

Kim Boeskov

Music and social transformation

*Exploring ambiguous musical practice
in a Palestinian refugee camp*



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Kim Boeskov

Abstract

This research project addresses a central tension in the field of music education. While music making is often seen as contributing to the positive development of a sense of self through experiences of communality, belonging, and as a foundation for empowerment and agency, music educational practices have also been shown to reproduce wider societal structures of power and inequality. Activist strands of music education, such as the field of community music, have sought to challenge structures of inequality by emphasizing participatory, democratic, and open forms of music making available for all members of society. Yet, these efforts have been subjected to critique for being based on romanticized views of music as a means of social transformation and for disregarding how progressive musical practices also may be implicated in processes of social reproduction and exclusion.

The present study subjects this tension to closer scrutiny. Advancing the notion of *ambiguous musical practice* as an analytical lens highlighting the ambivalent processes that occur when music is employed as a means of social intervention, this research project offers insight into how participatory music making may function simultaneously as a transformative and reproductive force that enables individuals and groups to transcend certain boundaries within their social worlds; but, at the same time, reinforces and conceals other limitations that equally constrain them.

The research project is based on an ethnographic study of a community music program in the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidieh in the southern part of Lebanon. Previous studies of the program have pointed to a range of positive outcomes for the participants, such as experiences of vitality and mastery, a positive sense of personal and cultural identity, and feelings of belonging and recognition. The present research builds upon these findings. Yet it also draws attention to a range of more ambiguous outcomes of music making in this context. In particular, the musical practice investigated here is connected to the constitution and imposition of a specific narrative of national belonging and identity, emphasizing a primordial and unceasing attachment to the land of Palestine, which may not fully resemble the lived experiences of all participants. A central objective of the study is to understand how the Palestinian music program offers music making as resource for agency and empowerment, while simultaneously constituting the participants as proper national subjects, thereby constraining the participants' agency to align with specific socially recognized truths.

The empirical data was constructed using participant observation of music activities and performances and semistructured interviews with participants, teachers, and administrators from the music program, as well as local Palestinians from the community. The analysis has been conducted as an evolving process in which the empirical data has been continuously revisited, subjected to different modes of interpretation and explored through various theoretical perspectives. This process is documented in the four research articles that constitute the core of this study. Each of these papers engages with the empirical data and/or develops the analytical perspectives, without necessarily building upon each other in a linear fashion. The research synthesis presented here gathers these perspectives and provides a frame for the research as a whole.

Adopting a performative view of culture and identity, this study attends to processes of subject formation as an inherently ambiguous endeavor. Employing the thinking of Victor Turner, musical performance is cast as a liminal space in which ordinary social relations are temporarily suspended, and performers are afforded the means of assessing, exploring, and transforming their social realities. Applying Judith Butler's notions of performativity and subjectivation underlines how such performative processes are situated within the social, discursive, and institutional norms and structures that constitute the social world. These ideas are combined with a perspective from critical musicology and Georgina Born's model of the social mediation of music, a model that

conceives of musical sociality as occurring on four distinct planes or levels, each of which contributes to the constitution of a musical assemblage. By enabling explorations of how music constitutes the social on various planes of sociality, and the mutual interferences and intersections of these planes, Born's model opens for examination the potential paradoxical and antagonistic outcomes of musical practice and performance.

The perspectives of Turner, Butler, and Born underlie the theoretical contribution of this study, which is the notion of ambiguous musical practice. As an analytical lens specifically suited for illuminating the ambivalent outcomes of participatory music making, this notion extends the dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation found within the field of music education. It does so by emphasizing three aspects of musical practice: its *bidirectionality* in terms of the interrelation of transformative/reproductive social processes involved in musicking; the *multiplicity of meanings*, referring to how music can mediate relations on various social planes simultaneously; and the *in-betweenness* that concerns how music making may enable performers to inhabit norms differently, but also how musical performance conceals and naturalizes those very norms. In this way, the notion of ambiguous musical practice may provide music educators with a deeper understanding of how music contributes to processes of social transformation, while retaining a critical attitude toward how music making may simultaneously be involved in more problematic processes of social reproduction.

Sammendrag

Dette forskningsprojekt tager udgangspunkt i en central spænding i musikpædagogisk tænkning. På den ene side fremhæves det ofte hvordan musikdeltagelse bidrager til en positiv udvikling af identitet og selvforståelse gennem oplevelser af fællesskab og samhørighed og som et fundament for deltagerens mulighed for at handle selvstændigt. Flere analyser har imidlertid også påpeget hvordan musikpædagogiske praksisser er med til at reproducere samfundsmæssige strukturer præget af ulighed. Aktivistiske strømninger i det musikpædagogiske felt, f.eks. community music-feltet, har forsøgt at udfordre sådanne ulige strukturer ved at promovere og igangsætte deltagerstyrede og åbne former for musikbeskæftigelse og ved at gøre disse tilgængelige for alle samfundsgrupper. Disse praksisser er imidlertid blevet kritiseret for at basere sig på romantiske forestillinger om musik som et middel til social forandring og for at overse hvordan også progressive musikalske praksisser potentielt er indflettet i socialt reproducerende og ekskluderende processer.

I det foreliggende studie undersøger jeg denne spænding i den musikpædagogiske tænkning nærmere. Gennem udviklingen af begrebet *flertydig musikalsk praksis* (ambiguous musical practice) fremhæver jeg de ambivalente situationer der opstår når musik bliver brugt som en form for social intervention. Derved skabes indsigt i den måde hvorpå aktiv musikhedtagelse potentielt fungerer som både en transformativ og en reproducerende kraft, der på den ene side gør individer og grupper i stand til at overskride barrierer i deres sociale

virkelighed, men som samtidig forstærker og skjuler strukturer der fastholder dem i roller eller skaber nye begrænsninger.

Forskningsprojektet er baseret på en etnografisk undersøgelse af et community music-projekt i Rashidieh, en palæstinensisk flygtningelejr i den sydlige del af Libanon. Tidligere undersøgelser af dette musikprojekt har peget på en mængde gavnlige effekter for deltagerne, såsom oplevelser af vitalitet, mestring, en positiv erfaring af personlig og kulturel identitet, og oplevelser af anerkendelse og af at høre til. Det foreliggende studie bygger på de tidligere undersøgelsers resultater, men samtidig fremhæver jeg nogle mere ambivalente konsekvenser af musikedtagelse i denne kontekst. Således viser jeg hvordan musikprojektet er forbundet til et bestemt nationalt narrativ der bygger på en forestilling om den nationale identitet og tilknytningen til Palæstina som uforanderlige og eviggyldige størrelser. Denne forestilling er imidlertid ikke nødvendigvis en præcis gengivelse af hvordan deltagerne i musikprojektet oplever deres egen livssituation. Et centralt mål for denne afhandling er at belyse hvordan musikedtagelsen øger de unge palæstinenseres muligheder for handling og erfaring, men også hvordan musikprojektet samtidig konstituerer dem som nationale subjekter og på denne måde afpasser deltagerens erfaringsmuligheder med allerede fastsatte socialt accepterede sandheder.

De empiriske data er produceret ved hjælp af deltagerobservation af aktiviteterne i musikprojektet og gennem semistrukturerede interviews med deltagere, undervisere og administrative medarbejdere knyttet til projektet samt andre personer fra det palæstinensiske samfund i Libanon. Disse data er analyseret i en fortløbende proces, hvor de kontinuerligt er blevet underkastet forskellige fortolkningsperspektiver og udforsket ved hjælp af forskellige teoretiske tilgange. Denne proces er dokumenteret i de fire forskningsartikler der udgør den centrale del af afhandlingen. Hver enkelt af disse artikler diskuterer elementer af det samlede studie uden nødvendigvis at bygge ovenpå hinanden i en lineær progression. Den foreliggende afhandlingstekst forbinder de forskellige perspektiver og danner en samlet ramme om forskningsprojektet.

Projektet fokuserer på subjektivitetsdannelsen gennem et performativt blik på kultur og identitet med et særligt øje for det ambivalente og flertydige i disse processer. Med reference til antropologen Victor Turner beskrives musikalsk performance som et *liminalt rum*, hvor de almindelige og hverdagslige sociale relationer midlertidigt suspenderes, og hvor deltagerne får mulighed for at betragte, udforske og forandre de sociale realiteter de lever i. Ved at inddrage Judith Butlers begreber om performativitet og subjektivering understreges

det hvordan sådanne performative processer er lokaliseret i de sociale, diskursive og institutionelle normer og strukturer der konstituerer den sociale virkelighed. Disse ideer og begreber kombineres med et perspektiv fra den kritiske musikvidenskab, nærmere bestemt Georgina Borns model for musik som en socialt medieret praksis. Denne model beskriver musikalsk socialitet som værende konstitueret på fire distinkte niveauer, der hver især bidrager til etableringen af en *musikalsk montage* (musical assemblage). Ved at give mulighed for at undersøge musikalsk socialitet på forskellige niveauer af den sociale virkelighed, og disse socialiteters gensidige interaktion, åbner denne model for forståelse af de paradoksale og modsætningsfyldte konsekvenser af musikalsk praksis.

Turners, Butlers og Borns perspektiver udgør fundamentet for mit teoretiske bidrag med denne afhandling, nemlig begrebet om *flertydig musikalsk praksis* (ambiguous musical practice). Dette begreb kan forstås som et særligt analytisk blik der er konstrueret for at belyse de ambivalente effekter af musikedtagelse. Som sådan bidrager begrebet til at udvide de dominerende opfattelser af musik som et middel til social forandring der findes i det musikpædagogiske felt. Begrebet sætter fokus på tre aspekter af musikalsk praksis: *dobbeltrettethed* (bidirectionality), der skal forstås som den indbyrdes sammenhæng mellem forandrende og reproduktive sociale processer afstedkommet af musikedtagelse; *meningsmangfoldighed* (multiplicity of meanings), der handler om hvordan musik medierer det sociale på forskellige niveauer på samme tid; og *'imellemhed'* (in-betweenness), som beskriver hvordan musikalsk performance potentielt tillader musikalske aktører at bebo sociale normer på alternative måder, men også hvordan musikalsk performance skjuler og naturaliserer sådanne normer. Begrebet om flertydig musikalsk praksis fremsættes som et analytisk redskab for musikpædagoger og -forskere der søger at forstå hvordan musik kan bruges til at skabe social forandring, men som samtidig ønsker at fastholde et kritisk blik på hvordan musikedtagelse på problematiske måder også – og på samme tid – kan være involveret i socialt reproducerende processer.

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1 Introduction

With music, I change my character. I build my own character. [...] You can make your life more positive and better with music.

The words are Ali's, a young Palestinian refugee who is a member of a community music program in the refugee camp of Rashidieh in Lebanon, and they substantiate a central belief within the field of community music: that music can be used as a means of positive social transformation for marginalized individuals and groups. I met Ali in 2012, when I lived in Lebanon for eight months. During that time, I taught music to the best of my abilities in the community music program in Rashidieh, and in return, I learned a great deal about the social, cultural, and political issues that influence the experience of the past, present, and future of the Palestinian youth growing up in refugee camps in Lebanon. Among the many things that have stayed with me since my first encounter with Ali and his friends is the question of how music making might be a response to such issues. How can music become a resource for change in Ali's life? How might music be a means of social transformation for a marginalized group like the Palestinians in Lebanon?

In 2015, I got the chance to pursue these questions in the Ph.D. research project presented here. As I began to dig deeper into both theoretical and empirical explorations of my topic, I found that I had to widen my initial questions. Previous research on the music program in Rashidieh had suggested that the musical practice offers resources for the participants to take up and put to

use for personal and social development (e.g. Boeskov, 2013a; Ruud, 2011, 2012; Storsve, Westby & Ruud, 2010). These findings generally reflected the dominant self-perception in the field of community music, where music's capacity as a resource for positive social transformation is readily acknowledged—some would argue, to the point of idealization. However, during the initial phases of field work, it dawned on me that these instances of agency were tied to the participants' subjection to particular values, meanings, and perceptions held by the Palestinian community. In other words, while music making afforded the young Palestinians ways of transcending specific limitations within the social context, and thereby a means of transforming their social experience and self-perceptions, these processes seemed intimately bound up with the reproduction of cultural truths and social structures that were more difficult—if not downright impossible—for the participants to question within the frame of musical performance. In this way, music's socially transformative powers appeared to be connected to processes of social reproduction that I found produced a range of ambiguous consequences for the young Palestinians. Rather than focusing exclusively on the transformative power of music, this insight led me to turn attention to the potentially ambivalent or conflictual workings of musical practice and performance.

Based on an ethnographic study of the music program in Rashidieh, this thesis seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the complex social processes that emerge when music is put to use as a means of social transformation. Through an exploration of the paradoxes and ambiguities attached to this particular musical practice, the study aims to extend the ways in which the fields of community music and music education imagine and conceptualize music's social significance.

An important starting point for this investigation has been the paradigm often referred to as the "new" or "critical" musicology. From this perspective, music is implicated in the production of sociocultural life, and therefore is also a part of the processes in which social and cultural identities and relations are stabilized, negotiated, and transformed. Inspired by recent developments in social theory, "the social" in this research project is conceived in the sense of "sociality," as a "dynamic matrix of relations" (Long & Moore, 2013, p. 3) between human and non-human actors that comprise the social world. This thinking of sociality has been adopted into the musicological discourse by Georgina Born (2011, 2012), who argues that "music necessitates an expansion of previous conceptions of the social" (Born, 2012, p. 266). For Born, this means that musical

sociality should be thought of in the plural, as an assemblage of socialities, a notion that attempts to capture how musical practice and performance at once establish particular relations at a microsocial level, but that these relations are simultaneously mediated by imagined communities, social-identity categories, and the institutional formations within which the music occurs. This thesis applies Born's perspective as an analytical lens to capture the sense in which participatory music making may be involved in transforming social relations on one level of sociality, while reproducing relations on other levels.

