

CREATING A MUSICAL DIALOGUE FOR PEACE

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Abstract

This article proposes that music can be a useful means to engage youth in a dialogue for peace. Field research was conducted with two non-government organizations – in Australia and in Northern Ireland – involved in youth peacebuilding projects that utilize music. Research methods included participant observation and interviews with youth participants and program leaders. Music offered a mechanism for the youth to engage in dialogue across differences. The value of music here is important because most of the young people interviewed reported that they would not have been interested in a peacebuilding program that was not music-focused. However, many of those same youth, after being drawn in by the musical aspect were inspired to continue working to build peace in some capacity. Obstacles and limitations are also evident, but the data suggests that music can be used to engage youth in a dialogue for peace.

Introduction

‘Dialogue’ has been a frequently discussed concept in peace studies in recent years, with many scholars agreeing that dialogue is integral to achieving peace and addressing global problems (Ahmed and Forst, 2005; Kaufman, 2005; Ramirez, 2007; Karagianis, 2001; Appiah, 2006; Beyer-Hermesen, 2001; Schirch 2005; Lederach, 2005). However, important questions remain about the meanings and parameters of dialogue and how it might actually take place. The word has Greek roots, with *dia*, signifying ‘through’ and *logos*, signifying ‘the word’ or ‘meaning’ (Bohm, 1996; Gerard, 2005). Bohm argues that this conjunction of terms brings to mind “a stream of meaning flowing among and through two or more, out of which will emerge some new understanding, something creative” (Bohm, 1996; Gerard, 2005). However, in peacebuilding, dialogue is typically associated with a verbal process (Schirch, 2005), including conversation and negotiation. Verbal processes clearly have an important role to play in building peace, yet other ways of conducting dialogue are possible and these can be mobilized for peacebuilding purposes.

In post-conflict societies, peacebuilding is often understood as a sequence of activities ranging from cease-fire through to creating a new government and reconstructing the economy while bringing together former enemies (Jeong, 2005). However, peacebuilding is also widely needed in diverse contexts with different types

and levels of conflict (Zelizer and Rubinstein, 2009). Peacebuilding processes, which include efforts at dialogue, can: aid in restoring and healing relationships in communities affected by conflict; create institutions based on community knowledge to prevent both social and political violence; and promote empowerment of citizens working for social change across religious, ethnic, and political divides in their societies (Zelizer and Rubinstein, 2009).

In this article I explore the possibilities of music as an alternative method for youth to engage in peacebuilding through dialogue. Since music frequently incorporates elements of both speech and nonverbal communication, it may offer unique insights. Given its appeal and accessibility to young people, music may also offer an appropriate way to engage youth in creating new dialogues for peace and thus encouraging the formation of a culture of peace.

This article begins with an exploration of the concept of dialogue in the existing literature. First, I argue that the peace studies field needs to broaden its understanding of dialogue to be more inclusive of those, including youth, who might be more willing or able to participate in alternative modes of dialogue as part of peacebuilding efforts. To be clear, I am not suggesting that music is some instant fix to alleviate all the issues associated with spoken dialogue. Rather, its addition to the repertoire of dialogue may aid in opening up more spaces for participation by offering alternative frameworks for expressing, sharing, and creating meaning.

I then examine the dialogues in two case studies conducted in Australia and Northern Ireland. First, I provide some information on the context in which the organizations that hosted my research operate, describing their programs and aims. Based on the data collected, I find that: (1) Music can be an alternative form of expression for taking part in dialogue. (2) Music may be used as a form of non-violent dialogue, giving young people another way to express themselves and even teaching alternative modes of addressing conflict. (3) Musical dialogues may improve youth participants' ability to engage in more traditional, verbal processes of dialogue. (4) Finally, music can also be used to broaden the dialogue to the general population. After presenting these key findings, I discuss challenges and limitations to the use of music as a tool for engaging young people in peacebuilding.

Dialogue

The term dialogue is used predominantly to connote formal political negotiations taking place in the international arena such as conferences, workshops, and diplomacy (Wallenstein, 2002; Francis, 2002). This frequently involves two or more parties talking to each other to communicate their issues and directly address their differences (Galtung, 1996; Jones, 2004; Banathy and Jenlink, 2005; Yankelovich, 1999; Kellett, 2007; Snyder, 2003; Kaufman, 2005). This is usually framed as a contest or debate of ideas (Salla, 1995).

At the same time, some scholars suggest that dialogue can be conducted verbally, but in a less antagonistic, framework that encourages other ways of talking. For example, scholars supporting narrative approaches to reconciliation see the oral ‘telling’ and ‘retelling’ of stories as vital to rebuilding society after conflict (Andrews, 2003). Value is accorded to the stories of each participant, rather than seeking to have one viewpoint eventually triumph over another. Participants are encouraged to construct new narratives or stories together in order to transform their conflict. Narrative approaches are thus based on a different view of dialogue, but they remain focused on speech.

While oral dialogue may be valuable, several scholars have posed challenges. For example, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2005) suggest that frameworks focusing on dialogue for ‘resolving’ conflict by creating shared meaning leave no room for ongoing contradiction in the views of parties to a conflict. There may be one, or several, issues on which parties will find it impossible to agree. To engage authentically in dialogue thus requires acknowledging that conflict will remain (Lederach, 2005). So, rather than being purely about pursuing mutual agreement, dialogue may also be construed as a means for building understanding and seeking ways of living with difference that are not contingent on resolving all issues. In short, frameworks that seek to use verbal dialogue to create a shared story may actually offer little utility in some aspects of conflict (Lederach, 2005).

