

## Music, Identity and Peacebuilding

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### **ABSTRACT**

A sense of belonging within social groups is determined in part by observed commonalities, but this can be self-assigned, assigned by others, unintentionally developed over generations or imposed by social hierarchies. Conflicts sometimes arise around the borders of these categories. Peacebuilding efforts sometimes find success through softening these borders to the point where conflicting social groups recognise their commonalities while respecting their differences. These social constructs are complicated by the understanding that everyone possesses simultaneous identities that can be foregrounded or backgrounded depending on life experiences, social and cultural influences and time. Due to these influences, new identities emerge throughout time and old ones may fade. In short, the concept of identity is a social construct that helps individuals and groups make sense of their world and where they feel they belong. Likewise, music is a social and cultural activity; many scholars, especially in the social sciences, claim that a sense of identity from the producer and the receiver of the music is required in order to interpret the phenomena. The experience of the phenomena, especially repeated experiences, can form, shape or alter these senses of identities. As such, it follows that music and peacebuilding can connect in and through the concept of identity.

### **KEYWORDS**

Music in peacebuilding; identity; social groups; belonging; subjectivities

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## INTRODUCTION

Humans tend to identify common characteristics of social groups in order to make sense of the social world. A sense of belonging is determined in part by observed commonalities, but this can be self-assigned, assigned by others, unintentionally developed over generations or imposed by social hierarchies. Conflicts sometimes arise around the borders of these social groups, where two or more identity groups disagree over what and who belongs to which group. Peacebuilding efforts sometimes find some success through softening these borders and/or integrating the groups to the point where they generally recognise their commonalities while respecting their differences. These social constructs are further complicated by the understanding that everyone possesses many simultaneous identities that can be foregrounded or backgrounded depending on life experiences, social and cultural influences and time. Due to these same influences, new identities emerge throughout time and old ones may fade. In short, the concept of identity is a social construct that helps individuals and groups make sense of their world and where they feel they belong. Likewise, music is a social and cultural activity; many scholars, especially in the social sciences, claim that a sense of identity from the producer and the receiver of the music is required in order to interpret the phenomena. The experience of the phenomena, especially through repeated musical experiences, can form, shape or alter these senses of identities. As such, it follows that music and peacebuilding can connect in and through the concept of identity.

Social groups in conflict often have difficulty coming to an internal consensus about their own identities, and it is common for many identities to be professed simultaneously in such situations. For example, Amal Ibrahim Madibbo pointed out that notions of ‘Africanism’ and ‘Arabism’ are often posited simultaneously and fluidly in the Sudan and that multiple simultaneous identities are further expanded through the influence of globalisation, migration and social ties between ethnic groups (Madibbo, 2012, p. 302). Increasingly, some scholars prefer the notion of ‘subjectivities’ to explain how an individual’s or group’s sense of self changes dependent on the context. For example, Kea’s study of British Nigerian young women who attended boarding schools in Nigeria and returned to the UK for university found that these women positioned themselves with different subjectivities (Londoner, Nigerian, dual-national or post-national) depending on the situation they found themselves in (Kea, 2019, p. 170). Zienkowski’s study of political activism, meanwhile, demonstrated how political preferences structure activists’ understanding of themselves and how they creatively and reflexively manage their multiple subjectivities (Zienkowski, 2017). While this is a useful sociological device for understanding these complexities, the use of the word identity is ever-present in everyday life, much more so than subjectivities. As such, in order to better understand how sense of self and belonging is enacted and how it might affect activities such as music and peacebuilding, identity remains a useful and natural heuristic.

There is a growing number of researchers who frame social musical processes as a resource for developing new shared identities (DeNora, 2000, 2003; Bergh, 2010; Jordanger, 2008; Pavlicević and Ansdell, 2004). While DeNora’s initial research (2000, 2003) mainly focused on how the consumption of music affects a sense of identity, many researchers within the music and health subfield have since focused on the act of musicking itself, including DeNora herself (2010, 2011). Bergh has suggested that a sense of shared identity is considered by those in the peacebuilding field as key to positively transforming conflict and that active musicking should be

able to work in this manner through its purported influence on identity (Bergh 2006). Unfortunately, the research Bergh conducted did not result in any evidence that supports this. This does not disprove the possibility, however, since it could be argued that Bergh's fieldwork sites did not utilise music in a manner that demonstrated an understanding of the processes involved and they were, therefore, less likely to succeed. The lack of strong evidence is similarly true for many other music and social transformation projects that have been examined so far (e.g. see Baker, 2014). One exception is that of the inter-religious choir, Pontanima, from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, as will be discussed later.