I seek to further illuminate these issues by combining critical musicological perspectives with insights from the anthropology of performance associated with Victor Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1988) and Judith Butler's (1988, 1993/2011, 1997a, 1997b, 1999) feminist philosophy. Centrally placed are the notions of "performance" and "performativity" that have become crucial in poststructuralist theories of subjectivity and agency. A central assertion in this combination of perspectives is that "performance is always a doing and a thing done" (Diamond, 1996, p. 1). As a doing, performance refers to the processes in which performative action establishes a liminal space for cultural imagination and creativity that extends our ways of being; and as a thing done, the notion of performativity captures the sense in which such acts always depend on prior performances and the principles and norms that shape our social reality.

The combination of the theoretical perspectives outlined above leads to an advancement of the notion of *ambiguous musical practice*, which I put forward as an analytical framework that allows for deeper understanding of potentially conflictual and ambivalent social processes in community music and music educational practice. The word "ambiguity" is used in a specific sense and refers to something indeterminate, bi-directional and open to multiple meanings. For example, an ambiguous phrase may be interpreted in several ways, while an ambiguous situation may lead to two or more possible outcomes. I use this word to emphasize three dimensions of musical practice: First, ambiguity refers to the potential of musical performance and practice for consolidating/destabilizing norms, as explicated in Butler's (1993/2011, 1999) notion of performativity. Because performance is both a present act and, at the same time, enters into chains of previous performances, it always contains a double potential as a transformative and/or reproductive social space. Second, the idea of several meanings experienced at once implied in the notion of ambiguity draws attention to Born's understanding of music as a mediation of multiple socialities. Analyzing participatory music making in terms of social processes occurring

on various planes of sociality allows for consideration of conflicting or antagonistic processes playing out within musical performance. Third, ambiguity is central to an understanding of Turner's concept of "liminality" as a space in-between (Turner, 1969, 1982). As musical performance enables experiencing multiple forms of existence simultaneously, meanings, identities and relations can be performed in ways that render them indeterminate. This potentially enables musical agents to exceed some limitations and alter particular social relations by drawing on the legitimacy and authority of other social relations mediated in performance. However, the in-betweenness of performance is also connected to the processes that conceal and naturalize such legitimacies and authorities. By emphasizing the bidirectionality, multiplicity of meanings, and in-betweenness of musical practice and performance, the notion of ambiguous musical practice points to the complex intersection of transformative and reproductive social processes of participatory music making.

The community music program in Rashidieh serves as the empirical case through which I develop this conceptualization. Processes of analyzing empirical data and developing theoretical perspectives have constantly interacted throughout the research process. Reflections upon my experiences in the music program have informed and guided my theoretical readings. Likewise, the insights I have gained from engaging with the ideas of Turner, Butler, and Born have spurred new readings of the empirical data. That this process has been ongoing throughout the research process is apparent from the four research articles that comprise the core of this thesis. As these papers engage with existing theory, propose new theoretical perspectives, analyze and discuss empirical data, and subject these readings to new theoretical frameworks, each of them constitutes a partial and provisional attempt to address various aspects of the larger study, without explicitly building upon each other in a linear fashion. The research synthesis presented here draws these various perspectives together and provides a frame for the research as a whole.

With this research project, I aim to contribute to the development of critical scholarship within the field of community music in particular, and music education in general. As a field of practice, community music is not necessarily fully convergent with music education. One could argue that insights arising from studies of community music practice are not necessarily easily transferred to other, more formal settings. While acknowledging that there may be some truth in this, I argue that there may also be significant advantages to using a community music practice for exploring larger issues that, as I will discuss

below, also have applicability to music education debates. As community music practices actively seek to utilize music as a form of social action and for promoting change, these processes are foregrounded in ways that better allow for scrutiny of their dynamics. I invite music educators to apply the perspectives developed here to explore transformative/reproductive social processes in their own practices, whether these are formal or informal. In the following, I discuss how the questions raised by the present research project are connected to these fields.

1.1 Social action through music

1.1.1 Community music

As a field of practice and research, community music has gained increased attention in recent decades. In the last few years, a series of academic publications has secured the field of community music a notable position within the broader music educational discourse (e.g. Bartleet & Higgins, 2018b; Higgins, 2012; Higgins & Willingham, 2017; Veblen, Messenger, Silverman & Elliott, 2013; and the *International Journal of Community Music*). Nonetheless, as community music scholars often note, what the term “community music” implies has proven consistently hard to define and tends to differ across the global contexts in which it is currently in use.

Kari Veblen and Bengt Olsson (2002) suggest that community music is most fundamentally based on the claim that “everyone has the right and ability to make and create music” (p. 730), underlining the inclusive and participatory ethos that for many has come to define the field. While “community” sometimes refers to the locality of the musical engagement, in the sense that musical practices are established to reflect or enrich the life of the group of people that enacts them, the word “community” is also frequently connected to the communitarian values underpinning such activities. Targeting people barred from social and cultural participation, community music often exhibits an “awareness of the need to include disenfranchised or disadvantaged individuals or groups” (Veblen & Olsson, 2002, p. 731) in music activities and focuses not only on musical learning, but also on the participants’ personal and social development. Further, community music practitioners often seek to use music to

“foster intercultural and interpersonal acceptance and understanding” (Veblen & Olsson, 2002, p. 731).

In one of the first academic books devoted to community music, *Community Music in Theory and in Practice*, Lee Higgins (2012) combines these different connotations of the word “community” and suggests that community music could be understood as the *music of a community* and as *communal music making*, dimensions that, according to Higgins, “point toward an expression, through music, of a community’s local identities, traditions, aspirations, and social interactions” (Higgins, 2012, p. 4). Higgins further connects this emphasis on locality and participation to an understanding of community music as “an active intervention between a music leader or facilitator and participants” (Higgins, 2012, p. 5), an intervention that through the use of music is directed at enabling the participants to address social, cultural, or political issues of concern to them, and thereby constituting a call for “cultural democracy to come” (Higgins, 2012, p. 167ff).

Building upon this interventionist understanding of community music, Higgins emphasizes the transformative potential of community music practice. Addressing community music as a site of social justice and drawing on the work of Homi K. Bhabha (1994), Higgins thinks of community music intervention “[a]s a form of thoughtful disruption [that] denotes an encounter with ‘newness,’ a perspective that seeks to create situations in which new events innovate and interrupt the present toward moments of futural transformation” (Higgins, 2015, p. 446). Thus, at the heart of community music lies a commitment to social justice, inclusion, cultural democracy and social transformation. Community music practitioners work according to these ideals in a wide range of contexts outside of formal institutions for music education, with at-risk youth, homeless, immigrants, refugees or asylum-seekers, in prisons, deprived neighborhoods, or in connection to peacebuilding initiatives. Here, active music making is offered as a resource by which individuals and groups address issues of importance to them, challenge stigmas or unjust social structures, and maintain or create positive relations to self and the surrounding world.

1.1.2 Musical-social work

The rise of community music over the past two decades is part of a broader turn toward a social-activist attitude within a variety of musical practices. In

the field of music therapy, the emerging field of community music therapy has gained prominence (see especially Ansdell, 2002; Ansdell, 2014; Pavlicevic & Ansdell, 2004; Stige, 2002; Stige & Aarø, 2012; Stige, Ansdell, Elefant & Pavlicevic, 2010). This line of music therapeutic work retains a focus on the use of music for processes of change, but lifts the gaze from the inner psyche of the individual toward relations between individuals and groups and the broader social, cultural, and political issues they face and which pose crucial threats to their health and well-being.

Within the music educational discourse, another strand of socially oriented work has appeared, namely music educational practices inspired by the Venezuelan program known as *El Sistema*. The *Sistema Global* webpage, an organization that links Sistema-inspired programs across the world, describes this program as “an extraordinary cultural, educational, and social program that pursues the goals of social engagement and youth empowerment through ensemble music education” (Sistema Global, n.d.). Music education programs inspired by El Sistema use classical ensemble music as a vehicle for social action to alleviate problems of deprivation and marginalization for children and youth. Evaluations of these practices have found a range of positive effects related to the participants’ social, emotional, and cognitive well-being, their level of aspiration and academic attainment, positive experiences of individual and group identities, and heightened self-confidence (Creech, Gonzales-Moreno, Lorenzino & Waitman, 2016).

What unites the fields of community music, community music therapy, and Sistema-inspired practices is their common interest in using music as a form of social action. While they differ somewhat in approaches to practice, philosophy, tradition, and area of application, these musical practices share the basic assumption that participatory music making can be a tool for responding to social problems, which it does particularly by fostering inclusive spaces for musical engagement. Acknowledging that there is currently no common terminology in place for this line of work, Gary Ansdell (2014, p. 193) proposes the term ‘musical-social work,’ a term I will adopt and use throughout this thesis. Musical-social work in my usage includes participatory music-making programs that put music to use in order to achieve equality, social justice, peace building, well-being, and positive social change. These are musical practices that are specifically founded on a belief in music as a means of social transformation.

1.1.3 Critical debates of music as a means of social transformation

While musical-social work has gained positive attention from music practitioners, researchers, and the public, some critical scholars have voiced concern over a tendency to idealize music as a means of social transformation while evading critical questions of power relations, ideology, and negative effects of music making (Baker, 2014; Bergh, 2010; Bergh & Sloboda, 2010; Dyndahl & Varkøy, 2017; Kertz-Welzel, 2005, 2011, 2016; Philpott, 2012; Røyseng & Varkøy, 2014; Yerichuk, 2014).

Writing from within the field of music and conflict transformation, the music sociologist Arild Bergh (2010) notices in publications on this topic a “distinctly romantic view of music” that is often “expressed through the term ‘the power of music’” (p. 13). This romantic view, Bergh (2010) continues, “implies, in effect, that music is *instantly* able to change enemies’ attitudes in ways that are context-independent” (p. 14). In a literature review of the field, Bergh and John Sloboda (2010) note “that in general there exists an overly optimistic view of what music and art can achieve in conflict transformation situations” (p. 8). They find that studies generally privilege facilitators’ views over participants’, often do not consider power dynamics, and frequently use anecdotes to explain success, rather than critical examination of actual events and experiences. A common problem is that evaluations of programs focus on claiming success (thereby also generating funding) rather than critically analyzing how the assumed positive results come about or discussing the negative sides of the projects.

Also, the field of community music has been criticized for eliciting overly romantic views of music’s power to affect positive social transformation. Alexandra Kertz-Welzel (2016) finds that community music writing is characterized by *kitsch*—emotionally charged and simplified beliefs about the transformative power of music. Kertz-Welzel argues that community music is often depicted in terms of “pedagogical heroism” and generally only acknowledges the positive aspects of music making while downplaying potentially negative sides. Similarly, Deanna Yerichuk (2014) argues that the field of community music historically has been reluctant to address questions of how music making serves specific interests while excluding others. According to Yerichuk (2014) this omission is connected to simplified understandings of the notion of “community.” In scholarship within the field, the term often is “normalized as always-already

inclusive,” which means that community music in itself is “understood as an always and only good thing“ (p. 146).

El Sistema and Sistema-inspired programs also have been the subject of debate, stirred by Geoffrey Baker’s (2014) work on the Venezuelan program’s history and practices, which does not exactly portray it as the progressive force within contemporary music education that its advocates propound. In his book, *El Sistema: Orchestrating Venezuela’s Youth*, Baker challenges the idealized image of the program that newspaper articles, films, and scholarly writing convey, which has dominated the public discourse about El Sistema in North America and Europe. As a counterweight to these reports, Baker emphasizes the negative and potentially damaging aspects of the program for the participants, teachers, and cultural life in Venezuela. Most importantly, Baker discusses the authoritative and competitive structure of the classical orchestras, and the focus on developing the participants’ discipline and loyalty toward the program and its leaders, rather than supporting informed and critical citizenship (see also Baker, 2016; Baker, Bull & Taylor, 2018; Baker & Frega, 2018).

Following Baker’s critique of El Sistema in Venezuela, several scholars have critically investigated Sistema-inspired programs around the world and raised questions regarding problematic aspects of the underlying ideology and pedagogy of these practices (e.g., Bergman & Lindgren, 2014; Boia & Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Bull, 2016; Dobson, 2016; Lindgren, Bergman & Sæther, 2016; Rosabal-Coto, 2016; Shieh, 2015). The remarkable distance between such critical studies and the overwhelmingly positive evaluations of Sistema-inspired projects found in commissioned reports¹ is discussed by Baker, Anna Bull and Mark Taylor (2018). They identify a range of methodological weaknesses in the evaluations that they subject to closer scrutiny. But they also note that the different portraits painted by commissioned evaluations and critical research of the effects of Sistema-inspired programs are produced by the differences in the questions they ask:

Whereas evaluators tend to examine whether programmes achieve their goals, independent researchers are much more likely to interrogate the validity of those goals and consider cultural, political, or philosophical questions that they raise, drawing on academic fields such as music studies, sociology, and critical theory. (Baker et al., 2018, p. 264)

While music educators often point to the potential of participatory music making as a means of positive social transformation, there may be reason to believe that advocates of musical-social work sometimes gloss over the

¹ For a review of these reports, see Creech et al. (2016).

contradictory outcomes of such practices. In the field of community music, this tension is recognized and embraced for its constructive potential as a source of development. In their introduction to the newly published *Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Higgins write:

[W]hen it comes to community music and social change, we also recognize the need for deeper and more critical reflection on the underlying processes and assumptions of community music initiatives. ... There needs to be a deep understanding of what change community music facilitators are trying to make, and the underlying aims, assumptions, and processes behind it. This is where *critical* scholarship and research can play a role. (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018a, p. 7)

I regard my own work as part of a burgeoning self-critical movement within the field of community music. I suggest that one of its central tasks is to contribute to moving the field beyond simplistic and romantic views of music's transformative powers, to deal with the complex, contradictory, and ambiguous outcomes of participatory music making. The usefulness of the notion of ambiguous musical practice advanced here, I argue, is that it allows the social analyst of community music and music educational practice to explore the transformative potential of particular musical practices while retaining a critical view of how such practices may, at the same time, reinscribe problematic social relations.