Conceptualizing dialogue wholly in terms of verbal processes also raises serious issues of inclusivity based on the limits of language. Lugones and Spelman (1983; as cited in Jones, 2004) note that verbal dialogue places significantly different expectations on the parties taking part. Participants from marginalized cultural and language groups may find their experiences and views inexpressible in the dominant language in which dialogue is to be conducted. They may remain silent (Lugones and Spelman, 1983; as cited in Jones, 2004). When it comes to verbal discussions, some communications are often privileged over others, reflecting existing power arrangements, which may be unjust. For example, Blommaert, Bock, and McCormick (2006; cf. Bordieu, 1991) argue that certain discourses are privileged, with the use of ‘legitimate language’ being seen as requisite for engaging in a discussion. But what is considered legitimate is often determined by what is dominant, i.e. the position that holds the most power in a given situation. Based on this, some people have experienced difficulty in getting meanings across in situations where ‘legitimate’ discourses are called for but remain inaccessible to them (Blommaert et al, 2006). If one is unable to ‘talk the talk’ of the privileged class, s/he may simply be sidelined from the conversation altogether.

Some authors have also drawn attention to the ways that hostility is expressed nonverbally (Kellett, 2007). Hence, nonverbal communications also deserve recognition in dealing with conflict. Schirch, (2005) for example, calls for the need to find ways of “negotiating without words.” After all, as Lederach (2005) points out, people can use conversation to engage in meaningful exchange of thoughts and feelings, but actions and attitudes are also important. Eisner likewise makes the salient point that “some kinds of meaning transcend the limits of language because the limits of language do not define the limits of cognition” (Allsup, 2003; citing Eisner, 2001: 22).

Likewise, I suggest that to encompass more inclusive mechanisms for sharing meaning(s), a definition of dialogue needs to include nonverbal methods of communication, such as music. In this article I use the concept of dialogue broadly, to include any situation where two or more people use non-violent methods to express and exchange meanings. This includes dialogues that involve both music and verbal processes, such as those that were apparent in my case studies.

Music and Peace

The literature suggests that as an art, music can also be an important tool for contributing to campaigns, protests, and other activism in non-violent ways (Branagan, 2003). This is particularly relevant, given that building cultures of peace requires new ways of thinking that offer nonviolent alternatives to addressing conflict. Branagan, (2003) for example, suggests that art, including music, can make a significant contribution to non-violent political engagement and expression by using innovation and engaging audiences in a way that enables movements to quickly spread far and wide. Music may also help by giving people the sense of the good that can come from working well together, trusting and supporting one another in reaching a goal (Pruitt 2011). Slachmuislder (2005) likewise proposes that music can: promote personal healing and facilitate the restoration of relationships through allowing expression in a non-threatening manner. This signifies potential for cultivating positive peace in which everyone, including youth, can participate. In the case of peace studies, that goal may be the creation of more peaceful and connected communities that can work together across difference. To that end, Heble (2003) says that in addition to its capacity to inspire hope and aid people's realization that things can be different, music can serve a significant function in inspiring a spirit of community and dialogue in public life. Music, he argues, can stimulate social engagement and play a powerful role in creating cultural awareness. Likewise, music can play an important role in creating cultures of peace. Indeed, Heble contends that making music gives us the tools to register hope, to take risks in relating to others, to cooperate across various differences, cultures, places, and styles, and to find truly novel ways of relating in and with the world.

There are a few scholars who have engaged with theoretical considerations surrounding the use of music specifically as a peacebuilding tool. In her study of female college students in the Philippines, Gutierrez (2006) reports finding that music is a powerful teaching tool for peace education. Likewise, Schirch (2005) includes singing, dancing, and playing music on a chart proposing peacebuilding actions that include information rituals. Lederach (2005) also supports using music and other art forms arguing that imagination translated into creative acts is necessary for transcending violence. More recently, Lederach and Lederach (2010) have explored issues of music and peacebuilding more deeply, discussing the role of music and sound in peacebuilding in several contexts in order to argue that music as metaphor can greatly enhance understandings of the need for more complex, holistic approaches to peacebuilding.

The intent here is not to argue that music is an inherently a positive force, merely that it can be used and adapted in ways that support peacebuilding. As Lederach (2005) suggests, music can drive things in directions that are either reconciliatory or more violent. While the emotional dimension of music can inspire people and stir nonviolent political action, it has also been used to call people to war (Love, 2002, quoting Derk Richardson 1990: 61), to exacerbate divisions in conflict (Pruitt, 2011), to create nationalist narratives of racial superiority (USHMM, 2009), and “as a weapon of war” for torturing prisoners (Cusick, 2006).

Likewise, some scholars have supported the use of music for peace while pointing out possible challenges. Based on research in Africa, Slachmuislder (2005) extols the benefits of using music, particularly drumming, in peacebuilding. However, challenges remain. Slachmuislder notes the cultural and ethical dilemmas that can be implicated in using music-based peacebuilding. For example, she says that taking drums out of their context may negate their cultural importance; also their association with traditional masculinity may limit their usefulness since women are not allowed to play drums in many African communities. Rees (2003) argues that the search for peace would benefit from seeking ideas from all sources, including music. At the same time, he suggests that music can only be effectively used for peace if attention is paid to attention to inclusiveness in such work and continual reflection takes place on how power might be deployed in creative and liberating ways that are both non-violent and framed by the drive towards equality, thereby contributing to advancing human rights. Phillips (2004) also notes that in order to facilitate positive peaceful change, musicians must take note of and radically subvert dominant ideologies of power, as otherwise these ideologies might commodify, hinder, or mediate musicians’ efforts.