There has been much written about how conflict and peacebuilding and identity interact as well as how music and identity reciprocally influence each other, yet there is little available about how music and conflict and peacebuilding relate through identities. 'Music in peacebuilding' itself is a new field of study emerging from applied ethnomusicology, music therapy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, peace studies and music education as well as peace activism and community music, and within this field are a few mentions of the role of identity. Sandoval, for example, refers to J. Scott Goble's anthropological observation that many cultures and societies' musical practices inform their collective sense of identity (2016, p. 240). She later points out that identification of such resources risks reifying this sense of identity and could perpetuate indirect violence (ibid., p. 241). Urbain has connected musical practice to the peace theories of Galtung and Ikeda (Urbain, 2016) and how both authors viewed cultural identity as a key concept in that process while Michael Golden, amongst others, has begun to see how music is part of an ecological system that not only connects people and their personal and collective identities with each other, but also their environment and, ultimately, all other living things (Golden, 2016). As can be seen below, however, other scholars view culture as a major influence on what identity or identities become central to an individual's life experience rather than a distinct identity in and of itself (Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood, 2009).

### **MULTIPLE IDENTITIES**

As can be imagined, there are limitless potential identities with an equally limitless combination of shared characteristics, all somewhat overlapping, relating to and/or in opposition to others. As such, it is not possible or useful to investigate all these identities in this context, but rather to demonstrate that identity construction, influence and usage is a part of music in peacebuilding. To do this, I next discuss some systems that scholars have devised for understanding the relationships between these identities and how they are utilised.

Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood (2009) suggest that there are hierarchies of identity. More specifically, they suggest that we hold a central identity that pervades all aspects of our lives while simultaneously holding numerous other identities that come in and out of focus depending on the context. The central identity is dominant in all contexts, and although it is possible to change what the central identity is depending on specific events and experiences, it is much less likely to change than non-central identities. Potential central identities include sexual, professional, ideological, national, ethnic, diasporic and religious. Two other factors influence this central identity, regardless of the focus, and have the capacity to alter and shape its characteristics: time and culture. Simply put, experiences occur over time, and if enough experiences shared by enough people challenge aspects of their collectively held central identity, then these aspects can change. Similarly, the central identity itself might change, although this type of change tends to occur over

many generations. One example of this is the shift in Europe from a centrally held religious identity to that of a national identity between the Enlightenment period and the modern era (Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood, 2009). This is a disputed terminology, however, as will be discussed later, since many sources, in both scholarly and popular press, use ethnic and cultural identity interchangeably. Here, Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood are using ‘ethnic’ to refer to physical, cultural and behavioural characteristics while they reserve the word ‘cultural’ for how cultural contexts influence other identities. Both ethnic and cultural identities are discussed in terms of how they inform central identities, such as ‘national’ identity. The authors also use ‘culture’ here to mean a commonly shared exposure to cultural influences and assumptions about the world, which affords likelihoods of affiliation to certain forms of identity. In other words, shared cultural experiences increase the likelihood of maintaining or challenging the current central identity or its characteristics. Some scholars (e.g. Spitka, 2016; Pattison-Meek, 2016; Elmi, 2010) have avoided specifying a particular type of identity that they are investigating, but rather they examined the process of how identities shift and change depending on the context and also depending on who is observing. In conflict situations, third-party intervenors often have a disproportionate amount of power compared to those embroiled with conflict which can alter the perceptions of the types of identities brought to the fore by those involved (Spitka, 2016). Others, such as Pattison-Meek, suggest that education plays a crucial part in developing conflict strategies amongst recent immigrants through working through identity expressions in dialogue (2016). Still others make a point of including the multiple layers and simultaneous expressions of different identities, such as Elmi’s study of clan, national and religious identities in Somalia (2010).