1.2 Critical scholarship in the field of music education

The theme of music as a means of social transformation is central to the field of community music and musical-social work in general. Yet, the issues outlined above can also be connected to central debates in the field of music education. Geir Johansen (2017) discusses critical scholarship in the field of music education that considers how music educational practices can become a force for democracy and positive social transformation within our societies, but also how institutionalized music education itself is involved in problematic processes of social reproduction and exclusion. Christopher Small's (1977) seminal book *Music, Society, Education* shows an early impetus toward this debate with its analysis of how music education and its institutions impose a specific world view and ideas about music, which effectively exclude people from becoming active in processes of music making and from accessing the potentially enriching experiences of musical communality. In recent decades, music education scholars have supplemented Small's critique from various perspectives by criticizing

the institution of music education for its failure to secure the equal rights of all people to develop their musical identities and abilities, regardless of race, gender, class, sexual identity, and musical preferences (e.g., Bradley, 2006, 2007; Gould, 2007, 2012, 2013; Green, 1997; Jorgensen, 2003). The recent publication of *The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Music Education* (Benedict, Schmidt, Spruce & Woodford, 2015) points to the continuous relevance and centrality of these discussions for the field.

In response to the inadequacies of music education in fulfilling its social and educational obligations, scholars have sought to establish more solid foundations for a truly democratic and inclusive form of music education, in which students develop a critical consciousness and are enabled to envision and enact alternative models of sociality that challenge social injustice and inequity. Community music can be understood as exactly this: an attempt to establish a model for radically democratic musical practice—in Higgins' (2015) words, “hospitable music making,” characterized by an unconditional welcome to those who have been excluded from cultural participation (p. 448). Yet, while such foundations may be philosophically sound, their application to real life practice may be more difficult. As Estelle Jorgensen (2003) argues, “Despite educators’ best efforts to create and sustain dialogue, an open-ended system in which multiple solutions can be implemented and tolerated, and in which all can participate fully, other forces invariably contradict, countermand, or crush these efforts” (p. 15). These oppressive forces are “systemic,” writes Jorgensen,

they permeate every societal institution and are embedded in institutional beliefs, values, norms, structures, and practices. They exist in every musical, artistic, and educational group and are almost impossible to eradicate because they are so widespread and taken for granted that they form a part of common sense. (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 6)

Baker (2014) reiterates the recognition that progressive music education also may involve unsolvable paradoxes, urging us to acknowledge that “[i]nstitutions and cultural practices potentially have both positive and negative effects simultaneously, and claimed benefits may come with hidden costs or countereffects” (p. 16). Likewise, Wayne Bowman (2009b) points to the potentially ambiguous effects of musical practice:

For one thing, the results of instructional and musical actions are seldom uniform and predictable; and, for another, results interact in complicated ways. A consequence that is desirable on one level or in one way may be quite undesirable on another. The consequences of human action, then, are seldom sin-

gular, are often entangled with each other in complex ways, and may well be at odds with each other. (p. 4)

The present research project emanates from a feeling that this recognition of music educational practice as an inherently ambivalent endeavor has not been fully adopted by the field of music education. Instead, critical scholars more often point to the shortcomings of institutionalized music education practices in order to devise conceptions and philosophies by which musical practice can become a liberating and truly democratic force in society, thus seeking to overcome and surpass the uncomfortable state of ambiguity.² This research project suggests a different approach. I argue that a central task overlooked in the eagerness to ascribe emancipatory potential to music education is to develop a nuanced understanding of the ambiguity itself: how music educational practice functions simultaneously as a progressive/conservative, transformative/reproductive, inclusive/exclusive force by which people transcend boundaries within their social worlds, while reinforcing and concealing other limitations by which they are equally constrained. The question that this thesis raises is whether the prevailing normative focus in discussions of music education's social significance has displaced highly relevant discussions of the more mundane functions of participatory music making. By developing analytical tools that allow for deeper engagement with these issues, this thesis aims to shed new light on the social dynamics of music educational practice.

1.3 Research aims and questions

The aim of this study is to develop deeper understandings of ambivalent social processes within musical practice, with specific attention to how such practice reproduces and/or transforms social relations. Through analysis of the music program in Rashidieh and informed by readings of musicological, anthropological, and philosophical literature, I seek to critically examine dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation within the field of music education. Moreover, I extend these conceptions in ways that better

² As an example, such states of ambiguity are disregarded in David Elliott and Marissa Silverman's (2015) praxial philosophy of music education, when they distinguish between music carried out ethically as *praxis* and music as (merely) a social *practice*, the latter frequently exemplified by the extreme case of music in Nazi Germany (see e.g., Elliott & Silverman, 2015, p. 102). My contention with this normative philosophy is that it neglects how "ethical" music educational practices aiming for positive social transformation also may be implicated in and influenced by "negative" social forces.

accommodate thinking about the potentially ambiguous, conflicting, and antagonistic social relations produced in music educational practice in general and community music practice in particular. The main research question is:

How can community music practice be analyzed and conceptualized as *ambiguous musical practice*, i.e., as musical practice comprised of interconnected transformative and reproductive social processes?

This overall research question is further elaborated into two research questions concerning the empirical part of the study, and two connected to the theoretical part:

- How are the participants' subjectivities constituted within the music program in Rashidieh?
- How do participants gain agency through musical performance and in what forms?
- How is music as a means of social transformation conceptualized within the field of music education?
- How can these conceptions be extended in order to accommodate thinking about ambiguous social processes within community music practice?

1.4 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is a synthesis and an extended discussion of the research disseminated in four research articles. This introduction is the first of eight chapters. It is followed by a presentation of the context and empirical object of the research, the Palestinian community music program located in the refugee camp Rashidieh, in the southern part of Lebanon. Chapter 3 provides an overview of existing research relevant to the topic of this thesis. The chapter is divided into four parts addressing the themes "music and the displaced," "musical belonging and community," "music and identity," and "music and agency." The fourth chapter discusses the thesis's theoretical framework, which draws together conceptions from anthropological theories of performance and ritual associated with Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1988), the feminist philosophy of Butler (1993/2011, 1997a, 1997b, 1999), and a model of the social mediation of music outlined by Born (2011, 2012). In the final section of this chapter, I present the notion of ambiguous musical practice and its three dimensions, *bidirectionality*,

multiplicity of meanings, and *in-betweenness*. In chapter 5, I discuss the methodological approach of the research and consider its ethical dimensions. The sixth chapter summarizes the articles, while chapter 7 recapitulates and discusses the findings of the research reported in the four articles, and in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework. In the final chapter, I discuss how this study and the notion of ambiguous musical practice might inform community music and music educational practice and scholarship.

2 Context

In this chapter, I provide a brief account of the history of the Palestinians in Lebanon, discussing their position as a socially and politically marginalized group and the role of the NGOs and cultural and commemorative activities in the social life of the refugee community. Thereafter, I present the context of the music program, its activities, and the relevant research connected to the program.

2.1 The Palestinians in Lebanon³

The Palestinians use the term *al Nakba*, “the catastrophe,” to designate the violent events surrounding the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, on the territory that until then had been the British Mandate for Palestine, which turned more than 700,000 Palestinians into refugees (Morris, 1987). Approximately 100,000 fled to Lebanon and settled in the temporary camps that were built in the early 1950s by the UN organization UNRWA.⁴ Today, twelve refugee camps are still the home of most of the 260,000–280,000 Palestinians currently living in Lebanon (Chaaban et al., 2016).

3 The account of the history of the Palestinians in Lebanon is based on the historical and anthropological works of Diana Allan (2014), Juliane Hammer (2005), Julie Peteet (2005), and Rosemary Sayigh (1979, 1994).

4 United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.

From the beginning, the refugee community was impoverished and without any political representation. In 1969, the Palestinian national movement led by Yasser Arafat reached an agreement with the Lebanese government that significantly extended the Palestinians' rights and autonomy in Lebanon. The agreement paved the way for a short-lived proliferation of the Palestinian community, and the camps became centers for the growing Palestinian nationalism and the fight for self-determination. However, increasing tension between Palestinian fighters and both the Israeli and Lebanese armies, as well as Christian right-wing militias, eventually erupted into fifteen years of civil war (1975–90) in Lebanon, with dire consequences for Palestinian as well as Lebanese civilians. In 1976, Lebanese and Syrian troops besieged Palestinian militias in the refugee camp Tal Al-Za'tar in Beirut. A large number of Palestinian civilians were trapped inside the camp, and when the camp finally fell, thousands of people had died. The continuing pressure upon the leaders of the Palestinian resistance movement led to their evacuation from Beirut to Tunis in 1982, which left the remaining Palestinian community even more vulnerable. In November of that year, Israeli-backed Christian right-wing militias conducted the infamous Sabra-Shatila massacres that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Palestinian and Lebanese, mostly unarmed, civilians.

By the end of the civil war, the Palestinians had returned to their previous condition as the politically and socially disenfranchised community they are now, facing legal and institutional discrimination and lacking basic rights, most importantly the right to own property and to work in a number of professions. After more than 70 years of residence, Lebanese law still considers the Palestinians foreigners, which subjects them to a number of restrictions in terms of limited opportunities for work, education, health care, and social services. Generally, the refugees need assistance in order to survive, either from humanitarian organizations like UNRWA or very commonly from relatives abroad. The Palestinians live in deprived conditions; camps are overcrowded, buildings and roads are insufficiently maintained, and water and sewage systems function poorly (Chaaban et al., 2016; Uglund, 2003). The constant feeling of insecurity and the unhealthy environment can most likely be connected to the severity of physical and mental illness among the Palestinians (Chaaban et al., 2016). The Palestinian refugees are not only victims of the *Nakba*, the original displacement from their homes in Palestine, but also of the continuing story of loss, war, and dispossession that characterizes their existence as refugees in Lebanon.

2.1.1 Marginalization in Lebanon and the right of return

The marginalization of the Palestinian community in Lebanon is maintained partly due to the fragile political division of power between religious groups that form the basis for Lebanon's constitutional democracy. A fear of creating sectarian imbalance has resulted in exclusion of the mainly Sunni Muslim Palestinian community from obtaining civil and political rights in the Lebanese society, which Lebanese politicians assert would inevitably lead to their naturalization (Allan, 2014; Hammer, 2005; Knudsen, 2007).

The Palestinians themselves have also objected to any talk of assimilation into the Lebanese society, seeing such a move as undermining the central political claim of the Palestinian community: the right to return to their homes in Palestine. This right is granted them by the UN Resolution 194, which states that “[Palestinian] refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date” (United Nations, 1948). The UN General Assembly has reaffirmed the 1948 resolution every three years (Peteet, 2005, p. 62), but it has yet to have any effect on the lives of the Palestinian refugees.

A significant blow to the refugees' claim of the right of return came from within the Palestinian community itself. In the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Palestinian representatives largely abandoned the issue of the refugees' right of return, in favor of the establishment of a Palestinian government in the West Bank and Gaza territories. Many Palestinians felt heavily betrayed by their national leadership's renouncing this crucial claim for the Palestinian refugees. The step effectively displaced the issue from the agenda of official peace negotiations to the level of grassroots activism (Jaradat, 2008; Schulz, 2003). The Lebanese authorities feared that the Oslo agreement would lead to the permanent resettling of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Therefore, any discussion of naturalization or extending the Palestinians' civil rights in Lebanon became highly contentious in Lebanese politics, despite the fact that the Palestinian themselves also rejected the idea of permanent resettlement (Khalili, 2007, p. 57).

2.1.2 Palestinian NGOs, cultural activities, and commemoration

After the end of the civil war that marked the displacement of Palestinian national institutions from Lebanese soil, Palestinian NGOs have emerged as

central institutions in the refugee community (Khalili, 2007; Suleiman, 1997). While some have ties to Palestinian political factions, such as Hamas or the PLO, many do not, and they are almost exclusively funded by donations from Western partner organizations. Working as representatives of the Palestinian refugees in both Lebanese society and international forums, the NGOs have become dominant agents in the political life of the camps and greatly influence the everyday life of the refugees. The NGOs offer a wide range of services to the community, including preschool education, vocational training, social welfare and health services, as well as cultural activities. As Jaber Suleiman (1997) notes, “although the majority of the donor agencies do not have this as a priority” (p. 405), the NGOs believe in the importance of providing the youth especially with cultural activities intended to preserve the Palestinian cultural heritage and national identity. Important parts of these activities are connected to preserving and disseminating Palestinian cultural practices from before 1948, as well as commemorating the *Nakba*, the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, and other significant events tied to the Palestinian displacement and ongoing suffering. This national education occurs as part of after-school activities in which the NGOs teach Palestinian history and geography, or offer various activities aimed at preserving cultural traditions or transmitting the cultural, social, and political identity of the Palestinian community to the younger generations. For example, music activities often consist of the dancing of *dabke*, a traditional Arabic line-dance regarded as the Palestinian national dance. Similarly, in art classes the participants learn to draw iconized images of keys, Palestinian flags, and olive trees as well as barbed-wire fences and stone-throwing children (Khalili, 2007, p. 73).

These activities must be seen as part of a broader “commemorative economy” (Allan, 2014) within the Palestinian community, connected to a range of social and political goals. In the way they emphasize a continuous attachment to the homeland and highlight the atrocities committed against the Palestinians, cultural and commemorative activities have become a means for the refugees “to counter their political marginalization, resist normalization of the expulsion, and underscore that they were not willing to concede the right of return” (Allan, 2014, p. 39). This has become increasingly important for the Palestinians in Lebanon after the 1993 Oslo Accords and what was seen as a renunciation of this vital issue by Palestinian Authority. In response, as Laleh Khalili (2007) argues, commemorative activities and narratives of suffering are performed in the refugee camp in order to legitimate a place within Palestinian polity: “Where

faced with exclusion from political participation in the Palestinian community, suffering comes to be a certificate of membership” (p. 223).

Further, the cultural and commemorative activities counter what is seen as an attempt by the State of Israel to erase traces of an indigenous Palestinian population in the land of Palestine. With practice of “re-claiming by re-naming,” Zionist policies replace Palestinian place names with Biblical and Hebrew names in order to create “an ‘authentic’ collective Zionist-Hebrew identity rooted in the ‘land of the Bible’” (Masalha, 2015, p. 16). As Tahrir Hamdi (2017,) notes, this process of silencing has also taken the form of appropriation of Palestinian cultural traditions like food, clothing and dancing, which are rebranded as Israeli (p. 21; see also Abunimah, 2015; Sheety, 2014). Preserving these practices and insisting on their origin within a Palestinian cultural tradition is an important way for the exilic Palestinian community to resist their marginalization and stress the legitimacy of their claim of the right of return.