Music as Dialogue

Music is often said to be a language that crosses borders (Shankar, 2005) and may indeed provide a more inviting tool for reconciliation. Music often includes lyrics sung in particular spoken languages, but the meaning of the music itself also influences how this is understood. Indeed, people may be able to ‘understand’ or enjoy the same music even when they do not speak the same language. The notation for reading and writing music is internationally recognized.

Many scholars, practitioners, and policy makers have suggested that arts and music can foster and encourage dialogue, promoting positive social change (Hunter, 2005; Madarshahi, 2005; Donelan, 2004). If some people, based on social hierarchies and language abilities, are unable to participate in a spoken dialogue in a way that is fair and inclusive, perhaps in at least some cases music may offer them another method for contributing. Indeed, some scholars have suggested that music may have an important role to play in communicating across difference, since it requires no translation (Schirch, 2005). Frith, (1996; citing Gilroy, 1990) for example, clearly states that music “conjures

up and enacts dialogue.” This occurs, Frith says, because music tends to blur the line between self and other, which presumably makes interaction more likely.

Lederach’s (1995) work also seems to support the deployment of music in addressing conflict, as it fits with his calls for using common understanding and knowledge as tools for peacebuilding. He says that rather than seeing peacebuilding skills or concepts as new things that have to be learned, peacebuilders should work to encourage parties to conflict to use things they already know in a novel way for facilitating peace. This is particularly applicable to young people’s participation in a dialogue for peace. Many young people may not feel comfortable in addressing conflict through more traditional forms of dialogue, but music such as hip-hop has often been seen by youth as a way to express oneself, get involved, and at times just to have something to do (Lock, 2005). However, hip-hop can be much more than this; youth have also used it to communicate with one another in a way that is relevant and interesting to them, and this has been central to political organizing around conflict mediation and other issues (Clay, 2006). Munõz and Marín (2006) note that hip-hop’s expressive practices have spawned the saying, “fight with creativity and not with weapons.” This potential of hip-hop thus leads to curiosity about the role music may play in addressing conflict among youth by serving as an alternative form of relevant, non-violent dialogue. While most writing on youth and politics focuses on hip-hop, I suggest that other types of music enjoyed by youth in a setting may have similar potential.

Drawing on the authors outlined here, I suggest that music can be understood as situated in the borderlands between speech and nonverbal communication. After all, music frequently incorporates elements of both verbal and nonverbal communication, and the meaning conveyed through music is often a complex melding of these two elements. Based on this complexity, music may be uniquely placed to provide new insights, offering an alternative and a supplement to exclusively verbal linguistic understandings of dialogue. Dialogue is usually thought of in terms of conversation and debate, but this concept of dialogue can be pulled apart and expanded to adapt to the needs of building positive peace. Doing so may aid in developing peacebuilding practices that are more inclusive and accessible to a diverse range of participants, especially youth.

While most of the existing literature recognizes the importance of dialogue in peacebuilding, it often neglects to account for the complementary role creative methods such as music can play as a form of dialogue. At the same time, music can also assist in facilitating more traditional verbal forms of dialogue. For example, at times in the case studies participation in music-based activities appeared to constitute a dialogue in itself, playing a role in reducing racism and increasing understanding. Moreover, many interviewees suggested that music could also serve as a way to build trust and understanding in order to get people to feel comfortable taking part in verbal dialogue. In the sections that follow I draw on observations and participant statements to build a case for the use of music in youth peacebuilding programs as an alternative or supplement to more traditional modes of dialogue.

The Case Studies

My case studies include two organizations – ‘Third Place’ in Australia and ‘Breaking Barriers’ in Northern Ireland—that utilize musical participation as a way of engaging youth in peacebuilding. The two case studies reflect very different local cultural contexts with different experiences of violence and peacebuilding. Northern Ireland is considered a post-conflict society, while Australia is seen as a country at peace, though violence does exist there. Looking at two significantly different cultures of conflict makes it possible to examine how music may be adapted to local needs in building a culture of peace. Furthermore, it is interesting to consider two case studies in which one (Third Place) is youth-run while the other (Breaking Barriers) is delivered as a program to young people, rather than by or with them. To collect my research data, I conducted participant observation at the various locations where the projects were run and used semi-structured interviews with youth participants and program facilitators. In order to preserve the privacy of young people involved, I have used a pseudonym for the organizations and removed or changed the names of all interviewees.

Originally aimed at addressing violent conflict between youth from Aboriginal and Islander communities, Third Place’s peace program has broadened its goals to include youth from other communities. In particular, their work aims to contribute to peacebuilding by challenging racism through building understanding between youth from many different cultural communities. Their work also seeks to build peace by providing a safe space for young people from refugee backgrounds to recover from violence experienced in their home countries. Based in a major Australian city, Third Place has many years of experience offering youth arts programs in the local area, where the organization works with young people from diverse cultures including, but not limited to, youth from migrant and refugee communities as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander backgrounds.