Intersectionality theory was spearheaded by Kimberlé Crenshaw as “a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics” (1989). Since then, intersectionality theory has helped to explain how multiple identities combine to form modes of discrimination and privilege, as examined in a huge variety of contexts, including political representation (e.g. Sevres, Celis and Erzeel, 2016), ethnicity (e.g. Erikson, 2017), national identity (e.g. Erikson, 2017), gender (e.g. Carrim and Nkomo, 2016; Rogers, Scott and Way, 2015; Mirza, 2013; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010), race (e.g. Carrim and Nkomo, 2016; Rogers, Scott and Way, 2015; Ball et al, 2013; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010; Murakami et al, 2018; Pastrana, 2004), professional identity (e.g. Carrim and Nkomo, 2016; Murakami et al, 2018), age (e.g. Ecklund, 2012), religion (e.g. Mirza, 2013), class (e.g. Ball et al, 2013) and sexuality (e.g. Pastrana, 2004). In other words, intersectionality theory is a way of understanding how multiple identities interact through contexts, cultural influences and time and how these interactions manifest in forms of privilege and discrimination. The American Psychological Association (APA) has viewed this theory in ecological terms, where multiple identities form concentric circles around an individual where the central identity is personal, followed by community, family and school (Clauss-Ehlers et al, 2019). Interestingly, this model of identity does not include the temporal element, even though the ecological model it was based on did (see Bronfenbrenner, 1977). There are many similarities in this approach to the hierarchy approach favoured by Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood (2009) discussed above, but instead of hierarchies, the APA uses an approach of radiating concentric circles. However, both models focus on multiple identities that can shift focus as influenced by experience, culture and time. Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood’s work comes from a political science perspective, which is perhaps more in line with the social science

perspectives of identities and music found elsewhere in this article than Clauss-Ehlers et al, but it is useful to consider how both attempt to model how multiple identities are constructed and navigated.

Within these systems, certain types of identities are more commonly associated with both conflict and peacebuilding, which I will now briefly discuss.

Regional identities, or identities associated with a specific geographic zone but not necessarily limited to political boundaries, are sometimes difficult to understand from an outside perspective, especially since they can change from certain forms of identity into others over time or through shared traumatic experiences. For example, the UK is one nation but also a combination of four nations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). An outsider could view these four nations as regions of the UK but those living in these 'regions' would almost certainly disagree with that notion. Within these smaller nations are further regional identities, currently largely denoted by county names like Yorkshire or Cornwall. Yet throughout history, these regions were part of other ethnic and regional identities such as Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian or Norman. This is explored by Capper and Scully in a study of how Anglo-Saxon archaeological objects simultaneously demonstrated ancient Anglo-Saxon regional identity in Staffordshire as well as influenced current regional identity (2015). They point out that tourism is often dependent on a perceived regional identity rooted in the past, which was the case here (*ibid.*, p. 183). Other scholars have pointed out that regional identities, rooted as they are in past experiences, often grow organically over time and pay little heed to politically constructed borders (Ashley and Alm, 2015). Prokkola, Zimmerbauer and Jakola (2015), on the other hand, focused on how individuals and groups 'perform' their identities, including regional identities, through social interactions. This can be said for all forms of identity; primary, current or focused identities come to the foreground through usage, or performance of these identities to others.

Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood (2009) believe that national identity is the primary central identity in modern societies, although this is hotly disputed by other work, including that of intersectionality theory. They point out that national identities have competing characteristics that threaten their stability since no nation has a completely homogeneous population with the same experiences. What holds the national identity together is a shared belief that there are enough strongly felt characteristics of all citizens under the banner of a state that bonds those people together and that the national labels and symbols represent them. Furthermore, Bieber (2015) pointed out that the choices available on national censuses limits the possible ethnic identities (see below) that can feed into a national identity, thus potentially alienating alternative identities. In this way, states seek to control the definitions of what makes up the national identity, with the objective to improve national cooperation and compliance to national laws.<sup>1</sup> Even when the census does allow for alternative identities, there are other factors that might make a group in a nation feel alienated from the national identity. For example, Thomas and Sanderson conducted a study of Muslim youth in northern England to determine how they identify themselves in relation to the state (2011). It was found that they suffered from prejudice and were perceived by outsiders as not identifying as British. In fact, they overwhelmingly *did* identify as British and were proud of that.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Greece removed 'Macedonian' as an option from the national census in 1951, thus limiting what was considered to be 'Greek' in the eyes of the state. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-47258809> [Accessed 27 July 2020].

Tensions here emerged from what they considered to be their *central* identity, which was their Muslim faith over their sense of national identity. It is also possible that no dominant national identity can be agreed upon if the competing identities are too similar in strength of feeling and/or popularity. This can be seen in Nigeria over the past decade, where ethnic and religious identities combined with still-existing colonial-era policies that hinder national identity development have led to a lack of cohesive national identity (Agbiboa, 2013).