In this way, the NGOs have a central position in the social and political life of the Palestinian refugees, and their role as providers of educational, social, and health-related services is vital for the Palestinian community. As representatives of the refugees both within Lebanese society and in the global context, through their connections to the international NGO community, the NGOs are important negotiating forums for advancing the needs and claims of the refugee community. Further, the NGOs play a key role in preserving the national identity and educating the coming generations of refugees in the Palestinian cultural traditions.

2.2 The music program

The research project reported here takes place in connection with a particular organization, *Beit Atfal Assumoud* (BAS), one of the larger Palestinian NGOs in Lebanon, with social centers in all of the country’s twelve refugee camps. BAS was established in 1976 in order to take care of the children who lost their parents in the massacre of Tal al-Za’tar. The organization describes itself as “a humanitarian, non-sectarian and non-governmental organization . . . not related to any political and religious groups” (Beit Atfal Assumoud, n.d.). As of 2017, BAS employed 260 people, offering a wide range of services and activities, including sponsorship programs, kindergartens, remedial and vocational training, dental

services, psychosocial support, mental-health services, and cultural activities like music, dance, drawing, and drama (Beit Atfal Assumoud, 2017).

In 2003, BAS established a music program in the Rashidieh camp in the southern part of Lebanon. Rashidieh is placed on a small strip of land by the Mediterranean Sea, completely cut off from its surroundings by tall barbed-wire fences. Access to the camp requires a permit from the Lebanese authorities, which must be shown when entering the camp through a heavily guarded military checkpoint. The camp officially houses more than 31,478 refugees (UNRWA, n.d.), has four schools, including one secondary school, and two health clinics. Alongside BAS, a range of Palestinian and international NGOs, religious, and political organizations offer various services to the refugees in the camp.

The music program was established in cooperation with the health organization Norwegian Aid Committee (NORWAC), which saw potential in extending to cultural activities an existing program focusing on mental health, in order to increase the mental-health levels of children and youth in the camp (Storsve & Danielsen, 2013). Today, 40–80 children and youth⁵ (aged 6–20) participate in music activities two days a week in the BAS social center. With the help of the Norwegian partners, the center has been equipped with instruments such as saxophones, violins, keyboards, bouzouks, electric and acoustic guitars, percussion instruments, Arabic hand drums, a drum set, and a PA system. Four or five local musicians lead the activities, which consist of instrumental tuition, group rehearsals, and dance training. The participants perform a variety of music, both Palestinian and Arabic songs, and Norwegian or “international” folk, pop, and rock tunes. This music is arranged according to the principles of the “multi-functions-score” (Storsve et al., 2010), a method in which voices are adapted to the skill level of the participant in order to allow newcomers and experienced players to perform music together.

The dance training focuses on Palestinian *dabke*, a folk line-dance that is an essential component of all Palestinian weddings, engagement parties, or other festive occasions. The oldest participants are also taught a presentational form of *dabke* popularized by Palestinian dance troupes like *El-Funoun*. As Elke Kaschl (2003) describes, the presentational *dabke* is linked to Palestinian resistance against cultural marginalization and dispossession. The dancers in the music program frequently perform shows at BAS commemorative events,

5 At the time of my field work, the number of participants at the bi-weekly lessons in the program was approximately 40–50. However, during my research, I witnessed a performance with almost 80 people on stage.

wearing traditional Palestinian costumes and invoking symbols of Palestinian resistance or pre-1948 life in Palestine.

The Norwegian music educators visit the program three to five times a year to support the teachers and introduce new material. Also, groups of Palestinians have been on trips to Norway to visit partner organizations and schools, and to perform Palestinian music and dance for and with Norwegian audiences. Such trips are highly valued by the Palestinian youth, as it is rare for Palestinian refugees to travel abroad, either because of insufficient funds or because of the difficulties of getting a visa. These trips, as well as the program itself, depend on financial assistance from Norwegian and other international partner organizations.

2.2.1 Former research on the music program in Rashidieh

Due to the involvement of music educators from the Norwegian Academy of Music, the music activities in Rashidieh have provided the case for several research articles that attend to different aspects of the program. Of particular interest to the present research project are the studies that explore the social significance of the program for its Palestinian participants. Vegar Storsve, Inger Anne Westby, and Even Ruud (2010) discuss the potential health benefits of the music program and focus in particular on how the music activities can “strengthen a sense of self and identity, as well as the experience of belonging to one’s own traditions among Palestinian youth” (Storsve et al., 2010, para. “Introduction”). Employing Etienne Wenger’s (1998) concept of *communities of practice* as a lens, they argue that the program offers roles and positions from which the participants acquire a sense of belonging, pride, hope for the future, and experiences of flow and happiness. According to the authors, the musical practice embodies values and social experiences that depart from the surrounding context, in terms of gender equality, inclusive pedagogical methods, and a focus on mastery rather than achievement.

Ruud (2011, 2012) further explores the significance of the music program based on participant observation and interviews with six participants. Focusing on participatory music making as health promotion, he finds that the young participants “have experienced a markedly positive effect upon their sense of vitality, agency and belonging, as well as their felt meaning and hope for the future—in other words, they have experienced positive health effects” (Ruud,

2012, p. 91). Ruud especially emphasizes how the music program provides a framework for developing a sense of belonging and community, both in terms of the development of positive relationships among the participants and between participants and teachers in the program, but also in the sense of belonging to Palestinian culture and history.

In my own former study of the music program (Boeskov, 2013a), I investigate the significance of the intercultural music activities for the young participants based on my own experiences and interviews with five of them. Arguing that these activities constitute an alternative framework of meaning that challenges prevailing feelings of marginalization and exclusion, I point to the way the Palestinian youths develop their identities in positive ways and experience feelings of belonging and recognition through their musical encounters with Norwegian youths. In this way, the music activities become arenas for cross-cultural interaction and friendships with positive consequences for the Palestinian participants' sense of self. Further, I emphasize how participants see the activities as a way of promoting the Palestinian cause and their pride in being positioned as representatives of the Palestinian nation.

An interesting tension that becomes apparent in these studies, although not addressed, is how the music program seemingly allows participants to develop both identities that challenge existing roles and identities within the social context and, at the same time, to acquire a sense of belonging that is continuous with already established values and identities. One aspect of this potential conflict is discussed by Brit Ågot Brøske (2017), who identifies cases within the music program where the culture of equality and democracy that the program seeks to promote comes into conflict with local ideologies and social structures. Such instances of equality may challenge existing authoritative and hierarchical structures, which, Brøske argues, in some cases potentially leads to further marginalization and exclusion for the participants. Therefore, she advises that the "local culture and society, and the limitations within it, have to be considered thoroughly and reflected upon critically in community music projects" (Brøske, 2017, p. 80).

The existing studies of the significance of the music program for its participants unanimously point to the way the music program offers various resources for the young Palestinians to take up and use for developing a positive sense of identity and belonging. They also give a clear impression that these identities are produced according to specific perceptions within the social context, and, as Brøske (2017) shows, challenging such local ideologies may involve conflict.

As such, these studies prepare the ground for the present research, in the way that they point to a need for a deeper understanding of how transformative processes, promoted by participatory music making, relate to the reproduction of wider social structures.

3 **Previous research**

Each of the four parts of this chapter addresses a research theme relevant to the present research project. First, I discuss research on music for displaced or diasporic populations, and then I consider three themes that each contribute to an understanding of music as a means of social transformation: musical belonging and community; music and identity; and music and agency. In this literature review, I focus primarily on discussions within the fields of musical-social work and music education, but I also extend the view toward relevant musicological or ethnomusicological research.

3.1 **Music and the displaced**

The present research project explores the significance of participatory music making for young members of a diasporic community. The connection between music and displacement is a prevalent theme in ethnomusicological scholarship, with specific attention to how music mediates a sense of belonging and identity for refugees or migrants (Baily & Collyer, 2006; Diehl, 2002; Kiwan & Meinhof, 2011; Levi & Scheding, 2010; Lidskog, 2017; Ramnarine, 2007; Slobin, 1994, 2012; Toynbee & Dueck, 2011). A central concern in this field of research is the relationship between the diasporic context and a home elsewhere, and questions of how music mediates a sense of place appear as crucial (Stokes, 1994a; Whiteley, Bennett & Hawkins, 2004). In his seminal exploration of this

topic, Martin Stokes (1994a) underlines the potential impact of music in the construction of a sense of place, when he writes, “The musical event . . . evokes and organises collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity” (p. 3). Such events, Stokes (1994a) continues, concern the establishment of social orders and differences. However, they are also significant because they allow people to “locate themselves in quite idiosyncratic and plural ways” (p. 3). Music both contributes to the production of moral and social boundaries, but also “provide[s] the means by which the hierarchies of place are negotiated and transformed” (Stokes, 1994a, p. 4).

The significance of music in negotiating the Palestinian experience of displacement and belonging is the theme of several ethnomusicological studies (Belkind, 2014; Frierson-Campbell & Park, 2016; Kaschl, 2003; McDonald, 2013; Van Aken, 2006). In a historical and ethnographic exploration of Palestinian music and dance, David McDonald (2013) examines the role of musical performance in the construction and negotiation of Palestinian nationalism, identity, and resistance. McDonald shows how music is an essential means of articulating a sense of national belonging and solidarity, but also how musical performance on a profound level “regulates, constrains and otherwise mediates fundamental aspects of what it means to be Palestinian and what it means to ‘resist’” (McDonald, 2013, p. 24). Similarly, in her study of music making within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories in the post-Oslo era, Nili Belkind (2014) discusses “how music is presently used as an agent in both boundary drawings and boundary crossings, a continuously evolving process that always injects new meanings into epistemologies of ‘home’, ‘citizenship’, ‘ethnicity’, or ‘nation’ for groups and individuals” (p. 4). These studies point to music’s role in forging and negotiating meanings and relationships central to the Palestinian experience of exile and national belonging.

Within the fields of music education and musical-social work, research concerning displaced populations has proliferated in the recent decade. Several studies explore the consequences of musical participation for refugees and asylum-seekers (Howell, 2011; Jin, 2016; Kenny, 2018; Lenette & Sunderland, 2014; Marsh, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017; Roaldsnes, 2017; Sunderland et al., 2015; Weston & Lenette, 2016). As is also the case in the studies examining the social significance of the music program in Rashidieh (see section 2.2.1), these studies generally construe music as a resource that enables participants to cope with the insecurity and instability of their situation, providing temporary relief and

creating positive emotions and happiness. Further, music is seen to offer possibilities for maintaining bonds to the homeland, while at the same time creating relationships in the new context, in the form of both beneficial experiences of belonging and commonality within the musical practice itself and positive cross-cultural relations to the host society. In this way, music empowers participants by allowing them to construct desirable identities and relationships, thereby becoming a tool for social inclusion and integration. Kathryn Marsh (2017) effectively sums up the common assumptions of the field when she states that for refugee and migrant children, “musical activities provide new musical and social beginnings and avenues for agency” (p. 61).

While these studies underline the positive potential of participatory music making as a means of intervention for displaced groups, some scholars also point to negative or ambiguous effects of such practices. One example is Bergh’s (2010) study of the use of music as a means of conflict transformation. Based on a literature review of the field and ethnographic studies of music intervention projects in Sudan and Norway, Bergh draws attention to how such interventions are often based on idealized views of music or insufficient knowledge about the context, thereby creating rather than solving problems. He also considers the power relationships in these practices, and how these affect the methods and the purpose of introducing and conducting the activities. This leads to a discussion of how top-down interventions that seek to encourage interaction and mutual understanding between groups of participants can function as a way of emphasizing differences, rather than obliterating them. However, Bergh also considers how music may function as an interruption in conflict settings and potentially provide a liminal space—a “temporary and transient space where new and different ways of interacting” can be safely tried out (Bergh, 2010, p. 200). He underlines that the liminal spaces that occur in musical events depend on the contexts within which they are enacted, and while their ambiguous and fleeting nature may allow for the temporary establishment of alternative social relations, the question remains of how “these translate into changes in the mundane, everyday world, if at all?” (Bergh, 2010, p. 210).

In this way, Bergh draws attention to the ambivalent effects of music as a means of conflict transformation. Another discussion that highlights such potentially ambiguous outcomes is connected to the Norwegian music program *Kaleidoscope* (in Norwegian: *Fargespill*), an intercultural program that uses musical performances as a means of creating cross-cultural connections and social transformation for newly arrived immigrants and refugees. In the

program's self-understanding, such joint musical performances are important means of generating social inclusion and acceptance of diversity among the participants themselves and in the society in general (Kvaal, 2018). However, in the analysis of ethnomusicologist Thomas Solomon (2016), the musical performances of Kaleidoscope do not translate to an example of intercultural dialogue or embracement of cultural differences. Solomon argues that "the Fargespill musical formula," the typical performance form in which songs, music and children's games from around the world are combined with each other as well as with elements from Norwegian culture, functions as an enactment of a particular idea of Norwegian multiculturalism in which the category of "the Norwegian" is affirmed as the only constant and proper measure by which to judge the differences of the interchangeable "others." While appearing to represent the children's voices, Solomon argues that Kaleidoscope functions to confirm the Norwegians' self-image as a tolerant, open-minded, and inclusive society, and he therefore questions whether Kaleidoscope in fact offers a space for agency and advocacy on behalf of the refugee children.

Defenders of the program have criticized Solomon for basing his analysis of the program solely on video recordings of performances, rather than on ethnographic work. Arguably, the primary effects of the program are not connected to the performances and how they represent the participants, but rather to the possibilities for collaborative action provided in the musical practice itself (Kvifte, 2016; Pedersen & Moberg, 2017). Solomon's critique is based on his textual reading of the performance and its presentational meanings. However, his critics argue that these performances should primarily be read in terms of their participatory qualities and how the musical practice itself provides spaces of recognition and empowerment.⁶ Interesting for the present thesis is the tension expressed here between musical-social work at the level of immediate practice and how the same musical performances are found by critical researchers to establish and reproduce structures that counter such positive outcomes. Camilla Kvaal's (2017; see also Kvaal, 2018) recent study on Kaleidoscope discusses how such tensions may work out at a microsocial level, while my own work attempts to address these questions from a broader understanding of music as a means of social transformation.