The organization uses hip-hop workshops including singing, break dancing, MCing, and crump dancing as part of a peacebuilding initiative. Break dancing is a solo dance style that was developed in New York in the 1970s as a component of hip-hop culture. ‘Breaking’ is typically fast-paced and involves acrobatic styles. The word ‘MCing’ derives from ‘Master of Ceremonies,’ and refers to the art of rapping—speaking or chanting lyrical rhymes normally accompanied by rhythms. Crumping, or krumping, is an urban dance style that originated in South Central L.A. in the 1990s. The style draws on fast paced moves that often appear aggressive, and followers of this style often participate in nonviolent competitions of skills termed ‘dance battles.’ During my field research music and dance workshops were conducted one afternoon per week. The diversity of the local area was reflected in the demographic makeup of participants in the project, with young people attending from a wide range of cultures, including immigrants from Samoan, Maori, Tongan, Sudanese, Liberian, Fijian, and Slovenian backgrounds among others, as well as young people whose families have lived in Australia for several generations.

My second case study was Breaking Barriers, which is located in Belfast, Northern Ireland. During field research I met and had discussions with many community leaders who work in peacebuilding programs, community arts projects, youth organizations, and good relations councils. I observed and interviewed participants from three main programs Breaking Barriers facilitates: Youth Movement (YM), Musical Exchange of Culture (MEC), and Project Movement (PM).

YM, held in locations around Northern Ireland, often in youth centers, brings together youth from different communities in Northern Ireland to create original music with the assistance of professional musicians from other countries. The project seeks to encourage cultural relations through music. The program generally includes a series of workshops and culminates in producing a CD of the music the youth make.

MEC is delivered in schools. The project was designed as an enjoyable and interactive way to increase diversity awareness and to teach youth about global issues. The program typically consists of two half-day workshops. These include: (1) presentations by international musicians and a facilitator trained in peace studies; (2) watching a section of a movie that uses music to explore global issues relating to fair trade; and (3) several interactive music-making and discussion sessions.

Lastly, PM is mostly composed of adult musicians, but one teenager takes part as a drummer. However, young people often attend and participate in the activities run by PM, which is a Northern Ireland-based multi-cultural music collective that includes musicians from a number of countries. PM travels around Northern Ireland providing interactive music experiences, performances and other programs, often at community celebrations and in schools. The program aims to counter racism and sectarianism by demonstrating that working together can lead to attractive and unique outcomes. Participants have the chance to meet people from different cultures, learn about other cultures, and play, hear, and learn about music from around the globe.

Music-making as an Alternative Form of Dialogue

In both case studies youth participants and facilitators reported seeing music and dance as creative, accessible ways to engage in dialogue across difference. These differences may be based on race, gender, or religion, for example. In any case, the young people, facilitators, and community workers often noted the importance of music in getting people together when they would otherwise remain unwilling or unable to engage in dialogue. This understanding of dialogue is in contrast to more traditional, limited definitions of dialogue as speech or purely linguistic exchanges. Examining these experiences makes the case for developing a broader understanding of what may be understood as musical dialogue, where youth exchange meaning through music.

While people living with conflict may be reluctant to come together to engage in formal dialogue (especially if they have failed in the past), they may be more willing or open to take part in a kind of musical dialogue. This was apparent in Breaking Barriers' work in the Northern Ireland context, where a variety of world music styles and

instruments were used in interactive music-making sessions in the youth peacebuilding programs. Music in these cases is a form of dialogue—participants are *sharing* their meanings through the music rather than, for example, playing or listening to music alone in their bedrooms. This capacity of music to draw people together to communicate may at times make it a more accessible form of dialogue than more traditional verbal forms of dialogue.

Engaging through music enables the young people to ‘explain’ themselves with confidence, as this is a mode of dialogue that is not predicated on notions of intelligence that value years of education or ‘wisdom’ over their daily lived experience. There is then a de-emphasizing of rational, academic modes of intelligence and a shift to the kind of knowledge that the youth participants in these programs feel they possess and can deploy well without the need for extensive formal training or previous experience. This is not to say that words are never included in the music-making or performance process; rather that they need not always be seen as primary or be delivered in a traditional fashion. While the youth participants may often feel they do not have the words to say what they mean, they are able to creatively convey their message through these alternative means in a way that is effective and equally, if not more, descriptive. As one participant and one facilitator reported in the Australian program:

Through your music you express a story...as well through dances you can express it and they pick up the story and understand what you're telling them. (Samoan-Maori female, 13)

It's better... than talking...You feel...more comfortable... It's a different way of creating dialogue...[L]ike...I've had this fear of...public speaking ... I sing...it's much...easier and you can just embrace the music and just be in that moment and...just express yourself freely... (Samoan/German female from New Zealand, 25)

Many of the peacebuilders I met in Northern Ireland also saw music as a different way to get a message across, to engage in dialogue. Some of the potential here may also be based on the possibility for music to serve as a peace education tool. It has been used as a way to convey information that helps participants learn more, so that they are then able to share with others. Because it is so relevant to youth culture, music may be especially useful in developing curriculum for peace education with young people. Peace education is an important part of peace building, in that it can be used to teach people in conflict about non-violence, cooperation, and alternative ways for dealing with conflict.