Ethnic identity can be tricky to determine since the term ethnic often does not strictly refer to ethnicity, but rather a combination of cultural, religious and social norms that are affiliated with one or more forms of ethnicity. There is a disparity between the use of the term ‘ethnicity’ to denote a genetic group and a social construct that problematises this form of identity. Ramstedt’s article on the displacement and anomie of groups in Bali conflates religious identity and ethnic identity into a combined ‘religio-ethnic identity’, for example (2012). Others, such as Jiménez (2010), have been more explicit in linking ancestral ethnic identity with cultural identity in a more fluid manner. He uses the term ‘affiliative ethnic identity’ to describe where an individual feels an affiliation with a combination of ethnic and cultural identities. The usage of the term ‘cultural identity’ further complicates matters since it is often used interchangeably with ‘ethnic identity’, which will be discussed further below. Going even further is a qualitative historical study conducted by Jan Bender Shetler in Tanzania and Kenya (2010). In this region, there is a dominant conflict between two perceived ethnic identities: the Luo and the Suba. The study concludes that the conflict is not based on ancient ethnic identities as previously assumed, but rather dozens of micro-identities that had much more recently merged into the current two opposing ethnic identities for the purposes of land disputes. Even ancient ethnic identities can be constructed, it seems.

Related to but distinct from ethnic identity is diasporic identity. Broadly speaking, diasporic identity refers to the perceived connection a cultural and/or ethnic group might feel to each other regardless of their geographical location. Groups in this category largely include those who have migrated, either by choice or force, yet still feel a deep connection to their land, people and culture of origin as well as to other migrated groups from the same place around the world (see for example, Lin, 2017).

Religious identity, like the above, refers to how an individual or group feels a sense of belonging to a religious belief, organisation and/or affiliation. In recent years, there has been a lot of scholarship that deals with how certain forms of religious identity are being mobilised for extreme behaviour, such as terrorism (Prucha, 2016; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti and Eiran, 2016). The connections to this form of identity are often felt extremely deeply by those involved, yet the spread of this connection is increasingly difficult to pin-point or accurately categorise, given the global use of social media and ‘lone-wolf’ approaches of individuals who identify with a religion yet are not directly influenced or controlled by any religious authority. Other groups who do clearly identify with an established religion can be influenced by the rhetoric used by official religious spokespeople and this can incite radical behaviour of a group. One example of this is how the Israeli state, supported by Jewish leaders, indirectly encouraged Jewish settlers to occupy land in the Palestinian territories (see Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti and Eiran, 2016).

Sexual and gender identity scholarship has grown significantly over the past couple of decades, but it is still largely absent from peacebuilding discourses. The terms sexual and gender are used inconsistently in scholarly material, which complicates

matters. Scholars in the past have used the terms interchangeably (e.g. Money and Ehrhardt 1972), but it is generally currently accepted that these are different terms. Sexual identity has been used to refer to how one views themselves as ‘male’ or ‘female’ while gender identity has been used to recognise a perceived gender (e.g. Diamond, 2002). Other scholars claim that sexual identity refers to one’s sexual orientation and that gender identity refers to how one has a sense of themselves as male or female (e.g. Tasker and Wren, 2002). In any case, this scholarship is absent from most peacebuilding discourses. One notable exception to this absence in the literature is an article by Daigle and Myrntinen (2018) who have pointed out that those who identify as non-binary or non-heterosexual often suffer more violence and abuse than others in conflict situations through violence that transcends the conflict itself. They make a call for evidence-based improvement to peacebuilding policies to help protect these vulnerable people.

Summing up the aspects of identity discussed above, one’s cultural affinity greatly influences an individual’s and group’s connection to notions of national, ethnic, religious, sexual/gender and diasporic identities. Other influences on identity are collective belief systems. Collective belief systems share common memories, emotional responses and senses of identity, and are therefore influenced by these three aspects. Collective belief can lead to collective behaviour or action (for more on this concept, see Spruyt, 2020). Furthermore, time and individual experiences likewise influence these connections as well as which one or more of these multiple identities is focused upon or becomes central to one’s life. This system of focus can be viewed in terms of a hierarchy or an ecology, or perhaps both. As will be explored next, it is also clear that music has the potential to play a role in representing, forming, maintaining and/or challenging all these forms of identity.

### **MUSIC AND IDENTITIES**

There are similarities between the approaches to understanding the identities mentioned above and the ways musical meaning is interpreted in as much as they are both heavily culturally influenced and change over time. In both cases, memory serves as the mechanism that enables us to understand these types of changes. There appears to be an interplay in both cases between the individual and group experiences in that both identities and musics are performative. This performativity in turn can focus on one identity at a time through a further interplay between past and present. It is worth noting that the literature on identity is diverse while the literature on music and identity tends to address identity as an overall conception and expression of who one is.

