling restrictive.

The gradual movement from Structure (particularly in early sessions) to choices offered through Organised Contributions seemed to enable individual group members to emerge within the group, which was exciting for some and terrifying for others. Group members had to manage the tension between choosing

to contribute to a group that they did not yet know, which involved some amount of trust and vulnerability, versus choosing non-participation, which meant they would never know whether the group would be something they could get meaning out of (Smith & Berg, 1987). In beginning to challenge increasing participation, my data notes how my musical accompaniment accentuated and affirmed tentative contributions, as well as mediating between individuals and the group through changes I made in musical parameters such as dynamics or tempo.

As group members contributed to the group, my field notes often describe an increase in the group's energy. I interpreted this as both a product of the evolving confidence and investment of group members and an enjoyment of achieving something together as participants noticed that their contributions were heard.

Through this process, remaining flexible enough to allow for resistance was important (Smith & Berg, 1987). In concurrence with a strengths-based approach to music therapy, I felt that young people needed opportunities not only to choose *whether* to trust the group, but also *how* they might use the group to facilitate their growth and development (Rolvsjord, 2010). Through my notes, I documented instances where group members commented that what they liked about an improvisation was that: "I can do what I want". This can be a foreign concept for those who expected that they would be judged on "good" behaviour and might compliantly participate according to their perceptions of what is expected. The freedom not to conform enabled some group members to try novel ideas. For example:

> Group 3, Session 9 (line 109): "Jaques and Kamo weren't doing anything, so I pulled them over to the keyboard and gave them simple bass lines they could play…Kamo, in not quite getting it just started doing his own thing – playing a repeated riff on three notes – that actually sounded quite cool – I think Kamo was quite pleased when, instead of correcting him I said…that's really cool, just keep doing that!"

Young people who have experienced trauma may need to use a group they trust to release volatile emotions such as deep hurt or rage. When denied expression, such emotions might erupt, "often in violent ways." (Hardy & Laszloffy, 2005, p. 241). Participation through apparent divergence such as laughing at activities, teasing or playing loud, harsh sounding music may offer opportunities to release challenging emotions (McFerran, 2010). Whilst one group I facilitated were reflecting on particularly difficult life experiences I noted that: "I would have felt they were just being silly and wouldn't take their answers for real – but they seemed to be responding genuinely, as if the laughter was helping them through this."

Through exploring different means of participation (and non-participation), group members could choose how to invest in groups. This was interwoven with another paradox: that of belonging within a community.

Community: Balancing sameness and difference

Belonging to a social group counters isolation and offers young people a reflection of who they are perceived to be, helping them to realise new identities and solidify those with which they are familiar (White et al., 2017). Identity is thus a social process, constructed temporally within relationships and communities, and initiates a paradoxical dilemma of holding difference (and potential isolation) alongside conformity (potentiating a loss of individual identity).

Many young people in the SPARC programme have had negative experiences of relationships with those who have both shown them empathy and abused them. Prescott (2001, p. 49) suggests that "by removing the anxiety around compelled attachment, the students may more easily find their way into relationships in which they experience genuine competence". Opportunities for withdrawal or conflict are as important as experiences of cohesion.
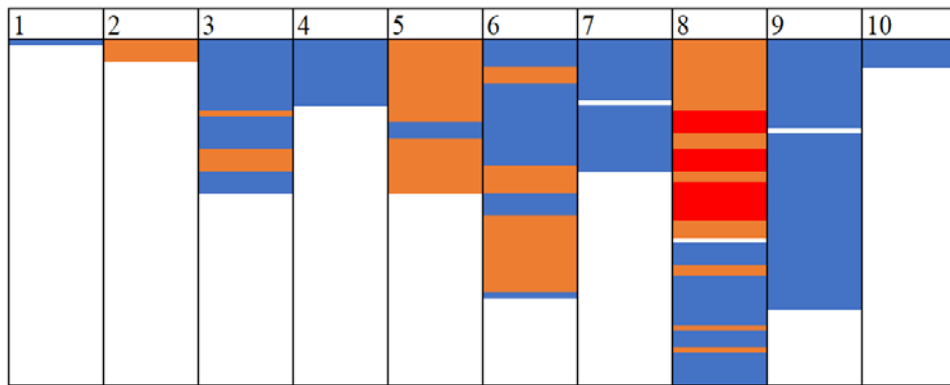