According to many of the people with whom I spoke, music is a particularly good mechanism for pursuing peace through dialogue, as it is a mode of expression that is more inclusive than many other ways of conveying a message. As some of the youth participants I interviewed put it:

Music's one language...In any language it all means the same thing. Through music can say so much cuz the different moods and textures and sounds that come with it and all the different sounds from different cultures can be combined...like [Project Movement] from [Breaking Barriers] actually shows all the music can be combined...to make you know one language...that everyone can listen to. Everyone understands. (White Northern Irish Protestant female, 17)

It's just a good medium because everybody, no matter where they're from or what religion or race...can all like relate to music... (White Northern Irish Protestant male, 16)

Furthermore, while programs that focus on traditional modes of dialogue may leave more quiet or shy people feeling they have not fully participated, the interactive use of music in these projects is more likely to leave participants feeling they have really taken part in the dialogue. One thing that seems clear is that the interactive nature of the music programs is what makes them such a useful way for engaging young people in peacebuilding through dialogue. As two of the facilitators said:

It isn't being done in a classroom, you're not being told...not to do it...it's not boring. It's something that they can come away and think...I played an instrument...from like a Chinese background...and we all sat in the same room and we played instruments...they can come away... saying 'You know we're able to sit in a room and do that, and why are we not outside?' (Northern Irish White Protestant female, 21)

[Y]ou have to do something interactive...they're...having a sort of feeling that they are contributing all together to one piece of music or one piece of dance...For dance, for example...if you're going to choreograph it, everybody has their role but you have to create a sense of collective thinking in those groups. (Mexican female, 31)

Music and dance can be used to bring together previously segregated communities. Many of the young people in both the Australian and Northern Irish programs came along because they wanted to take part in music and dance workshops, and through doing so, they came to interact with and know young people from groups they had previously seen in a negative light and thus avoided. In this way, music, which plays a key role in youth culture in the areas, helped bring these young people together; the workshops activities may thus be understood as opportunities for dialogue based on respect for difference as well as an alternative way of looking for commonality. While engaging with youth from different backgrounds did not occur on the same scale at Breaking Barriers in Northern Ireland, young people in these programs did at least have some interaction with or instruction from adults from different cultural origins, which could possibly have some influence on the way they understand communicating across cultural difference.

As suggested above, in both case studies participants and facilitators saw music as an inclusive mechanism for communicating across difference and therefore engaging in a peacebuilding dialogue. However, I wanted to learn what limits might exist to this. In the Northern Ireland context, when I asked three of the facilitators if they thought any youth who were different in some way (for example, gay, disabled, or from another cultural group) would have trouble fitting in to the project, all of them mentioned thinking of music as a useful way to engage in a more inclusive dialogue:

[E]veryone can understand music and enjoy music. So... as a facilitator we have to include them as well. I have to recognize these kinds of situations and try... (Colombian female, 31)

I think obviously at the start no matter what...everyone's gonna be quite... aware of everyone else around them... that's wherever you go... once people relax and see everyone else having fun, and...not caring about anything else, they surely start unwinding and doing it as well. (Northern Irish White Protestant female, 21)

A couple of the young people responding in Northern Ireland offered more caveats, giving possible reasons, including lack of confidence or disability, why other youth might feel left out of a musical dialogue for peace. Likewise, in the Australian project a couple of respondents noted that people who are nervous might have trouble at first. So, rather than saying these young people might feel excluded based on being different, the issue was seen in terms of people who had problems with shyness or lack of confidence, not any exclusion in the space or the practice. However, more research needs to be done with young people who have left such programs or decided against attending them to find out what barriers to inclusion might exist to engaging youth in peacebuilding through a musical dialogue.

Music as a Non-violent Form of Dialogue for Dealing with Conflict

Verbal dialogue has traditionally been seen as a way to get a message across during a conflict without resorting to violence. Music can also meet this criterion for dialogue. In this section I suggest that youth participants in both case studies learned non-violent skills they could use for dealing with conflict. While it may be unconventional, using music as dialogue during conflict may in some circumstances be both gratifying and productive. After all, conflict often evokes intense physical feelings, and music may offer a chance to express and adapt feelings such as anger through physical musical expressions rather than by taking part in direct violence. This may be especially important for young people like those attending Third Place (Australia), who live in some of the most violent communities in their region. For example, one young woman pointed out how dance and music could both provide alternatives to getting into a physical altercation:

For dance you can just express your anger in your body and for singing you can express your anger in writing a song or writing a rap. (Black African Sudanese female, 15)

Some of the young people involved in the crumping program expressed how their participation in this dance style in particular had equipped them with alternative ways of responding to conflict:

When they get in my face, I like crump...until they like the relationship is of respect, respect you and not fight or something. (Liberian black African male, 16)

...[I]t's been good for me...and for others cuz...crumping's like replacing fight, so yeah, that's why I like it cuz it just replaces the bad stuff. (Samoan-Maori male, 14)

This makes sense, as crumping, also known as krumping, originated in South Central Los Angeles as an alternative to involvement in gang violence. For further historical background and information, see the documentary film *Rize* (2005) from David LaChapelle Studios. One young woman who had worked as a crumping instructor also echoed these sentiments, saying:

[T]he crumping does help...Cuz...I remember once the boys just saying yeah that they used to fight, but now they just solve their problems by crumping... Battle each other...But you don't actually have to fight. (Samoan/Chinese female from New Zealand, 18)

The last comment above, from a crumping instructor, points to the need for considerations of gender that require serious attention in the field of youth peacebuilding. It seems that while hegemonic norms of masculinity as violent may be 'proven' through skill in battle, young men involved in the crumping project have decided to enter a new battle arena, one where their skills are proved through dance-offs rather than through fighting. While in other arenas boys may gain respect through being the best fighter, here they do so by being dancers with amazing command of technical skills, which facilitates building better relationships based on this respect. In short, crumping may be used as an alternative, non-violent means for dealing with conflict.