Musical identity itself is an area of research that has dramatically expanded in recent years and this is explored in depth in the edited volume, *The Handbook of Musical Identities* (MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell, 2017). It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into all the different interpretations of musical identity discussed in this volume, but overall, they have divided these interpretations into theoretical perspectives: sociological; developmental psychological; individual; institutional; educational; and health and wellbeing. As can be seen, there are numerous ways to examine how individuals and groups come to see themselves through music, and this process of identity formation occurs in the performing of the self through sound in a cultural context over time, which is in line with the approaches discussed above. The addition of music and sound to this process demonstrates how musical experience can simultaneously represent these different forms of identity as well as shape them. In other words, individuals and groups can perform their identities through music and music can be performed to influence identity. This interplay of

music, experience and identity is explored in more depth in the chapter “From Musical Experience to Musical Identity” by Spychiger (2017).

There are many other contributing factors and attributes when considering both music and identity. Musicking affects belief, for example, through interaction with memory, emotions and identity which in turn affects behaviour at the personal and social levels (Small, 1998). Music has long been seen both to represent the identity of the person(s) who create(s) the music and increasingly those who consume it. More recently there have been discussions about how musicking itself helps to define and strengthen a sense of shared identity for those creating the music over time with numerous repetitions until it has been normalised into a social group’s collective belief system (see e.g. Sirek, 2018). Therefore, music indirectly affects behaviour through this reflexive matrix of meaning-making and identity-formation (see Robertson, 2010, 2012, 2014). This approach also demonstrates how identities shift in and out of focus depending on the contextual interplay of belief, emotion and memory.

In addition to exposure and participation in cultural experiences, Negus and Velázquez highlight that music can be and usually is used in identity work through the act of the consumption of music (2002). While they suggest that music may indeed help to solidify or consolidate one’s sense of identity, the consumption of music is often believed to be affiliated with what these identities are *believed* to be. They claim there is no ‘authentic’ identity; it is constantly being reconstructed reflexively between the individual, the social groups that the individual belongs to, the memories individuals have, or believe they have, as expressed, transmitted and influenced by mediatory devices<sup>2</sup> such as music. The relationship between music and identity, therefore, involves memory, meaning and action, and beliefs and conceptions.

Sociology and psychology scholarship converge on this matter and conclude that the various permutations of emotions, memories and identities influence how one perceives the world, one’s beliefs about the world and ultimately how one behaves in the world. There are some writings linking music, religious belief and identity together such as Stanley Waterman’s study of the Kfar Blum musical festival in Israel that serves to affirm the shared cultural influence on religious identity as a central identity in part formed through musical experience (1998). Tying these together is the idea that temporally situated emotions regarding identities affect one’s beliefs about the world and the collective beliefs of a social group.

Music has been much discussed in partnership with emotions, memory and identity separately but rarely altogether. In addition, in most cases the music investigated was objectified to a large extent, where a specific recording or piece of music, or a style of music, was considered when determining the relationships between it and the person or people being studied. DeNora has discussed at length, however, the abstracting nature of music that affords modes of attention which could be any combination of emotional, memory or identity states (2000) and Pavlicević and Ansdell have considered how this mental workspace could be useful in a therapeutic setting (2004).

Musicologist John Shepherd, meanwhile, has made a solid case for the connection between music and social identity. Shepherd has long been known for his attempts

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<sup>2</sup> Hennion understands an art-work, including music, as a form of mediation that includes all of the associated gestures, bodies, habits, materials, spaces, languages and institutions (2002, p. 82).



to bridge musicology, sociology and cultural studies, and his work remains salient today. In *Music as Social Text* (1991), he refers to social identities as identities formed collectively with others through social interactions. One could argue that this encompasses almost all forms and foci of identities, except for, perhaps, the self at the centre of the ecological concentric circles model. Even this central ecological identity can be seen in the context of social influences, however, and can therefore also be an individual expression of a social identity.

According to Shepherd, change in societies happens gradually and infrequently and this is reflected in music (Shepherd, 1991, p. 22). Shepherd suggests that pre-literate societies sense power and immediacy in sound and words that literate industrial societies find difficult to grasp; words and sounds are things, not representations of things (ibid, p. 28). Music absolutists in Western literate cultures, on the other hand, are visually dominant and can abstract music into form and content. Musical absolutism emerged in the late nineteenth century starting in Germany as a belief that music is a "metaphysical entity, without genealogy or narrative" (Chua, 1999, p. 3). In other words, music absolutists view music as separate and isolated from the society that creates the music itself. This process of abstraction within views of music enables one to see how the societies that create this music are visually based and literate (Shepherd, p. 29). Shepherd is so convinced of the intrinsic link between music and social identity that he doubts there is a division between music and society at all (ibid, p. 68).