In summary, the research discussed above suggests that music may be a powerful tool for displaced individuals and groups to maintain and create a sense of belonging to both "home" and the new context, as well as for establishing

6 For a distinction between participatory and presentational music making, see Turino (2008).

positive relationships to self and others. Studies also point to the potential of participatory music making in cross-cultural work for alleviating problems of exclusion and disempowerment. However, as both Bergh's (2010) study and the discussions of Kaleidoscope show, due to the way such practices may be implicated in unequal relations of power, music making can also produce a range of more ambiguous outcomes.

3.2 Musical belonging and community

As discussed above, participatory music making is seen to provide a sense of belonging and commonality, and this potential is validated in a number of other studies (Hampshire & Matthijsse, 2010; Karkou & Glasman, 2004; Rinta, Purves, Welch, Stadler Elmer & Bissig, 2011; Welch, Himonides, Saunders, Papageorgi & Sarazin, 2014). Reviewing existing research on the effects of active music making on social inclusion and cohesion, Susan Hallam (2015) concludes that "[g]roup music making clearly has the potential to promote social cohesion and support inclusion. Making music with others creates bonds which are not easily created in other ways" (p. 84). The belief in the special potential of music in terms of fostering social bonding, is often based on research within the field of music psychology, where the human capacity for communication and interaction connects to a fundamental "communicative musicality" (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). This universal proto-form of musicality appears in this line of research as a central constituent of what makes us human and what enables human relationality. Research on music from an evolutionary perspective supports this assessment. Ian Cross (2012) suggests that "music could have served as a means of managing intra- and inter-group interactions, helping to nurture the human facility for complex sociality that underpins the capacity for culture" (p. 25).

Many scholars point to the impact that participatory music making can have for communal life (Finnegan, 1989; Kenny, 2016; Pitts, 2005). Common in these accounts is the acknowledgment that understanding the significance of music making requires a focus on the sociality created in musical practice, whether this sociality is perceived as "musical worlds" or "pathways" (Finnegan, 1989) or as "communities of musical practice" (Kenny, 2016). Thomas Turino (2008) also emphasizes the role of music for human sociality, arguing that music functions to enhance sensibility toward the way we are connected to the world in which

we live, thus serving as a fundamental and powerful way for human beings to achieve an integration of the self and the surrounding world.

The integrative function of music is especially tied to what Turino terms participatory performance, in his framework a distinct type of artistic practice, with no artist-audience distinctions and a focus on inclusion of the maximum number of people in the performance (Turino, 2008, p. 26). Participatory music making is significant because this activity creates an immediate experience of togetherness. When a participatory performance is going well, “moving together and sounding together in a group creates a direct sense of *being* together and of deeply felt similarity, and hence identity, among participants” (Turino, 2008, p. 43). This potential for “social synchrony” (Turino, 2008, p. 41) leads Turino to advance participatory music making as a response to the loss of values of commonality and solidarity in the capitalist structure of modern society. The enactment of a participatory and democratic ethos, a strong focus on social bonding, and the acceptance of differences in the musical-skill levels of the participants lead Turino to suggest that successful participatory music making is not only a metaphor for, but *is* good social life (Turino, 2008, p. 136).

The potential for social bonding through music is not exclusively perceived as a progressive force in human social life. As Turino (2008) notes and explores with reference to participatory music in Nazi Germany, this potential is also utilized by “politicians, fascists, and nationalists” for more dubious purposes (p. 44). Deborah Bradley (2009) points to this ambivalence when she discusses how a significant musical moment that allowed participants to constitute a “multicultural human subjectivity,” embracing diversity and difference at the same time, can be said to contain “the seeds of fascism” (p. 61). Bradley bases her argument on Kertz-Welzel’s (2005) examination of the thinking of Theodor Adorno and its implication for music education. According to Kertz-Welzel, Adorno explicitly warns against using music as a social technology, and criticizes the humanistic and idealistic philosophies of music education that advance music making as a means of social transformation because of the way they seek to instill unquestioned values in music students, rather than contributing to the establishment of a critical consciousness. Bradley (2009) maintains that Adorno’s arguments should lead us to consider how the powerful establishment of a collective “we” is vulnerable to manipulation for ideological purposes, not all of which become apparent to the participants.

Bowman (2009a) also urges music educators to acknowledge this ambiguity and to critically reflect upon the underlying values, beliefs, and identities established through the creation of musical communities:

Music's performative and participatory power has both a potentially dark side and a progressive one. It behooves us, then, to ask what kinds of community, what modes of togetherness, what patterns of inclusion and exclusion, what kinds of social capital our musical practices are intended to serve, as well as what modes of togetherness, what future goods (or their opposites) they may serve. (Bowman, 2009a, pp. 125–126)

Thus, Bowman asserts that the collective and social aspect of music making must be scrutinized in terms of its ability to nurture unity and belonging, *and* as a marker of difference: “The other sides of music’s inspiring capacity to forge unity amidst diversity are its erasure of at least certain dimensions of individual difference and its creation and reinforcement of boundaries that separate and distinguish insiders from outsiders” (Bowman, 2009a, p. 122).

Petter Dyndahl examines music’s paradoxical role in processes of inclusion/exclusion within education, the society, and the academy in several studies (Dyndahl, 2015a, 2015b; Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skårberg & Nielsen, 2014; Dyndahl & Varkøy, 2017). Advancing the concept of musical gentrification, Dyndahl and his colleagues discuss how previously marginalized forms of music, e.g., folk, popular, or “world music,”—and, by implication, the people who participate in, enjoy, or identify with these musical cultures—have been included and legitimized in educational and academic settings in Scandinavia (Dyndahl et al., 2014). Nonetheless, Dyndahl argues, while gentrification processes may reconstitute or displace previous social distinctions, new lines of legitimacy and authenticity are simultaneously being drawn, introducing alternative sets of criteria and hierarchies by which some individuals and groups are excluded or devalued. Thus, Dyndahl argues against a conception that sees music as primarily a tool for social acceptance of diversity. Instead, he urges us to also consider how music reproduces social distinctions and inequality (Dyndahl & Varkøy, 2017).

In summary, music holds special potential for creating experiences of belonging and community. Several scholars point to the dangers of this power, how musical communities may function to exclude as well as include, and how inclusive musical practices may establish a new set of boundaries by which exclusionary functions of musical practice are maintained, albeit under different criteria. In the present research, I seek to address these issues by advancing

a framework that takes into account how music mediates and is mediated by wider social and institutional formations, a perspective that underlines the potentially ambiguous consequences of musical communities.

3.3 Music and identity

As the review of research connected to the music program in Rashidieh shows, the music activities involve opportunities for the participants to construct feelings of commonality through musical and social interactions, but also to attach themselves to wider identity formations. Most importantly, the music program provides the participants with possibilities for establishing a sense of national belonging. The theme of music and identity is a topic in numerous investigations (DeNora, 2000, 2003; Frith, 1996; MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002, 2017; Rice, 2007; Ruud, 1997; Stokes, 1994b; Ståhlhammar, 2006; Turino, 1999, 2008). My understanding of the somewhat problematic concept of identity is based upon the work of Stuart Hall (1996), who conceives of identities as the points of *suture*, the “points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (p. 6). Rather than thinking of identities as coherent and stable, this perspective turns attention to processes of identification, how subjects invest in the positions that become available to them through social and discursive practice.

This conception of identity and its implication for understanding the connection between music and identity are aptly articulated by Simon Frith (1996) and Tia DeNora (2000, 2003). Rejecting the “homology” model of music and identity, which presumes that the music of a given group “reflects” underlying structures or values, Frith advances a processual understanding of the self as a continuous “becoming,” rather than a static being. According to Frith (1996), the significance of music is that music making allows for the “experience of this *self-in-process*” (p. 109). In an oft-cited quote, Frith argues that: “Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives” (Frith, 1996, p. 124). Building upon this conception, DeNora (2000) shows how music can work as a “technology of self”, as a “device for the reflexive process of remembering/constructing who one is, a technology for spinning the apparently continuous tale of who one is” (p. 63). Emphasizing the situational use of music, DeNora (2017) pays particular

attention to how musical action and interaction produce and alter identities in real time and place.

However, Born and David Hesmondhalgh (2000) notice a tendency within this processual and constructivist perspective on music and identity to emphasize a microsocial conception of identity that “risks evacuating a sense of how individual and collective musical identifications may be powerfully formed and influenced by larger discursive, ideological, social and generic forces” (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000, p. 33). While acknowledging the need to depart from the essentialist assumptions of the homology model, Born and Hesmondhalgh argue that

music can variably *both* construct new identities *and* reflect existing ones. Sociocultural identities are not simply constructed in music; there are ‘prior’ identities that come to be embodied dynamically in musical cultures, which then also *form* the reproduction of those identities. (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000, pp. 31–32)

Yet, Keith Negus and Patria Román Velázquez (2002) argue that it is problematic to assume that music always is involved in some kind of identity project. While music surely can be employed in the construction or reproduction of identities, these scholars maintain that music is also “often associated with disaffiliation, ambivalence, and disengagement” (Negus & Velázquez, 2002, p. 141). A central issue the present research addresses is the tension between music as a way of articulating existing, already legitimized identities, and musical performance as a means of negotiating, transcending, or retreating from such categories.

“The national” is an example of a pre-existing identity category that music may articulate and reproduce. Of particular importance for the present thesis are discussions of music and music education activities for the construction of a sense of national identity and belonging (Folkestad, 2002, 2017; Hebert & Kertz-Welzel, 2012b; Kallio & Partti, 2013; Stokes, 1994b; Sugarman, 1997; Turino, 2000). Within the educational context, music historically has been used as part of a national education aiming at strengthening the students’ national identity (Folkestad, 2002). However, scholars question the relevancy and appropriateness of this use of music in the increasingly diverse and multicultural societies of the modern world (Bradley, 2009; Folkestad, 2017; Hebert & Kertz-Welzel, 2012b; Kallio & Partti, 2013). While David Hebert and Kertz-Welzel (2012a) acknowledge that patriotism in education may be reasonable for emerging nations, they criticize music educators in general for failing to critically assess the benefits and costs of adopting patriotic music into the curriculum, and the potential role music

education plays in the promotion of nationalistic or other ideological purposes. One of the costs of excessive nationalism within music education, as Jorgensen (2007) notes, is that it risks excluding other interests, such as the construction of international or more local affiliations.

In contrast to ideas of music as national education, music education scholars more commonly promote the idea of multicultural music education and emphasize the need to embrace cultural diversity, in the hope that music can contribute to the development of democratic, inclusive, and just societies (Allsup, 2010; Elliott, 1995; Morton, 2001). Thus, multicultural music education requires a balance between the local and the global. Göran Folkestad (2002) suggests that the ground for a genuinely multicultural society may be laid when students are secure and feel recognized in their own sense of identity, while simultaneously achieving possibilities for learning about others (p. 160). Yet, it is not always possible to make clear connections between students' cultural backgrounds and their musical identities (Karlsen, 2013; Sæther, 2008; Westerlund, Partti & Karlsen, 2017). With regard to immigrants' experiences of music education, Sidsel Karlsen (2013) discusses that in some cases, employing music from the students' places of origin as educational content may lead to experiences of recognition and empowerment. However, it could also be experienced as an attempt by the teacher to impose specific assumptions about student background and cultural affiliation that threaten the student's possibilities for self-definition. While popular or youth music has been suggested as a potential common ground in the culturally diverse classroom (Karlsen, 2012; Sæther, 2008), which at least to some extent transcends problematic assumptions of the students' cultural affiliation, a range of scholars also point to the way popular music introduces its own set of hierarchies and representations, concerning, for example, gender (Björck, 2011; Onsrud, 2013) and ethnicity (Karlsen, 2014). Therefore, as Dyndahl and Live Weider Ellefsen (2009) argue, it is insufficient to ask "whether or not music education ought to be multicultural, or if popular music should be part of music education or not" (p. 23). Employing an intersectionalist or multifaceted perspective, Dyndahl and Ellefsen propose that music educators must broaden the perspective and investigate how music education practices work as a discursive space in which students "negotiate, renegotiate and identify with narratives of themselves as male/female, straight/queer, white/black, native foreign, local/cosmopolitan, young/grown-up . . . and . . . experience a sense of belonging and connection to high/low class and/or culture as well" (Dyndahl & Ellefsen, 2009, pp. 15–16).

For capturing such processes, this thesis employs the Butlerian notions of performativity and subjectivation, in order to illuminate how musical agents not only construct their identities, but also are constituted as discursive subjects. Butler's concepts have been employed to explain processes of subject formation in educational (Davies, 2006; Davies et al., 2001; Youdell, 2006) and music educational research (Björck, 2011; Ellefsen, 2014; Gould, 2007; Onsrud, 2013). Understanding a musical practice as a subjectivating practice implies a focus on how participants become viable subjects through their subjection to specific discourses. It is within such discursive spaces that musical agents find the resources to construct and negotiate a sense of self.

3.4 Music and agency

Closely related to notions of music, identity, and processes of subjectivation is the question of agency. Fundamental for any understanding of music as a means of social transformation is an idea of how music making informs, guides and constitutes the agency—which I broadly construe as the possibilities for action and experiences of meaning—of those involved. Two conceptions of the connection between music and agency especially have been influential in the fields of musical-social work and music education, namely, the work of Small and DeNora. These authors are at the forefront of a shift of emphasis in terms of understanding musical experience and meaning, broadly construed as a turn away from regarding music as a *work*, an object with an inherent semiotic force through which music asserts its social power. Instead, Small (1998) suggests that music is better understood as *musicking*, as active doing, and further that the meaning of musicking is found in the relationships that these acts establish “between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world” (Small, 1998, p. 13). For Small, musicking is important in human social life because it allows people to affirm, explore, and celebrate these relationships. Significantly, musicking enables the experience and affirmation not only of social relationships that already exist, but also the “ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be” (Small, 1998, p. 13). In the musical event, ideal relationships are constituted in powerful ways, which means that participants “not only *learn about* those relationships but actually *experience* them in their bodies” (Small, 1998, p. 96).