Table 5: Group 1 highlights for Partnering and Organised Chaos, including Dissonance incorporated within group conflicts (emphasising the development of a group community)

My highlights of group processes moved between prolonged stretches of Organised Chaos and Partnering. As I interpreted it, the tension between collaboration and conflict supported the healthy development of group relationships.

Music can be a powerful "social lubricant"…that "promotes socialisation with others…but can also accentuate anti-social feelings" amongst adolescents (Miranda, 2013, p. 7). The boundaries provided by structured music-making appeared to unify the group and strengthened feelings of belonging. I adapted musical structures to include everyone. Sharing preferred musical genres, or musically attuning to one another in moments of Partnering also appeared to affirm and unite groups, expressed through my descriptions of the high, celebratory energy in these moments.

If a group has not received sufficient affirmation, they may struggle to negotiate differences and potential conflicts later in the process. However, Smith and Berg (1987a, p. 642) note that "it is only through negative feedback that knowledge develops, for it tells the system that what it is doing is not working and that it must stop, reflect, contemplate other alternatives, adopt an experimental approach, and discover anew what works." Healthy relationships require resistance, disagreement, conflict or struggle alongside connectedness.

Differing musical preferences and struggles or refusals to attune musically and/or personally precipitated conflict in groups analysed. Dominant group members tended to override contributions of others, countered by a lack of energy and investment amongst those who either withdrew or conformed to the desires of the dominant group members. For example:

> Group 2, Session 7 (line 100): (After the group started to follow a beat introduced by a less dominant group member), the dominant member "…shouted that "ah, we don't play Kwaito in the group." And all faded." (Kwaito is a popular genre of South African dance music)

This example preceded a discussion that motivated change in the group. Less dominant group members began to challenge the hierarchical group dynamics:

> Group 2, Session 10 (line 41): "Kagiso asked (only) everyone on tambourines to play – which included only himself and Dineo – as a joke, but also possibly to move away from the pressure of the older and dominating group members."

Here Kagiso worked together with the group, but also resisted having others dominate over him.

My data suggested that when group members trusted the individual and collective feedback from the group, this could lay a foundation for self-correction and growth. For example:

> Group 3, Session 10 (line 90): "Mpilo laughed and said Adriaan [a withdrawn group member with a disability] had to sing. He'd been teasing Adriaan about singing the whole time…but now Adriaan actually took the mic and said "OK, wait," and looked at the song…the rest of us got a little quieter in our playing…he sang the chorus twice!! Never in my life would I have expected this!" (Group 3, Session 10, Line 90)

If Mpilo had not pressurised Adriaan to participate through his teasing, it is likely that Adriaan would have remained withdrawn. However, Adriaan might not have responded if he had not trusted that the group's feedback would have been positive. On previous occasions Mpilo had affirmed Adriaan's contributions.

This challenge thus felt manageable, and as Adriaan struggled to participate verbally, this was an important achievement for him.

The balancing between conflict and connectedness, positive and negative feedback fostered the growth of healthy group relationships, individual and group identities. These relationships supported group members in exploring alternative ways of being within the group and beyond.