While identities can be expressed and performed through musical phenomena, who controls access to the available musical material and performance opportunities greatly influences the possible expressions of these identities. Shepherd noted that capitalism, as a societal organising force, has a powerful ability to control the musical and cultural material available for people to choose from as expressions of their identities. The performative element of these musical identities largely occurs through the consumption of musical material rather than the creation of it. As such, identities and relationships between identities is largely mediated through current capitalist power structures (Shepherd, 1991, pp. 150-151). This ties in with the claims of Negus and Velázquez that identities are not just reflected by music but that those identities are fabricated through music consumption (Negus and Velázquez, 2002, p. 5).

As can be seen from the above, a common omission when discussing music and identity is just what type of identity, or identities, do the authors mean. To summarise thus far, identities are innumerable, simultaneous and overlapping yet they can be drawn into focus through how individuals and groups perform their identities. This in turn is influenced by cultural and social experiences, not to mention the theoretical perspectives of the scholars who study this phenomenon. These experiences over time form another influence when perceived as memory. Music is a cultural and social activity and phenomenon that embodies this complex and often contradictory relationship between these various identities at both individual and group levels. Every form of identity can be discussed in terms of how music is involved in identity expression, formation, challenge and maintenance. While it is possible to have any form of identity as a primary focus at any place in time, violent intractable conflicts often project their disputes through the lens of nationalism, culture and ethnicity. As such, I will focus on these more common forms next.

## MUSIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES

There are several sources that illustrate how music has played a role in establishing a sense of national identity. Smith points out that national identity has roots in ethnic identity concepts and is influenced by shared cultural experiences (1993), whereas Adams has discussed how the punk music scene in England has influenced and continues to inform the English sense of national identity (2008), especially when combined with other identities such as that of being working class. This was in part a reaction against the perceived middle-class popular music forms such as progressive ('prog') rock. The Adams example illustrates how a sense of national identity can be fostered from the bottom-up, as opposed to top-down; punk was a grassroots movement based largely around music, but also a common attitude and frustration with the status quo, not to mention art and fashion. Punk, therefore, became a cultural influence that challenged the dominant notion of English national identity with an alternative form of national identity and, arguably, formed an international punk diaspora identity symbolised through the music and other associated forms of expression (Moore, 2001). In any case, this alternative form of national identity expressed through music, art and fashion could not have emerged without experiences in the past of other identities that were not felt to represent a certain group effectively, nor did they feel they could participate in the shaping of that identity, and therefore developed their own.

Bujić discusses how questions of Bosnian national identity arise with memories of certain events, as in how a group collectively remembers a past event helps to determine their present sense of identity. This process forms a continuum of identity-formation, Bujić argues, that can be examined through the changes in dominant musical forms found historically within the Bosnian region and the tensions that continue to exist between the different musical traditions (Bujić, 2006, p. 73). For much of the region's history, Bosnia has not had an independent state, nor has it had a singular ethnic identity or cultural sphere of influence on which to draw. Instead there are specific instances throughout the area's history where there is a collective memory of a national identity. Cobbled together, these national, religious and ethnic identities from the past have come to form their current sense of national identity. Again, this is a bottom-up approach, as evidenced by the opposing official national attempt to separate identities based on religion. Alcock sums this concept up nicely: "Tradition is not replaced by modernity but subsumed within and articulated in relation to it" (Alcock, 2000, p. 19). This demonstrates the temporal nature of these identities and how they change over time.

Ethnomusicologists, meanwhile, deal with a variety of identity concepts that frequently shift focus depending on the context. Eisenberg, for example, discusses East African music and identity in terms of national, ethnic, religious and cultural identities (2017). Montero-Diaz, conversely, examined fusion music in Lima, Peru through national and class identity perspectives (2016). Krakauer also discusses how identities are not only self-identified but assigned as labels by those not within the same social groups, as is the case in his study of folk traditions in West Bengal (2015).