DeNora (2000, 2003, 2011, 2017) also emphasizes that the significance of music must be investigated from the level of actual musical practice. Through detailed examination of how people put music to use in their everyday life, DeNora shows how music works as a tool by which people can “regulate, elaborate, and substantiate themselves as social agents” (DeNora, 2000, p. 47). Thus, DeNora (2000) suggests that music should not merely be seen as “a ‘meaningful’ or ‘communicative’ medium” (p. 16); rather, music is an active social force within the daily lives of people, through the way it “offers specific materials to which actors may turn when they engage in the work of organizing social life. Music is a resource—it provides affordances—for world building” (DeNora, 2000, p. 44).

From a music education perspective, Karlsen (2011, 2017) draws upon the work of Small and DeNora when she advances “musical agency” as an analytical lens that enables investigations of the significance of music making from the angle of experience. Karlsen (2011) proposes that musical agency encompasses an individual and a collective dimension. On the individual level, musical action involves the use music for self-regulation, the shaping of self-identity, self-protection, thinking, matters of “being,” and for developing music-related skills (Karlsen, 2011, p. 111). On the collective level, music can be used for regulating and structuring social encounters, coordinating bodily action, affirming and exploring collective identity, “knowing the world,” and for establishing a basis for collaborative musical action (Karlsen, 2011, p. 115). Karlsen (2012, 2013, 2014; Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010) discusses musical agency with specific attention to the experiences of immigrant students and the musical repertoires that these students bring into the diverse classroom. She argues that recognizing how immigrant students exercise musical agency inside and outside the classroom will better equip music educators attempting to build truly democratic processes that support the students’ “sustainable growth of selves” (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010, p. 237).

Also within the field of musical-social work, the work of Small and DeNora has influenced scholars who direct attention toward the many ways music shows itself as a resource for action and experience in efforts to achieve positive social transformation. The most comprehensive discussions of music and agency have been developed within the field of community music therapy (Ansdell, 2014; Stige et al., 2010). The focus in this line of research is on the many ways that music *helps*; how it becomes a means of addressing basic human needs, such as recognition, personal development, feelings of well-being, being in community with others, and experiencing the transcendent (Ansdell, 2014).

This work is highly informative and useful for understanding how music can be utilized as a means of personal and social transformation. Nonetheless, emphasizing music as a resource comes with the danger, as Hesmondhalgh (2008, 2013) argues, of downplaying the psychological and social constraints that limit the ability to construct coherent and positive self-identities through music, or disregarding how music may also be implicated in negative social processes. One of the problems, according to Hesmondhalgh (2013), may be that in the interactionist sociological perspective employed by writers such as DeNora, social life is understood as intersubjectivity, which means that the broader macro-social processes never come into sight (p. 117).

Recent analyses of musical-social work have paid attention to how the participants' agency is constituted and negotiated within these practices and how particular social and discursive frames determine and constrain these instances of agency in various ways (Boia & Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Bull, 2016; Dobson, 2016; Kuuse, 2018; Kvaal, 2017, 2018; Logan, 2016, Ringsager, 2018; Rosabal-Coto, 2016; Sarazin, 2017). Common to these studies is their attention to the ambiguous outcomes of these practices, either through microsocial analyses that illuminate tensions between rhetoric of student empowerment and the constraints or paradoxes found within actual pedagogical practice (Boia & Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Dobson, 2016; Kuuse, 2018; Kvaal, 2017, 2018; Sarazin, 2017); or through analyses that investigate how musical activities set in place to transform social relations can in fact reproduce broader social hierarchies and inequalities (Bull, 2016; Logan, 2016; Ringsager, 2018; Rosabal-Coto, 2016).⁷

This sort of ambiguity has also recently been explored within music education by Juliet Hess (2017) in an interesting discussion of the paradoxes of critical pedagogy. This pedagogical philosophy is derived from progressive thinkers such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks and, according to Hess, it constitutes the forefront of the turn toward issues of social justice in music education (see Benedict et al., 2015). Hess considers two ways that a critical pedagogical practice may work contrary to what was intended. Discussing issues of race, privilege, and whiteness as a form of social capital, Hess considers how white individuals involved in anti-racist work are admired, because they, as white, are read as disinterested and neutral, while activists of color often experience criticism or denigration for doing similar work. This leads Hess to suggest that white

7 I discuss how my work is related to Anna Bull's (2016) study of *In Harmony* and issues of class and Guillermo Rosabal-Coto's (2016) study of neo-colonialism in the Costa Rican program *SINEM* in article 3: "Birds from Palestine."

teachers' effectiveness when combating racism and structural inequity through music education may actually have been dependent on their own whiteness. In this way, paradoxically, "their activism ultimately reinscribed racial hierarchies at the moment it worked to undo them" (Hess, 2017, p. 181). Further, Hess discusses the practice of "eschewing the canon," e.g., by introducing popular or world music into the curriculum, as a central ingredient in critical music pedagogy. However, subverting established forms of knowledge connected to race, class, or gender may actually turn out to be a disadvantage for students if they wish to engage in formal music education at higher levels. When teachers decenter the skills and knowledge that represent the currency valued by dominant institutions, students are prohibited from entering the institutions and their marginal position is thereby enforced.

The studies mentioned above indicate a need for conceptualizing musical agency in a way that moves beyond the notions of music as ideal relationships, or as a resource to be put into action by self-reliant subjects. Particularly, I argue, what is needed for a deeper understanding of music as a means of social transformation are conceptualizations that allow for reflection of how social and institutional formations direct and constrain agency, as well as the paradoxical way that musical-social work may reproduce the social conditions it aims to transform.

4 Theoretical framework

The current project is theoretically informed by what has been called “the performative turn” in human and social science (Conquergood, 1989). The origins of this development can be traced to movements within the fields of anthropology, sociology, and linguistics, which, over time, have intersected and spurred a range of original conceptualizations of the human subject, identity, culture, and performance art (Carlson, 2004). The turn to performance emphasizes not only the socially constructed nature of human reality, but also its dynamic and provisional character. From this perspective, essential notions of culture and identity are displaced. Instead, as Dwight Conquergood (1989) writes, “Cultures and selves . . . are made; even, like fictions, they are ‘made up’” (p. 83). Performing one’s identity or culture is not to reproduce an essential and already given meaning; rather, the meaning is generated in the performance itself.

In his critical introduction to the concept of performance, Marvin Carlson (2004) states that performance is essentially a contested concept applied in a range of contexts with both overlapping and divergent meanings. This contestation opens up for rich explorations of not only performance art but also human activity and interaction in general. Carlson (2004) discusses three common ways of thinking of performance (pp. 2–5). First, performance can be thought of as a *display of skills*. Typically, we think about performance in terms of specific events, e.g., musical or theatrical performances, which are distinctive as

such because they involve human beings displaying their performative skills. Second, performance also commonly refers to some kind of *patterned behavior*, a quality within performative action that signals a distance between the performer and the action being performed. However, not only theatrical events, but also ordinary life involves some kind of role-playing, as we undertake socially sanctioned modes of behavior when performing our roles as, e.g., mothers, fathers, students, or teachers,⁸ which means that “all human activity could potentially be considered as performance” (Carlson, 2004, p. 4). Third, Carlson discusses the notion of performance in a more evaluative stance, in which performers, or, more often, spectators, judge the performance according to some more or less articulated standards of achievement. While critical reviews of a theatrical performance can be hard enough on performers, it seems more crucial to acknowledge that also in the social realities of everyday life, whether in the work place, school, or as a gendered human being, failure to live up to established standards of performance may come with punitive consequences.

In this way, performance refers to the immediate actions of performers, whether staged or in everyday life, but simultaneously signals the events, frames, patterns, and standards by which we come to understand the performance as such. Elin Diamond (1996) usefully sums up this dual nature of performance in her assertion that “performance is always a doing and a thing done” (p. 1). As a *doing*, performance indicates the “embodied acts, in specific sites, witnessed by others (and/or the watching self)”; while as a *thing done*, performance refers to “the completed event framed in time and space and remembered, misremembered, interpreted, and passionately revisited across a pre-existing discursive field” (Diamond, 1996, p. 1). All performances, suggests Diamond, drift between the presence of the immediate doing and the absence of the previous performances whose conventions, traditions, and histories always figure as the conditioning context. Importantly, however, while a performance always contains traces of other and now absent performances, it only partially depends on them. Within the performative present lies a “possibility of materializing something that exceeds our knowledge, that alters the shape of sites and imagines other as yet unsuspected modes of being” (Diamond, 1996, p. 2). Thus, at the heart of performance lies a double potential; as a site for cultural reproduction, performances reinscribe the fundamental principles and norms

8 The sociologist Erving Goffman is often quoted for the assertion that “All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn’t are not easy to specify” (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 78).

that shape our social reality. On the other hand, performances also function as sites for cultural imagination, in which new visions, symbols, and actions challenge our established modes of being.

In this chapter, I outline and discuss the principal notions of performance and performativity in order to build an understanding of the social significance of music making as a simultaneous transformative and reproductive social force. My discussion is particularly indebted to the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner, whose ideas have spurred the performative turn in anthropology, and the feminist philosopher Judith Butler, whose notions of performativity, subjectivation, and discursive agency are central in poststructuralist debates of the constitution of the human subject. For connecting this discussion to musical performance, I look to critical musicology and the model of the social mediation of music, advanced by Georgina Born. In the final section, I discuss how the ideas of Turner, Butler, and Born can be combined in a notion of ambiguous musical practice.

4.1 Culture as performance

The British anthropologist Victor Turner is among the most significant contributors to the performative turn within the human sciences, and his ideas of liminality and *communitas* are still prominent within contemporary analysis of ritual and performance. Turner turns away from the static models of culture inherited from structuralist theories, emphasizing instead the temporal dynamics of sociocultural processes. Turner is especially interested in what he terms “social dramas,” which are social processes that occur in response to an interruption in the everyday life of community, a violation of the social order caused by external forces such as natural disasters or internal clashes of interests. Social dramas, Turner argues, are often modeled on a particular form consisting of four phases. After the initial *breach* of the regular social order, a *crisis* occurs, in which factions are divided and antagonisms expressed. The deepening of the crisis leads to the initiation of the *redressive* phase, in which cultural modes of conflict resolution are applied in order to restore social order. This leads to the fourth phase, consisting of either a *reintegration* of the social group or the recognition of a *schism*.

Social life is pregnant with social dramas, writes Turner (1982, p. 11), and symbolic action in ritual and performance is an important means by which groups

cope with these processes, ascribe meaning to them, assess their situation, and adapt themselves to changes. Turner regards social dramas as the prerequisite for the generation of humankind's many rituals, performative genres, myths, and oral and literary narratives. Such cultural performances, found in all societies and including plays, festivals, ceremonies, and concerts, are events spatially and temporally set apart from the mundane processes of social life in which they occur and which they continue to renew and transform.

Turner emphasizes the reflexive function of such performances. They are instances that allow a group or community "to think about how they think, about the terms in which they conduct their thinking, or to feel about how they feel in daily life" (Turner, 1988, p. 102). This reflexive capacity renders performance a site for cultural self-knowledge and for expressing and communicating important cultural values. But, Turner argues, cultural performances should not only be seen as expressions of culture. Rather, they "may themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting 'designs for living'" (Turner, 1988, p. 24). Engaging in a dialectical relationship with the everyday social order, cultural performance entails a potential for thematizing, reflecting upon and transforming the relations that constitute the social reality of a given group of people.

4.1.1 Liminality and *communitas*

The reflexive and transformational potential of performance is connected to Turner's notion of liminality, a concept he adopts from Arnold van Gennep's theory of rites of passage and develops in his book *The Ritual Process* (Turner, 1969). Van Gennep sees in rites of passage a three-part structure: a separation from the everyday life of the group, which places the specified members in some kind of limbo between their old and their new status, before returning them, changed in some way, to the group. Turner focuses upon the second phase in this process, where a person is placed in the margin of the old or on the threshold to the new, a state Turner describes as *liminality*. Liminal entities and persons, Turner states (1969), "are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (p. 95). Therefore, to be in liminality is to be "betwixt and between" two modes of existence, free from the old structures of society and culture, and not yet bounded by the

new; a place of desire, possibility, supposition, and play. For Turner, liminality comes to refer not just to a particular phase in rites of passage, but as a defining characteristic of ritual and performance in general. He writes, "The dominant genres of performance in societies at all levels of scale and complexity tend to be *liminal phenomena*" (Turner, 1988, p. 25).

Turner connects the liminal condition found in rituals to a special mode of human relatedness that he terms *communitas*. This mode of existence is "out of place" and "out of time," and Turner describes it as society's anti-structure that emerges from the margins of social structure. With reference to the philosophy of Martin Buber (1961), Turner (1969) conceives of *communitas* as the spontaneous, immediate "flowing from *I* to *Thou*" (p. 127), with an existential quality as opposed to the cognitive quality found in the norm-governed, institutionalized, and abstract nature of social structure. Turner (1982) states that *communitas* "has something of a 'flow' quality" (p. 58), but whereas flow in Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (2008) sense describes individual experiences of a loss of ego, complete absorption in a task and the merging of action and awareness, *communitas* exists "between and among individuals." As Turner explains, again referring to Buber, *communitas* can be seen as an "essential *We*," a mode of relationships that always arises as "a 'happening,' . . . in instant mutuality, when each person fully experiences the being of the other" (Turner, 1969, pp. 136-137).