This is particularly interesting, because rather than the role accorded to physical strength in fighting, respect in crumping may be attainable through means that can include others, including girls and smaller boys. However, it should be noted that while this is a possibility, no girls took part in the crumping stream of the Third Space workshops in Australia. Interviews revealed that several girls were interested in participating in crumping, but did not feel the group was open to them as young women. This exclusion clearly must be addressed if such projects are to be truly inclusive and pursue positive peace that includes gender justice.

While dancing was not a part of the work of Breaking Barriers in Northern Ireland, the physicality of music work also came up as a way of dealing with conflict without perpetrating violence against others. As one girl explained,

If there's a drum and they'd hit the drum... with music like if I'm angry I would just go listen to some music and it would calm me down and...I just think it would help you through. (Northern Irish Catholic female, 13)

Moreover, among the major things many youth participants specifically learned were skills that could be used in responding to conflict without violence. At Third Place when I asked participants if they had learned any skills that could help them in this way, all but one answered in the affirmative. All the facilitators interviewed in this project also felt that they had learned or taught some skills that could be used non-violently in situations of conflict.

Similar results appeared at Breaking Barriers, as nine out of thirteen young people and all four facilitators interviewed had a positive response when asked “What skills, if any, have you learned/taught in this project that can help you address future conflict non-violently?” All but one of the young people interviewed said they would use the skills they had gained through the workshops to make peace. Examples they gave included telling others what they had learned or teaching others. Facilitators also said they had gained skills and knowledge they would use to continue to make peace. When asked what they had learned or taught, they said:

The capacity to be flexible...I think that everyone has the capacity to do music. (Colombian female, 31)

... I think having an understanding and the confidence to just... explain to people. People sort of know...but that's just one side of the story you know... (Northern Irish White Protestant male, 31)

A lot of people use violence...and to kind of explain to kids, yeah a lot of people use violence to communicate, but that's not the way. (Northern Irish White Protestant female, 21)

[P]eople will learn that...you can talk about to manage your emotions... [Y]ou can channelize that through dance or music... [S]ometimes, some teenagers they're just passing through a difficult stage, and you have a choice... just wandering on the streets or maybe... learn to play the drums or learn to play an instrument or dance...[Y]ou are giving them...options and let them know they have options in life...and you don't have to conform with...everybody... [T] he important part is showing people that they have a choice. (Mexican female, 31)

While four participants in the Breaking Barriers program, all young Protestant men, could not name any skills they had gained for dealing with conflict non-violently, every one of them responded in the affirmative when asked whether they thought the program can help reduce or has already reduced the violent events in the local communities. Two of these four did preface their answer by saying a reduction in violence could only occur if more people got involved and if this occurred across the communities.

In summary, there is evidence that these programs in Australia and Northern Ireland have contributed in different and important ways to promoting a non-violent dialogue through music. They have taught young people non-violent skills they can deploy when faced with conflict, and they have also provided an alternative activity to taking part in fighting.

Returning to Talk-Based Dialogue

In this section I argue that by participating in the alternative dialogue of the music-based peacebuilding programs, participants were also able to gain trust and build verbal skills that could then be used in more traditional forms of dialogue. While I propose widening conceptions of dialogue to include music, I am not suggesting that dialogue as talk should be completely rejected as a tool. The peacebuilding programs in these case studies, whether they intend to or not, appear to provide a training ground where young people can develop their verbal linguistic skills and abilities. Although they acknowledged the importance of music and dance as alternative modes of expression, the participants and facilitators also expressed their belief in the importance of more traditional modes of dialogue for peacebuilding. Several young people indicated that participation in the project had helped them develop trust and enhance their verbal skills and ability to engage in spoken dialogue. One participant mentioned benefits from the opportunity in the workshops to practice English, which was a second language for many participants at the program. Two arts workers also reported learning about ‘talking things out’ before resorting to violence.

When asked “Do you feel being involved in this project will make it easier for you to be formally involved in peacebuilding in the future?” all interviewees responded that it would. In response to queries of how the project would facilitate involvement, some pointed directly to the skills they had learned that would enable them to talk more easily to others:

Yeah it's helped me a lot cuz I've been able to talk to people and to dance together... (White Australian male, 14)

Yeah, it's helped me, helped me with group work...and socially, talking to other people. (White Australian male, 16)

[I]t helps me to have more confidence to be able to talk to others and get along with others and understand...how people think so I don't have to be so uncomfortable around other people and same with them around me. (White Australian male, 17)

Interestingly, when asked how the workshops may have prepared them for future involvement in peacebuilding, the only participants at Third Place who mentioned improved talking abilities were young white males born in Australia. While I cannot conclusively explain this, it does suggest the need for further study on young people's understandings of what peacebuilding is or should be and how this relates to race and gender.