## MUSIC AND ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

Music is often strongly connected to perceptions and expressions of ethnic identity and cultural identity, yet there is no consensus on how to define these forms of identity. Indeed, ethnic identity and cultural identity are often used interchangeably. This has been commented on by other scholars of ethnicity, race and culture, such as Bell, who noted that these terms are often used indiscriminately by laypeople and

scholars alike and suggests that both must, therefore, be social constructs (Bell, 2015). The use of the term ethnic identity to refer to observable characteristics of a social group that may include physical, behavioural and cultural expressive traits as shaped and framed by the cultural context is perhaps the most prevalent and is the closest to a working definition that is available. Scholars that investigate cultural expressions of a group often refer to cultural identity whereas those that refer to ethnic identity might imply cultural, physical and behavioural elements. Bergh, for example, has discussed how shared cultural identity formation had been attempted in socio-musical projects in Norway and the Sudan (Bergh, 2008). This is an example of a top-down approach where an organisation devised and implemented a project that purported to create a new sense of Norwegian national identity that could accept and include the immigrant communities. Examining this project with an understanding that culture influences other forms of identity rather than being an identity in itself might be helpful in understanding this process. It is worth noting how cultural and national identities were conflated here.

A research review of ethnic identity formation in diaspora through music also uses ethnic and cultural identity interchangeably (Lidskog, 2016). On the one hand, Lidskog notes that ethnic minorities can be identified by others through visible genetic similarities and differences while at the same time noting the importance of access to cultural resources for ethnic minorities. The delineation between ethnic and cultural identities is rarely clear. One approach is to claim ethnic identity is based on groups with shared genetic make-up that is largely observable whereas cultural identity is the common heritage and cultural norms of the group, but these two groups are not necessarily the same, although they clearly overlap. In the review itself, music has been often observed in an ethnic identity context, but again, the ethnic and cultural are often conflated, not recognising that ethnic groups have more than one possible cultural identity and vice versa. Furthermore, there is no evidence provided here that music helps form ethnic identity as such, but rather they are referring to cultural identity, which may or may not have a common ethnic identity associated with it. On the other hand, it is also evident that individuals state they identify as an ethnicity, but the characteristics they identify with often are cultural in nature.

Given the multiple possible identities of any group or individual at any time, it does seem more useful to discuss the system within which these identities exist and operate. Whether that is through the hierarchical system of Boix, Greenfeld and Eastwood (2009) or the ecological system of Clauss-Ehlers et al (2019), such systems are more explanatory than a focus on any one form of identity, especially forms of identities that do not have consensual definitions, as can be seen regarding cultural and ethnic identities. Identity, therefore, is not an objective truth but rather a mode of understanding the membership criteria of in/out groups in a context. Exploring how these modes of understanding are utilised is useful for peacebuilding.

### **MUSIC, PEACEBUILDING AND IDENTITY**

People have been shown to engage with music in peacebuilding through identity work (Davis, 2003, pp.17-36; Cooper, 2009, p.27; Doherty, 2000), representation<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bergh refers to music as representation meaning music being used as a symbol that represents a particular social group and is therefore solidifying boundaries between in and out groups rather than necessarily acting peacefully (2006).

(Bergh, 2006), and even unpeaceful<sup>4</sup> means (Kent, 2008), yet it is rare to find any research that delves into the how and why, or even if peacebuilding is happening at all. The creation of new shared identity is one path to building trust amongst those in conflict to the point where fruitful negotiations can occur where the outcome is more likely to be agreeable for all involved. Active musicking (see Small, 1998) in groups does seem to have this effect. As mentioned above, types and forms of identity are multiple, varied and overlapping; they do not operate and are not expressed in isolation. Similarly, they are connected to other aspects of human experience very strongly. I will now explore a few examples of how this has manifested in music in peacebuilding.

There is a common peacebuilding problem where all participants work together well during a project but when returning to their place of origin, they conform to pre-existing behaviour in the groups. Any effect or feeling of togetherness does not last (Bergh, 2006, p.6). This conforms to Small's concept of musicking and how group cohesion is more likely to occur amongst protracted, repeated, joint creative processes rather than one-off projects. Bergh implores musicians involved with conflict transformation to not over-romanticise their art but rather take it practically and seriously as those who use music for negative purposes already do.