For Turner, experiences of liminality and *communitas* are the subjunctive mood of culture. These modes of existence allow participating subjects to experience and explore alternatives to the existing social structure in an abstract cultural domain, in which new forms of communication and action are evoked. As he writes:

Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men [*sic*] with a set of templates or models which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality and man's relationship to society, nature, and culture. But they are more than classifications, since they incite men to action as well as to thought. Each of these productions has a multivocal character, having many meanings, and each is capable of moving people at many psycho-biological levels simultaneously. (Turner, 1969, pp. 128-129)

The in-betweenness, ambiguity, and multivocality inherent in liminal situations hold transformative potential. However, Turner maintains that such experiences often end up affirming the dominant social structure. He continues:

There is a dialectic here, for the immediacy of *communitas* gives way to the mediacy of structure, while, in *rites de passage*, men [*sic*] are released from structure into *communitas* only to return to structure revitalized by their experience of *communitas*. What is certain is that no society can function adequately without this dialectic. (Turner, 1969, p. 129)

Turner underscores here how rituals and cultural performances, insofar as these entail experiences of liminality and *communitas*, function to revitalize and reinscribe social structure through a temporary suspension of social norms and hierarchies. Nonetheless, in his book *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982), Turner adopts a perspective that emphasizes the transgressive and subversive potential of liminal phenomena. Based on a distinction between tribal and industrialized societies, Turner argues that the notion of liminality and its implied conservative function properly belong within analysis of rituals found in relatively simple and small-scale societies, where rituals are connected to work and social obligations. He distinguishes such performances from the ones found within complex, large-scale societies, which are better seen as *liminoid* phenomena. These performances occur in connection with leisure activities. While both liminal and liminoid performances involve a temporarily suspended social structure, experimentation, and play, the independent and voluntary character of liminoid activities places them outside central social domains of obligation, and thereby endows these phenomena with a critical potential whereby they may come to function as sources of cultural creativity and social change.

4.1.2 The performative frame and restored behavior

The liminal condition is connected to a central idea in performance studies and anthropological theories of ritual, namely, that ritual and performative events establish a particular communicative frame. According to Turner, a frame can be seen as an “invisible boundary . . . around activity which defines participants, their roles, the ‘sense’ or ‘meaning’ ascribed to those things included within the boundary” (Turner, 1988, p. 54). The concept of frame is developed by Gregory Bateson (2004) in his essay *A Theory of Play and Fantasy*, originally published in 1954. He suggests that human communication operates on different levels of abstraction and that the metacommunicative level determines how to interpret communication operating on lower levels. Following Bateson, Richard Bauman (1978) argues that performance can be regarded as a particular interpretive frame established through the performer’s “assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and

beyond its referential content” (p. 11). By putting their performative skills on display, performers subject their actions to evaluation; not only *what* is communicated counts, but also *how* that message is delivered matter. In this way, Bauman suggests, performance “calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity” (Bauman, 1978, p. 11). This intensity marks performance as a distinct space, lifted out of the ordinary with a special significance and transformative potential. For Turner, the distinctiveness of the performative frame marks performance as a privileged site for cultural reflexivity. In performance, ordinary meanings are suspended, allowing a group of people to assess the cultural frames in which they conduct their lives. In such processes of “plural reflexivity,” writes Turner, people “strive to see their own reality in new ways and to generate a language, verbal or nonverbal, which enables them to talk *about* what they normally talk” (Turner, 1988, p. 103).

The American performance scholar Richard Schechner (1985) further elaborates on the distinctiveness of performance from everyday action when he states that performance can be understood as *restored behavior*. Using a strip of film as an analogy, Schechner (1985) describes restored behavior as “strips of behavior” that exist independently from their original sources and therefore can be reconstructed and rearranged in performance (p. 35). Restored behavior highlights the rehearsed nature of performance; it is “twice-behaved behavior” and, as such, performative actions “exist separate from the performers who ‘do’ these behaviors” (Schechner, 1985, p. 36). In this way, engaging in a performance allows a performer to distance herself from her normal self and behave as “someone else,” a someone else that could “also be ‘me in another state of feeling/being,’ as if there were multiple ‘me’s’ in each person” (Schechner, 1985, p. 37). Therefore, Schechner argues, performance holds significant opportunities for trying out alternative and more desirable ways of being. He writes, “Restored behavior offers to both individuals and groups the chance to rebecome what they once were—or even, and most often, to rebecome what they never were but wish to have been or wish to become” (Schechner, 1985, p. 38). Performance can therefore be said to involve a double consciousness; the separateness of the performer from the act situates performance in a transitional space. In the performance space, Schechner argues (1985), “[e]lements that are ‘not me’ become ‘me’ without losing their ‘not me-ness’” (p. 111). This is an ambiguous and fragile space, in that “it rests not on how things are but on how things are

not; its existence depends on agreements kept among all participants, including the audience” (Schechner, 1985, p. 113). Yet, it is also a highly potent space for processes of transformation, in which performers (and audiences) potentially articulate and experience a new or more desirable sense of the world.

4.1.3 Turner’s ideas as a model for music and social transformation

The ideas of the transformative potential of performance that I here ascribe to Turner and Schechner have also influenced conceptions of musical performance developed within the field of musicology, music education, and musical-social work. Most fundamentally, these ideas seem to inform Small’s (1998) formulation of his theory of the social significance of musicking as an exploration, affirmation, and celebration of ideal relationships (see also article 1: “The Community Music Practice as Cultural Performance”). Although Small obviously bases his ideas on anthropological thinking on ritual and performance, he does not explicitly acknowledge the work of Turner or the performance theorists mentioned above. June Boyce-Tillman (2009), on the other hand, openly builds upon Turner’s notions of liminality and *communitas* in her exploration of the transformative qualities of music making. According to Boyce-Tillman, the transformative capacity of musicking is connected to how it opens a space apart from the everyday, in which “we can imagine new worlds for ourselves and others” (Boyce-Tillman, 2009, p. 197). Turner’s concepts are also applied by Ruud (1998) to explore improvisation in music therapy and the possibilities for generating change through experiences of *communitas*, a line of thought further developed in the field of community music therapy by Ansdell (2004, 2014). While Ansdell advances his own vision of *musical communitas* as a mobilization of “individual capability and confidence,” as well as “group mutuality and solidarity” (Ansdell, 2014, p. 239), he also warns against overlooking the “inevitable paradoxes and complexities of musical community” (Ansdell, 2014, p. 243). How such experiences are connected to and influenced by local conditions and politics must be carefully considered when coming to an understanding of how and what kind of transformation might occur. I attend to such paradoxes in the following.

4.2 Transition: From transgressive to normative performance

Performance, as Turner conceives the notion and Schechner develops it in the tradition of performance studies, is primarily conceptualized in terms of liminality. As a mode of activity that is temporally and spatially set apart from the everyday, performance denotes the in-betweenness of social life. Experiences of liminality and *communitas* are imbued with potential for individuals and groups to experience, express, reflect, and act upon the relationships that constitute their social worlds. As the subjunctive mood of culture, performance offers significant opportunities for social groups to formulate and bring into existence alternative visions of their social reality. However, Turner (and the field of performance studies in general) has been criticized for a preoccupation with the transgressive and subversive potential of performance, neglecting rites and performative events that do not fit into the liberating model of performance as a site for cultural critique and social change (see e.g. Lewis, 2013; Maxwell, 2008; McKenzie, 2001). While Turner's early work on ritual and social drama in pre-industrial societies primarily emphasizes the conservative function of liminal rites and the way such rituals maintain social coherence and revitalize social order, his interest in the transgressive potential of theater and performance in modern life has led the notion of liminality almost exclusively to be conceptualized in terms of its transformative potential (McKenzie, 2001, p. 51). Ian Maxwell argues that when the primarily conservative function Turner ascribes to the liminal is displaced by a subversive and innovative potential of the liminoid, performance is attributed "an unqualified capacity to facilitate not only an enlightening critique, but, even more, the potential to effect societal change, and to do so for the better" (Maxwell, 2008, p. 61). The notion of liminality, especially when considered in combination with the notion of *communitas*, contains an idealistic core that connects performance with transgressive moments of positive social transformation.

A significant critique is also directed against Turner's view of liminal processes as emerging from the margins of social structure, as this understanding overlooks questions of how transitional performances themselves are structured by social and institutional formations of power. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1991), Turner's perspective fails to recognize the most fundamental function of rituals, which is to impose and legitimize arbitrary boundaries in the social order. Bourdieu argues that common understandings of rites of passage, of which he takes van Gennep and Turner's work to be emblematic, are too focused

on the transitional phase in such rites, thereby concealing their most important effect, namely, to mark out a difference between “those to whom the rite pertains and those to whom it does not pertain” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 117). While the rite itself draws attention to the *passage* of a line, e.g., the way a circumcision makes a boy into a man, the primary function of the rite, according to Bourdieu, is not to transform boys to men, but to institute or to consecrate a fundamental social order, in this case, the division between the sexes. Although the rite most obviously is directed toward boys and men, a hidden set of individuals, the girls and women, are simultaneously defined as such by the rite, naturalizing the distinction and effectively imposing a social essence on these arbitrary positions.

Thus, Bourdieu argues that rites of passage more appropriately should be understood as *rites of institution*,⁹ whose function, rather than providing means for organized transgressions of the social order, is the implementation of boundaries that maintain that very order, consecrating it and thereby concealing its arbitrariness. While transformative rituals and performances on one level seem to reconstitute social relationships, these acts are simultaneously legitimizing social relations at a deeper level, thereby reinforcing social normativity. Nonetheless, Bourdieu still seems to acknowledge the social efficacy of the rite. If the ritual is properly legitimized by a social institution, it does perform a certain “social magic” that not only changes the representation of relations and persons, but also the behavior, attitudes, and beliefs that the social group adopts toward these entities. However, rather than implying, as Turner does, that the transformative power of ritual is located in the temporary dissolution of social structure that follows from liminality, Bourdieu claims that such rituals are only effective as long as they are authorized by exterior forces (i.e., social institutions). Therefore, they must be seen not only as implicated in the structures they apparently transform, but also concealing this institutionalized power. In this way, Bourdieu challenges a central idea in Turner’s work—that rituals and performances are means for a social group to gain knowledge of itself. In Bourdieu’s reading, performance may be effective for attaining some kind of transformation; however, the same processes conceal the formations of power that uphold the existing order. Thus, what Bourdieu and other critical readers of Turner highlight is the need to address the normative effects of performance.

9 By “institution,” Bourdieu is not necessarily referring to a specific organization, but “any relatively durable set of social relations which *endows* individuals with power, status and resources of various kinds” (Thompson, 1991, p. 8).

4.3 Performativity and subjectivation

For explicating the tension between transgressive and normative aspects of performance, I now turn to Judith Butler, who, in her theory of gender performativity, presents a quite different perspective on performance that radically departs from Turner's, but nonetheless can be connected to Turner's ideas when developing a conceptualization of music as a means of social transformation. For Butler, the performance of gender is not connected to a transgressive potential. On the contrary, gender performativity denotes the normative function of discourse through which gender, and the human subject in general, is constituted. This line of thinking offers ideas for considering how performance not only contributes to the consolidation of social norms, but also the concealment and naturalization of such processes. Yet, Butler's thinking also entails discussions of the politics of the performative—how the notion of the performative involves a possibility for subverting and challenging social norms. This double potential, performance as the consolidation/destabilization of social convention, is central to developing an analytical framework for understanding the ambiguous function of musical performance. In the following section, I discuss some of the main themes in Butler's work, specifically the notions of performativity and subjectivation. Further, I draw on Saba Mahmood's notion of docile agency that challenges the binary set of consolidation/destabilization and lets us consider performance as a way of experiencing and inhabiting norms in different ways.

4.3.1 Performativity, subjectivation and agency

Butler's notion of performativity is developed in order to rethink the identity categories of sex, gender, and sexuality that serve as "the stable point of reference for a great deal of feminist theory and politics" (Butler, 1999, pp. 163–164). Feminism expresses the interests of "women," but in doing so, feminism may contribute to reproducing some of the presuppositions that underpin the hierarchical division between the sexes. In her groundbreaking book *Gender Trouble*, Butler seeks to make such categories permanently problematic by proposing that there is no preexisting gender identity behind the bodily attributes, gestures and characteristics that are normally taken to be the expressions of gender. Rather, "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1999, pp. 43–44).

Any recourse to a “true” nature of sex, gender, and sexuality is fictitious. Ideas about men/women, masculinity/femininity, and heterosexuality/homosexuality are culturally and discursively constructed, and these categories are real only to the extent that they are being performed.

By pointing to gender as discursively constituted, Butler draws on the work of Michel Foucault. In a Foucauldian framework, there is no recourse to an underlying reality. Truth is produced in discourse, defined as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Discourses manifest themselves in the material practices that constitute social life, and these discursive practices regulate what can be said and done within a social field. What interests Butler is, as the subtitle to her book *Bodies That Matter* indicates, the discursive limits of “sex”—how not only gender, but also the body itself, is discursively constituted. Sex is not something one is or something one has; “it will be one of the norms by which the ‘one’ becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (Butler, 1993/2011, p. xii). This does not mean that the materiality of the body is in some way fictitious or merely a social construction. That “discourse is formative”, writes Butler (1993/2011, p. xix), “is to claim that there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body.” In this way, Butler (1993/2011, p. xix) urges us to consider the formation of the human subject as a “temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms.” Combining the Foucauldian approach with psychoanalytic theory in the tradition of Lacan, Butler (1993/2011, 1997b) discusses how this regulatory process works in restrictive but also productive ways, to assert the boundaries of that which qualifies as a viable human subject, simultaneously producing its constitutive outside, the abjected or excluded forms of human subjectivity.

Whereas Turner deals with theatrical performance as a potential site of cultural critique and imagination, Butler’s notion of performativity refers to the normative function of discursive practice. However, interesting passages occur between the two conceptions of performance. Significantly, Butler’s (1988) initial work on the topic explicitly draws upon Turner and Schechner, when she refers to theatrical contexts for illuminating how gender is constituted in performance.¹⁰ Further, in *Gender Trouble*, she uses the example of drag performances to illuminate how firm gender categories can be destabilized in

10 As she writes in an article published prior to *Gender Trouble*, “the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts” (Butler, 1988, p. 521).

parodic performance that “implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself” (Butler, 1999, p. 175, emphasis removed). However, as Jon McKenzie (1998) argues, the example of drag coupled with the references to Turner and Schechner, which could imply a focus on the transgressive function of performance, may have led some readers to misunderstand Butler’s suggestion that gender is real only to the extent that it is performed. Butler herself engages with this common misreading in the essay *Critically Queer*, published between *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*. Here she writes:

The misapprehension about gender performativity is this: that gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, that there is a “one” who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today. This is a voluntarist account of gender which presumes a subject, intact, prior to its gendering. The sense of gender performativity that I meant to convey is something quite different. (Butler, 1993, p. 21)

For Butler, resistance toward gender norms does not come from outside of norms. There is no recourse to a distinct space where cultural truths can be assessed and intentionally changed, as this would presume a subject that stands outside of discourse. Instead, she writes:

Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power; to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a “pure” opposition, a “transcendence” of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 184)

Importantly, the process of subject formation cannot be seen as an exclusively repressive one that subordinates the subject to a higher order; but also implies a productive power, that Butler illuminates by employing Foucault’s (1980, 1982) notion of subjection/subjectivation (*assujettissement*):¹¹

The term ‘subjectivation’ carries the paradox in itself: *assujettissement* denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection—one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies a radical dependency. ... Subjection is, literally, the *making* of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced. Such subjection is a kind of power that not only unilaterally *acts on* a given individual as a form of domination, but also *activates* or forms the subject. (Butler, 1997b, pp. 83–84)

11 Foucault’s term *assujettissement* is translated “subjection,” “subjectivation,” or “subjectification.” Following Butler, I primarily use the term “subjectivation.”