Creativity: Balancing creation and destruction

The most significant goal supportive of long-term change for young offenders would be that group members can envisage futures that hold hope, where they are accountable to alternative ways of creating and recreating their lives (Prentky et al., 2009). Perhaps due to their need to negotiate paradoxes such as the freedom and restrictions of living between adulthood and childhood, many young people can be incredibly creative and resilient (Epstein, 2007; Winnicott et al., 1986). They are the risk-takers, those who resist socialisation and defy authority to create their own ways of belonging and expressing themselves. Young people who are faced with challenges or suffer great adversity are sometimes surprisingly able to overcome this and to become strong, independent, highly functioning individuals.
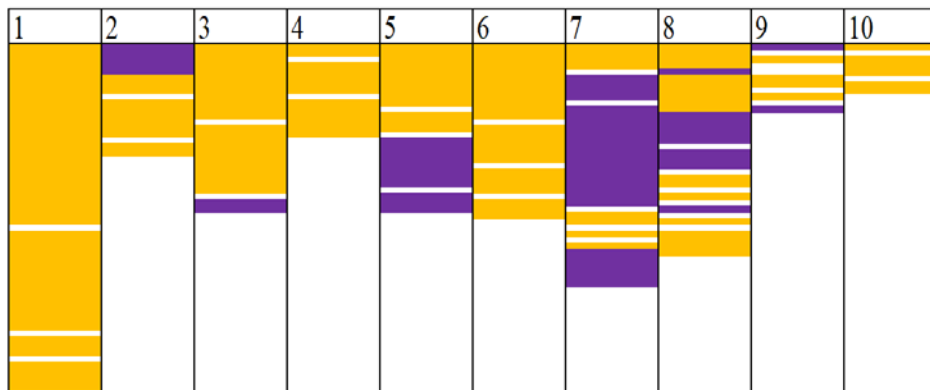

Table 6: Group 1 highlights for Structure and Inspiration

My comparison between moments of Structure and Inspiration mapped a movement from predictable participation in structured activities early in the group process, towards increasing moments of Inspiration where group members appeared to use the chaos in the group to explore novel contributions. In turn, moments of Inspiration sometimes led towards new structures reflective of the creative growth of the group.

Music offers a powerful outlet for young people who have few places to release their creative energy (Epstein, 2007). However, opportunities to access creativity through "playing" music can feel overwhelming for those unaccustomed to making music in a group, or at all. Just as a game with rules can defend against the uncertainty of free play (Parsons, 2000), clear structures developed early in music therapy group processes set a pattern that limited what a

group could achieve but also made the prospect of participation less threatening. In the groups analysed, group rituals, my directive lead and clear structures set a basis through which group members began to interact and explore.

Learning basic musical skills, such as how to play different instruments, can help young people to explore more diverse musical expressions later within the therapy process (Gardstrom, 2004). Similarly, learning to reflect on experiences in therapy can be beneficial, enhancing young people's awareness of the connection between internal changes experienced in therapy and their potential for making changes in their everyday lives. In the data, my role of reflecting *for* group members when they did not or could not reflect themselves appeared to offer ways of thinking about activities and making connections, sometimes motivating group members to reflect themselves.

Too much order, however, can restrict the change required for growth of the group. Group members might be limited within the norms and assumptions of the group or therapist. They may conform or rigidly follow "rules" without investing. Thus, once a group is stable enough, it is important to be flexible enough to move away from this stability (Smith & Berg, 1987).

In the groups analysed, the pervasive lack of energy and uncertainty described in moments of non-participation urged group members to entertain alternatives. The fragmentation of "messing around" seemed to offer a liminal space for group members to tentatively negotiate and test ideas before having to share these with everyone which may have felt overwhelming. For example:

> Group 3, Session 9 (line 79): "Mpilo was just messing around on the guitar, Kgabu's rhythms didn't match anything and kept stopping and changing…Jacques wasn't doing anything…Sifiso and Mpilo then picked up the mic – one of them hummed into it, then the other, just messing about…there was no sense of anyone working together…just checking things out…"(Shortly after this, Mpilo and Sifiso experimented with some lyrics that were later incorporated into a group song).

In some groups, a release through "mayhem" led directly towards the exploration of contrasting or novel possibilities. For example:

> Group 1, Session 8 (line 76): "…but the first time I indicated we could play anything they were off…I've never heard instruments played with such energy, almost aggression…it was awful to be in the room it was so loud…In imitating what I saw someone else offer I then ran up the piano…I think the group took this as the run to move into the known section and suddenly got quiet…this meant we moved into a beautiful quiet moment…"…(after many more loud moments) "…for a long while we played quietly together".