In the Northern Ireland program, 3 of the 13 participants interviewed said they had learned better communication skills, with 2 boys specifically mentioning talking, and 1 girl listing communication in her response. Also, when asked about why music might be a useful tool for young people wanting to engage in building peace, one young man said:

Yeah...Cuz you can have something comfortable for talking to people. (White Northern Irish Protestant male, 14)

In other words, he suggests that music helps put people at ease talking to one another when they might otherwise feel unable to do so. Finally, when asked whether and how they might use the skills they had gained through the project to continue to make peace, some of the young people mentioned talking about what they had learned:

Just having the confidence to talk to people about like what they're about and who they are and...just like especially learning about people, about like where they come from and how they grew up and what their life was like before they came here. (White Northern Irish Protestant male, 16)

Just talk to them. (White Northern Irish Catholic male, 13)

And tell them, learn stuff. (White Northern Irish Catholic female, 13)

Part of this ability to engage in more traditional dialogue is clearly based on confidence built through participation in music making. In her answer to another question, one young woman participant pointed out how the confidence they had built left them better able to engage in traditional modes of dialogue:

Like if we were to...go on stage...and play in front of friends and family it takes confidence no matter what the kids are doing, be it slapping the drums, you know, with their friends, they're creating confidence...even with their communication with other kids, life skills. (White Northern Irish Protestant female, 17)

While music was seen as a useful way to engage in alternative modes of dialogue, many long-term community workers in Northern Ireland acknowledged that talking is

also important. Some specifically noted that their work in music had helped ease their way into discussions. One such community worker told me about how being part of a music community as a young man enabled him to meet people across the political divide and talk about issues. He saw similar opportunities being created through the work of Breaking Barriers with local young people.

Likewise, the assistant project manager at Breaking Barriers mentioned that:

Music and dance can be... something you can get involved in and can be united with other people. It's a common ground where you start talking... Music is something that even with a stranger it's a kind of common ground between you, so you can talk about music. You can talk about dance...Even if you're not talking about serious issues, you're still interacting. (Northern Irish White Protestant female, 21)

Perhaps this type of interaction is a means to pave the way for talking about more 'serious' or contentious issues. Trust is an essential element to be developed in transforming conflict. These findings suggest that music workshops may be used to build trust that can facilitate more traditional engagement in dialogue. As one community worker put it:

Music recognizes no cultural boundaries or barriers. It was that commonality that was a vehicle for trust and eventually friendship...Music and art are the means of bringing people together in a common aim where suspicion is diminished and trust building is a feature.

Moreover, one Breaking Barriers facilitator, who has lived and worked in several conflict areas around the world noted how music can be a way of engaging people to build trust, saying:

[I]n working with communities ...there are many... sensitive issues that sometimes you have to discuss with different communities and it's very very difficult to make them come personally...But if we start preparing the line, as we say in Colombia, and we engage with people first and then we sit down... they can be engaged with music. (Colombian female, 31)

In the MEC programs in particular, young people were encouraged to discuss issues of global development and inequality. In the workshop series I observed, after watching a musical educational documentary film section on money, the youth participants were separated into groups to discuss their initial reactions and write down key words, which a leader from each small group then shared with the wider group. Many of them talked about feeling sad, angry, sorry, or guilty about the issues discussed in the film, which included, among other things, child labor and sweatshops. They were also asked to come up with ways they would address the issues. Their suggested actions

included protesting, boycotting, contacting government leaders, and making different consumer choices. In this way, they were participating using traditional communication while still in the music workshop.

In summary, participants and facilitators in both case studies agreed that while different modes of engaging are important and should be accepted and supported, traditional modes of dialogue are important, too. What is particularly intriguing here is that according to the youth and facilitators interviewed, these alternative forms of engagement can actually serve as a means for participants to build trust that is necessary for taking part in more traditional formats and for developing skills and confidence that allow them to better participate in such discussions.

Outcomes: Expanding Dialogue for Peace

Findings from these studies suggest that music can also be a useful way of engaging and encouraging members of the wider community to take part in dialogue for peacebuilding. The fact that many youth felt these musical peacebuilding programs gave them an opportunity to engage in dialogue is important in and of itself. However, the potential for growing what these programs have started is also significant. When asked whether they would continue to use the skills they had gained at the workshops to make peace, the youth involved offered several responses indicating that they would show the artistic skills they had gained, use their improved speech abilities to talk about what they had learned, promote the growth of the project by inviting others along, and use the knowledge of peace practice they had gained to try to spread peace in a wider context. In short, music and dance in this case were seen as a draw card to effectively engage in a new and creative form of dialogue for peace, and as a relevant way to encourage other people to take part in peacebuilding.

Interviewees suggested that music and dance were modes of communication that could be expressed and understood even across languages, cultures, and religions. From these understandings, several young people and facilitators at Third Place explained how they see music and dance as a mode of cross-cultural dialogue that provides the kind of meaningful engagement required to build more peaceful societies. For example:

[D]ancing and singing is the best way to show to the world what's your message...It's easier to do than if you talk with somebody. If you talk with somebody that doesn't... respect you or something, he won't listen, but if you getting crazy and start dancing and singing he will start listening... Music and dance just got something inside it that like bring you there...It's...trying to get message across...It doesn't matter what religion...No matter what you are, how you do, whatever, you can do dance and singing... (White Slovenian female, 18)

This ties in with one of Anderson's proposed criterion for measuring the effectiveness of peacebuilding programs, which is whether they establish "a link between

leadership and the general public by which either the leadership or the general public communicate to the other in ways that encourage their support and involvement to move toward settlement” (Galama, 2002; citing Anderson). At both programs I observed several instances in which people unfamiliar with the project happened by or intentionally came to a performance and ended up speaking to participants or facilitators or getting involved in some way. I asked facilitators at both programs, “Is there anything you think is unique to music and dance that can be particularly useful in engaging people outside the program?” They all agreed that there is:

...I think music's the easiest; it's accessible you know...if you wanna engage it's a very easy tool... (Northern Irish White Protestant male, 31)

I find that it's easy because people love music... if you kind of measure that with just running a peacebuilding workshop without music, I'm not sure if the general public would be actually interested in ... like if you're gonna create a ten page document... more likely to be drawn to the music. (Samoan/German female from New Zealand, 25)

Interviewees at both programs also suggested that talk-based dialogue has an important role to play in engaging others in building cultures of peace. When asked whether and how they would use the skills they had learned to continue to make peace in their communities, participants in Australia and Northern Ireland said they would do so by talking to other youth about the work they had done to get them involved. Some of them had the following to say:

...Yeah. I'll tell them. I wanna spread the word about this [Third Place] because it can... help you ... if you feel like don't you fit in...It can help you change your life and become confident... I've told gobs of people!...They wanna come next year. I know a lot of my friends are coming cuz I've told them about it. (Maori female, 13)

Yeah I think...like giving people music and...talk to them. Because people who are like violent have no real reason to be violent...If it comes out of them, they just might be... nicer people...I told...A class and C class. (Northern Irish Catholic female, 13)

Yeah... we could even get... everyone together and like tell them about it and then ask if they wanted to do it... (White Northern Irish Protestant male, 14)

In summary, based on their participation in musical peacebuilding, youth in these programs became inspired to share their ideas and experience with other young people. This form of peer education can play an integral role in recruiting more youth to work for peacebuilding. These young peacebuilders may also use their musical expression and

related skills to communicate with adults and the wider community in seeking to create a dialogue about peace.

Acknowledging the Limitations

Of course, not all uses of music will constitute an act of dialogue. Sometimes people may be merely listening for enjoyment, not really paying attention, or engaging in a leisure activity in the same location as others with whom they have conflict without interacting with them. The activities for engaging young people in building positive peace vary across the programs I researched, with some seeming to be undeniably promoting dialogue, while others may not. For example, the young people who came to Third Place and sat at their own tables drawing while others sang and danced together would probably not feel they had taken part in a dialogue; whereas youth who collaborated with others from different cultural backgrounds in creating a song or dance would probably feel they had experienced dialogue through music. However, even activities that do not promote a peace dialogue may at times aid in building skills that can enable the youth participants to better engage in dialogue in the future should they choose to do so. It is important to make clear that the claims made above are, for the most part, based on what interviewees said, and sometimes what people say is different from what they do.

Moreover, as it provides no comparison with youth programs using other methods to engage in peacebuilding, this research design does not allow me to claim that the particular changes would only have occurred in a music-based program. Indeed, I do not suggest that music is the only way such changes may take place, nor do I argue that it will always be the best medium for engaging young people in peacebuilding. Music is not inherently peaceful and therefore can be used to confirm exclusive or xenophobic identities. Thus, in at least some instances, it may be necessary to combine musical participation with other activities that critically engage more directly with issues of injustice.

The evidence of the effect of these musical peacebuilding projects remains limited. However, there is some evidence to suggest that these programs have facilitated long-term continuation of dialogue across difference in the lives of some youth. For example, in interviewing long-term and former participants at Third Place, I found evidence that many had continued participating in this dialogue for peace, as they had made and maintained friendships across cultural difference, whereas prior to the program they had not engaged in relationships with people outside their own cultures. Finally, it bears repeating that the focus of this research is not on evaluating the impact of these individual programs, but rather on looking at what they are doing, what they are hoping, what they are saying, and seeking to gain whatever limited evidence is available about the possible impacts.

Conclusion

Scholars in international relations and peace studies have pointed to the prime importance of dialogue in building peace. Still, going further to interrogate our assumptions about this concept is necessary. 'Dialogue' is frequently discussed in highly theoretical terms without an in-depth consideration of practical challenges. Responses from the young people interviewed in this project suggest that our scholarly understandings of dialogue need to be understood much more broadly than current scholarship allows particularly (but not only) in order to better include young people in peacebuilding processes. Moreover, while most youth may not have the training or interest required for engaging in more formal, traditional modes of political peacebuilding, many have years of experience in music-making, so employing such resources is useful in acknowledging and building on the skills young people already have that can be applied to their work as peace-makers.

In the two case studies presented here, youth participants and facilitators, through their words and actions demonstrated several ways that music can serve as an important form of dialogue for pursuing peace. First, the young people interviewed for this research suggested that music can be important in providing alternative modes of expression and dialogue, which can play a vital role in dealing with conflict and facilitating communication across difference. Moreover, many youth participants expressed the feeling that they could use music or skills they had learned through music making when faced with conflict instead of resorting to violence. While acknowledging the potential of music to support alternative forms of dialogue, interviewees also recognized the relevance of and need for more traditional modes of dialogue. Many explained that participating in music-based activities offered them a chance to practice and improve their skills in traditional dialogue. These musical peacebuilding programs are important for the youth directly involved, but they can also have a broader impact, as music is particularly useful for conveying the young people's message in a way that encourages the development of a culture of peace by engaging people 'in the outside world' in a dialogue for peace. Furthermore, many participants said they had told or would tell others about their musical activities to try to get more people involved in work promoting a culture of peace through music. Not all music activities will constitute an act of dialogue, nor will they all promote peace, but these findings suggest that musical activities can be a relevant and effective way to engage youth in a dialogue for peace.

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