One case that has demonstrated some success in music in peacebuilding is the inter-religious choir Pontanima, from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>5</sup> Pontanima was formed in the aftermath of the Bosnian War in 1996, originally as a Catholic choir, that quickly adopted a mission to sing liturgical music from all of the faiths that had been dominant and living peacefully together prior to the war (Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Muslim. Jewish music was also included, in homage to the large Jewish communities that had been lost in World War II during the Nazi occupation). The choir continues today, and consists of relatively equal members of the Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim communities. It is an adult, amateur choir, but several members are professional singers and musicians. They are considered an elite-level choir and they have competed in and won several international choir competitions. The members collectively remembered a pre-Bosnian War time, especially the era of Tito's rule (1945 to 1980). In Sarajevo during this time, it was common to see Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Muslims co-existing not only peacefully but as an integrated society with inter-marriage being commonplace (Robertson, 2014). This collective memory was the case even for those members too young to remember the Tito era with any clarity. Tito was extremely authoritarian and he brutally repressed dissent, yet these atrocities during this time were not generally a remembered topic nor were Tito's disastrous economic decisions that planted the seeds of nationalism, religious divide and war after his death in 1980. During the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Croatian and Bosnian wars, families that had mixed nationalities and religions were often torn apart and divided along national/religious lines (e.g. Croatian Catholic, Serbian Orthodox and Bosnian Muslim). These memories of the pre-war era brought up feelings of yearning to live in such a time again, combined with a sadness that this situation no longer existed after the Dayton Accord in 1996 forced the cessation of military conflict. This was followed by a determination to make it happen again in the future. This highlighted a collective sense of national identity as Bosnians first, influenced by cultural experiences and followed by religious identities that were considered less important

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<sup>4</sup> Kent (2008) refers to the many applications of music that increase conflict, pain and other negative and undesirable outcomes in people.

<sup>5</sup> Based on personal research conducted with Pontanima for my doctoral thesis in 2010-11.

at the time. By performing liturgical music from the faiths involved in the war side by side in a mixed cultural choir, they reinforced this matrix of meaning, which only became stronger with each experience, to the point where a new primary identity emerged, that of being a member of Pontanima, who were 'normal' people who did not believe that cultural or religious differences should encourage uncivil behaviour towards each other. By performing in public, Pontanima served as a reminder to other Bosnians who had suffered greatly that their suffering had not always existed so divisively and to spread a feeling of hope that peaceful co-existence and better, even friendly, interaction was possible in the future. The strong sense of a new shared identity that Pontanima members felt with each other regardless of cultural background had not propagated itself nearly as well with audiences, and this was due in part to the difference in how active music production creates stronger social bonds than reception. Audiences experience these musical events much less frequently than those within the choir which also lessens the impact on memory, since it has been long established that repetition of experiences is the greatest variable that affects memory (Hintzman, 1976). In other words, the creating and performing of the music regularly had a greater observable benefit to the participants than the listening alone.

Cultural contexts are influential enough to override certain other processes in music in peacebuilding, so that a lack of attention to the social contexts either results in a poor understanding of what is happening or in the ultimate failure of music to achieve its social purpose. This is evident in the Pontanima example above. This is also the case in research conducted by Arild Bergh (2006). With Bergh, non-Norwegian musicians were brought in to perform at schools in Norway where there were immigrant children to attempt to improve attitudes by ethnic Norwegians to immigrants, but this music as representation of identity actually de-contextualised the music of the immigrant culture, so that it had no particular meaning to the audiences except as an excuse to be out of normal class activities. The reason why a choir worked as well as it has in Sarajevo in bringing people together from conflicting identity-groups is the history of choral societies there. Pontanima members remembered hearing choral music from all the religious traditions at least at their respective major holidays. Many of those involved remembered having childhood friends from different religions and that they would often participate in religious ceremonies that differed from their own, during which they would hear and sometimes participate in the musicking. Choral music was and still is considered an outward expression of normal European civil society, which was a legacy from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There is no one definition of identity and it is far more useful to discuss multiple simultaneous identities. It is also clear that there are organising and influencing forces that help determine which identity or identities are focused on at any moment, including cultural experiences and time. There are different systems of understanding these processes, in terms of hierarchies and ecologies. Despite a move in scholarship to focus on subjectivities that highlights how these categories are complex and ever-changing, everyday use, and even academic use, maintains

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<sup>6</sup> Central European choral traditions were publicly prevalent since at least the times of The Hapsburgs who ruled the Holy Roman Empire for hundreds of years. This continued through the emergence of the Austrian Empire in the early 19th century and the alliance of Austria-Hungary later that same century. When that combined empire conquered what is now Bosnia-Herzegovina a few years later, this choral tradition had come to represent 'normal' society.

identities as a useful term. It is clear from both music and peacebuilding scholarship separately and together that identities are key concepts in understanding how people place themselves in relation to the sound world and to other groups of humans, at different times and in different contexts. As such, for music in peacebuilding initiatives and research, it is crucial to understand what identities exist in a given situation, how they were and continue to be formed, and the processes involved that influence these changes and how they are perceived by different groups of people.

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