Similarly, Zeal (2011) describes a drama therapy group for young people facing many challenges (including some who had committed offences). She noted

how the creativity and safety of drama therapy offered a space for the release of "chaos and destruction" within these young people's lives. This led to group members showing less anxiety and destructiveness and trying new ways of being beyond the group.

Winnicott (in Winnicott et al., 1986, p. 41) highlights that creativity requires the ability to integrate creation ("seeing everything afresh") and destruction (destroying what is no longer helpful). In their study on the creativity of workers, Miron-Spektor et al. (2011, p. 231) suggest that "paradoxical frames increased participants ability to tolerate different perspectives, to recognise contradictions and distinctions but also integrate different perspectives." A paradoxical frame may thus support young people to find ways to thrive in complex contexts.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Paradox theory for music therapy groups

Young offenders live a paradox. They are constantly negotiating contradictory identities of being victims and perpetrators, feeling powerful and vulnerable, attempting to form healthy relationships within often dysfunctional communities, or exploring their potential in the wake of feelings of remorse, for example. If music therapy is to have relevance beyond the life of a group, our approach needs to take these paradoxes into consideration. If not, we may impose an apparently ideal order motivating for solutions completely at odds with the natural flow of struggle and potential, disappointment and achievement of everyday life (Nitsun, 1996). Smith and Berg (1987a, p. 648) suggest that "the very treatment of many group dynamics, in non-paradoxical ways, serves to reinforce the conflicts they are designed to 'resolve', increasing 'stuckness' rather than releasing it".

Based on this research, group music therapy has the potential to offer young people a space that motivates growth through a paradoxical frame. In active music-making, flexible musical frameworks provide sufficient structure to contain, and space to explore diverse, novel, tentative and even harsh or dissonant contributions through changes in musical parameters such as meter, tempo or dynamics. Experiences of collaborative music-making or sharing music preferences in groups forge powerful connections amongst group members, whilst conflicts regarding what beats to play, how music should sound or what genres of music are "in" or "out" urge group members to find ways to balance the affirmation of unity alongside the challenge of diversity within a group. Group improvisations invite young people to broaden their expressive possibilities along with the negotiations required to fit their novel ideas with the group.

Is a paradoxical frame then merely one way of articulating what we as music therapists are doing anyway? Or, does this implicate a new way of practicing, or expanding our conception of what is normal, acceptable, helpful or required within a group therapy process?

A paradoxical frame

In music therapy groups, a paradoxical frame requires balancing the tension between order that forms and chaos that transforms. The repercussions of the disintegration of a chaotic group may be clearly apparent, whereas the stagnation of a group masquerading as a model group through compliance and cohesion may be less obvious and as such potentially more dangerous (Nitsun, 1996).

In balancing along the continuum of chaos and order, we are challenged to "attend to the dimension where one feels less at home." (Parsons, 2002, p). Perhaps it is due to the awkward relationship we have with chaos, or because adolescents seem to bring so much chaos into sessions themselves, that a large proportion of music therapy literature documenting work with young people stresses the formation of groups through increasing order. This may accurately portray music therapy practice within this context. Alternatively, music therapists who are more accommodating of the chaotic nature of groups in practice may feel pressured to describe more ordered or accessible work advocating for music therapy based on what we presume colleagues and allied professionals consider as valuable.

For me, chaos in groups can be particularly difficult to negotiate, particularly when experienced as potentially threatening. Moments of "mayhem" or Organised Chaos challenge my capacity to balance the need for group members to release tension with the possibility that they may struggle to regulate their behaviour after such intense expressions. Although it is rare that group members physically harm one another, on occasion I have considered the need to end a session early, ask a group member to leave, or have a social worker assist to calm the group. This heightens my feelings of incompetence as a therapist. Malekoff (2014) reflects that therapists may draw away from working with young people, perhaps due to an anxiety about losing control, as much as this might be necessary for young people to grow.

Therapy goals embracing order and chaos

A preference for order over chaos in the literature is highlighted through goals stressing cohesion and engagement, an increase in tolerance or impulse control, or improving and regulating mood and affect (see McFerran, 2010). These goals are applicable in some contexts, but are not always relevant, and can be problematic in music therapy with young offenders. For young people contending with challenging contexts, acts of destructiveness may represent a fight to keep hope alive, whilst an attachment to cohesiveness may signify the resignation of a person whose sense of self and ideals have been denied (Winnicott et al., 1986). In this respect, Rolvsjord (2010, p. 40) suggests: "We might say that a person who is becoming more sceptical towards traditional authority, more willing to oppose injustice, and more involved in citizen participation is psychologically empowered." The capacity to resist, oppose or critique, which might involve

embracing more chaotic aspects of participation in society, is important for young people dealing with the paradoxes of their lives beyond the therapy group.

In balancing chaos and order, I suggest that a paradoxical stance does not negate but reframes commonly accepted goals for music therapy work with young offenders.

When I work towards goals such as "enhancing self-esteem" or "confidence", I find I tend to focus predominantly on affirming the potential of young people. A strengths-based therapy goal such as resilience, "aimed towards fostering internal and enduring capacities in the young person that are not dependent on an ongoing therapeutic relationship" (McFerran, 2010, p. 44) might motivate young people to internalise relevant affirmation *and* critique. This would equip them to take responsibility for finding ways to cope in challenging contexts beyond the support of the group, even when they do not feel confident. A goal of offering a space for "emotional release" hands responsibility to group members to release emotions as they need, contained within a group that allows for resistance and destructiveness. I prefer this wording over that of offering space for "emotional expression", which might intimate "appropriate" means of expressing emotions based on group norms or the therapist's perspective. I would reframe a goal defined as the development of "healthy relationships", often aligned with constructs of cohesion and connectedness. Enhancing the "vitality" of relationships may involve encouraging young people to participate actively in the complexity of human relationships that necessitate embracing the conflicts and challenges presented by diversity alongside connectedness that celebrates inclusivity. A focus on empowerment strengthens young people to integrate destructive and challenging aspects of themselves and contexts whilst conceiving futures that hold hope (Winnicott et al., 1986).

The choice of alternative wording for these goals may appear superfluous. The descriptions may replicate how some therapists work with groups of young people already. But this rewording initiates a pertinent movement to conscientise therapists in reflexively reconsidering our assumptions regarding the potentially implicit implications of the goals we stipulate for working with young offenders.

In considering chaos as a resource in our practice, this research challenges music therapists to expand our boundaries. As much as many music therapy practices invite creativity and spontaneity, remaining fixed within familiar paradigms stifles the flexibility required for group growth (Parsons, 2000). If music therapy *literature* documenting work with young offenders remains fixed within certain paradigms, this will not support and may hinder music therapists who experience their work differently. Parsons (2000, p. 151) states: "To be open to the shock of creative discovery means putting ourselves at risk and being ready to give up, with no certainty about the future, ways of seeing which up until now have served us well." This involves *both* therapist and group in a process of discovering new possibilities that could not be predicted by either.

The paradox of this research

The paradox of this research involves balancing my own need to make sense of (or find order in) the chaotic nature of many therapy groups I run to extend my expertise in this area, without limiting my frame of understanding this chaos to my assumptions of what music therapy is or should be. This research offers one frame, grounded within data, within which to view the resources of chaos within music therapy. I hope this will instigate an ongoing dialogue, continually open to challenge and expansion.

Further research

This study is informed by pre-existing data from groups where I as the therapist did not view chaos from a paradoxical frame. An exploration of chaos when intentionally considered as a resource within therapy groups would strengthen research into the value and potential of paradox theory for music therapy groups with young offenders and young people more generally.

In addition, this research presents my personal frame of reference regarding chaos in music therapy work. Research into the perspectives of a greater number of therapists and group members themselves may both challenge and deepen these findings.

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