Thus, the paradox that Butler contemplates is that the discursive norms to which we are subjected also are the ones that we depend on for our existence. She writes, "Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency" (Butler, 1997b, p. 2). When coming to terms with the sense of agency entailed by the discursive constitution, Butler rejects the notion of the voluntarist subject of humanism that can somehow escape its discursive dependency. However, the subject should not for that reason be seen as fully determined. Butler writes:

The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; "agency," then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. (Butler, 1999, p. 185)

For explicating this notion of discursive agency and formulating a politics of the performative, Butler turns to J. L. Austin's (1962) speech-act theory and the subsequent critique by Bourdieu (1991) and Jacques Derrida (1988). By introducing the linguistic notion of a "performative," Austin (1962) brings attention to how language is not essentially constative—i.e., aimed at the production of true or false statements about the world—but that the uttering of certain statements is actually a performance of an action, what Austin refers to as a "speech act." When a priest says "I now pronounce you . . ." in a wedding ceremony, her words are performative in the sense that they do not describe her doing or merely state what she is doing; rather, to say is to do. However, a marriage is not produced merely by saying the proper words. For a performative utterance to succeed, for it to be *felicitous*, appropriate circumstances must be in order, e.g., the priest must be an actual priest and endowed with authority for the marriage to be valid.

Whereas in this way, Austin connects the performative (or illocutionary) force of the words to "the total speech situation" in which the statement appears, Derrida argues that its success more fundamentally relies on its citational character:

Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"? (Derrida, 1988, p. 18)

Therefore, argues Derrida, the performative gains its force not because of the particular context, but because of a foundational *iterability* of the mark, which implies an ability to break with its context and, therefore, also to be deployed and recited in future and yet unknown contexts. Bourdieu (1991), on the other hand, appraises Austin's theory for drawing attention to language's dependency on social convention, although he objects to a tendency he finds in Austin to ascribe the power of the performative to the language itself, rather than connecting it to the position of the speaker within an institutional network of power. Bourdieu's reading of Austin is closely related to his critique of Turner, that the authority that ensures the effect of rituals and performatives must be derived from the social institutions that endow individuals with power to act.

Butler (1997a) seeks to mediate between Derrida and Bourdieu's positions by suggesting that while Bourdieu is right to emphasize the network of power within which the performative acts, his static view of social institutions fails to account for the way a performative can break with its context. This capacity is illuminated by Derrida, whose structural account of the performative, however, is removed from any consideration of its social embeddedness. In Butler's view, social norms are the sedimented effect of continuous reiterations stabilized by discourse, but this reiterative structure also opens on a possibility of the undoing of norms, as these are always vulnerable to false citations. To illustrate, Butler points to the example of Rosa Parks, who sat down on a bus-seat to which she was not entitled, according to the segregationist politics of her time. As Butler reads this incident, "in laying claim to the right for which she had no *prior* authorization, she endowed a certain authority on the act, and began the insurrectionary process of overthrowing those established codes of legitimacy" (Butler, 1997a, p. 147).

The possibility of social transformation lies within the false or wrong reiterations of convention that may "have the effect of challenging existing forms of legitimacy, breaking open the possibility of future forms" (Butler, 1997a, p. 147). Crucial to an understanding of Butler's notion of discursive agency is that the possibility of agency resides within the norms; "as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power" (Butler, 1993/2011, p. xxiii). For a feminist politics, this means that resistance toward the hegemony of the heterosexual matrix does not come from a position outside the gender norms that constitute the domain of the intelligible, since the "I" that would resist such norms is already dependent on rearticulating them, in order to enter into cultural intelligibility. The political

promise of the performative lies in the possibility of resignifying the terms by which the subject is constituted—the possibility “to exploit the presuppositions of speech to produce a future of language that is nowhere implied by those presuppositions” (Butler, 1997a, p. 140).

Situated within a feminist political project, Butler’s notion of discursive agency is directed against the destabilization of the norms that deprive particular individuals of their viability as subjects. However, when applied for other purposes, this notion of agency may need to be expanded. As Mahmood (2001, 2005) argues, Butler’s emphasis on agency as the subversion of norms grounds her analysis in an “agonistic framework, one in which norms suppress and/or are subverted, are reiterated and/or resignified—so that one gets little sense of the work norms perform beyond this register of suppression and subversion within the constitution of the subject” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 22). Analyzing the religious practices of women in a pious Islamic movement in Egypt, Mahmood (2005) argues that norms are not only resisted or consolidated, but “lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated” (p. 23) in a variety of ways, and these forms may presuppose different models of subjectivity and rely on different instances of authority. Suggesting the notion of *docile agency*, Mahmood (2001) draws attention to the way “individuals work on themselves to become the willing subjects of a particular discourse” (p. 210), but in this process, as her study of the pious women shows, such individuals may counter several other structures of authority to which they are also subjected. The interesting question for Mahmood is not whether such authoritative structures are subverted or reproduced, but rather how different models of subjectivity are produced from disparate ways of fulfilling or inhabiting the norms, and how various forms of life emerge from such diverse enactments.

Connecting the discussion above to the purpose of the present research, Butler’s concepts of performativity and subjectivation offer a quite different view of the social significance of musical performance than the one that can be extracted from the work of Turner. By thinking of musical performance as a subjectivating practice, attention is drawn toward music’s contribution to the production of subjectivities within existing relations of power in a social field. This perspective has recently been applied by music education scholars to thinking critically about the discursive constitution of gender (Björck, 2011; Onsrud, 2013) and musicianship (Ellefsen, 2014) within music educational practice. In such practices, Elizabeth Gould (2007) argues, music may contribute to the ongoing social processes of (re)signification by which people are constituted as legible

or illegible subjects. Further, informing a theory of music as a means of social transformation, Butler's ideas of the politics of the performative open up for consideration how musical performance might become a way of displacing or subverting the social and institutional norms to which individuals are subjected. Following Mahmood, I suggest that such a notion of musical agency should also include consideration of how norms are not necessarily subverted, but rather inhabited or consummated in musical performance and practice. Yet, a deeper understanding of these processes requires a further engagement with ideas of the particular ways in which music constitutes the social.

4.4 Performance/performativity and music

As one could expect, the notion of performance is mundane to musicological thinking. However, it is only within the last thirty years that musicologists have begun to pay attention to music *as* performance, and not just consider performance as a necessary (but ultimately disposable) means of bringing into sound the actual object of musicology, the "work" (Cook, 2012, 2013). This *new* or *critical* musicological movement is in part inspired by the performative turn in the social sciences and has entered the field through ethnomusicology. Scholars like Steven Feld (1982) and Anthony Seeger (1987) direct attention to the ways music can be studied not only *in* culture but *as* culture. In his groundbreaking study *Why Suyá Sing*, Seeger (1987) suggests that music is not only an expression or manifestation of broader cultural systems, but "part of the very construction and interpretation of social and conceptual relationships and processes" (p. xiv). A performative view of musical practice entails seeing music making as a meaning-producing activity in the midst of our social and cultural lives. As Nicholas Cook (2012) writes, "To call music a performing art, then, is not just to say that we perform it; it is to say that through it we perform social meaning" (p. 193).

These ideas have also influenced the music educational field, especially through Small's theory of *musicking*, a notion that places emphasis on music as a performative act within which social relationships are established and negotiated. Among the scholars to follow Small in this assertion is Bowman (2005). "Music making," he writes, "is about the creation, through enactment, of self, and the creation, through enactment, of social relations" (Bowman, 2005, p. 147). Granting music this capacity, however, leads Bowman to stress the importance

of critically examining “what kind of social relationships we enact in our musical performances,” and “what, besides ‘the music,’ is being performed, taught, and learned?” (Bowman, 2005, p. 152).

The perspectives from Turner and Butler outlined above invite us to consider these performative processes in two senses. Looking at musical performance as a Turnerian space of liminality, we can explore how ordinary social relations are temporarily suspended and how performers are afforded means of assessing, exploring, and transforming these relations. Applying the Butlerian notions of performativity and subjectivation, on the other hand, illuminates how such performative processes are situated within the social, discursive, and institutional norms and structures that constitute the social world. From this perspective, taking up the tools that musical performance provides is seen as a reiterative process that ultimately reinscribes the terms under which performers appear as viable subjects. I argue that the task for the critical analyst of musical practice, seeking to understand how music making contributes to processes of social transformation, is to keep both of these dimensions in play, explore the contradictions and conflicts produced in this tension, and investigate how musical actors position themselves and are in turn positioned as subjects within the musical practice. In order to arrive at a deeper understanding of this tension, I draw upon Georgina Born’s model of the social mediation of music.

4.4.1 The social mediation of music

As argued above, understanding music as a means of social transformation requires attention to the social relations produced in musical performance and practice, but at the same time, a focus on the institutional structures and discursive norms in which these relations are constituted. In a brief but weighty exploration of *Music and the Social*, Born (2012; see also Born, 2011) advances a model of the social mediation of music that addresses this complexity. Informed by the challenges Marilyn Strathern (1988, 1996) and Bruno Latour (2005) pose to the dominating conceptions of “society” and “the social,” Born (2012) argues that social analysis of music has relied on too-simple models of musical sociality that either assume that music reflects the social life of a group, or employ reductionist thinking about the social in music (p. 264). As a corrective to previous conceptions, and informed by Will Straw’s (1991) scene theory, Born (2012) argues that sociality produced in music must be understood as plural

rather than singular, and that these multiple socialities can be analyzed in terms of four planes of social mediation (p. 266).

The first plane concerns the relationships established in immediate practice or performance, relations produced in and bound to a particular place and time in which the music unfolds. This plane of analysis elucidates the micro-socialities of musical practice: how the interaction between people and musical things establishes specific affordances that allow for action within the immediate context. In the second plane, music generates imagined communities that transcend the place and time of performance. For example, music may enable listeners to attach themselves to a virtual collective of other music fans around the globe, who share their love for a particular genre or performer. In the third plane, music mediates social-identity categories such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, generation, nationality, or locality, forms of identification that music may contribute to reproducing or modifying in some way. The fourth and final plane concerns how musical socialities are part of institutional formations, e.g., educational, religious, market or non-market-based institutions that facilitate the production of music and musical performance.

These four planes of musical mediation should be seen as irreducible to each other, but they may intersect in various ways. The first two planes, immediate performance and imagined communities, relate directly to musical action and experience and have a certain autonomy from the last two planes concerning the social conditions of music. However, as Born writes, the conditioning planes cannot be seen merely as “context”; rather, “they are folded into musical experience; they both permeate and are permeated by music’s intimate socialities and imagined communities” (Born, 2012, p. 267). Together, the four planes comprise what Born terms a musical *assemblage*,¹² a notion that underscores how music allows for multiple forms of existence to be experienced and produced simultaneously, and how relations and socialities occurring in music may continuously be transformed and recombined. Born writes:

It is the complex potentialities engendered by both the autonomy of and the mutual interference between the four planes that are particularly generative of experimentation, transformation, and emergence in musical assemblages, whether this entails experimentation with the socialities of performance or practice, with the aggregation of the musically affected, with the crystallization via musical affect of novel coalitions of social identities, or with music’s institutional forms. (Born, 2012, p. 267)

¹² Born employs the notion of *assemblage* with reference to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) and Manuel DeLanda (2006).

Born (2012) suggests that this view of musical socialities is productive for complex analysis of musical practice, as it enables an engagement with dimensions of scale, temporality, and power; questions of how music produces social relations across the different planes of sociality, how these emerge and are transformed in time on each plane and as a result of cross-scalar interactions; and finally, how such processes are embedded in and influenced by the power relations that constitute the social (pp. 273–274).

Of particular significance to the present research is the relative autonomy that Born ascribes to the immediate act of performance, a capacity that allows for experimentation within the musical assemblage and thus points to transformative potential. The socialities established in immediate performance and practice, argues Born, may be

alternatives to or inversions of, and can be in contradiction with, wider hierarchical and stratified social relations. These are performed contradictions that contribute powerfully to the nature of socio-musical experience by offering a compensatory or utopian social space—one that fashions experience differently even as it may fail to overturn wider social relations (although such an outcome is not foreclosed). (Born, 2012, p. 269)

Here, Born invokes the line of thinking inherited from Turner when she draws attention to the way musical performance may furnish a “compensatory or utopian social space” set aside from, and potentially in contradiction to, everyday social relations. While in this way Born seems to emphasize music’s capacity for positive social transformation, she acknowledges that such alternative relations should be examined in terms of their temporal endurance and permanency. Some socialities animated by the musical event will show historical depth and stability, while others may be of a more transient character. Yet, Born’s aim is not primarily to emphasize music’s capacity for transforming social relations. Instead, she seeks to offer a model that allows for complex understandings of how music mediates the social, which challenge the idealized images of musical sociality often encountered in social analyses of music. Born (2012) argues, “Rather than conceive of social relations as organic or oriented to community, the intention must be to address them in all their complexity as constituted also by difference, contradiction, and antagonism” (p. 274).

I suggest that the way Born’s model opens up for consideration the plural socialities established in musical performance and practice offers tools that allow the analyst to move beyond simplistic understandings of music as a resource for social change. By insisting on the autonomy of each plane, as well

as the possibility of cross-scalar intersections that allow for transformation to occur, Born retains socially transformative potential within musical performance. However, this capacity can only be properly conceived insofar as due attention is paid to how musical action and experience are mediated by wider social and institutional formations. Such norms and structures are not external contextual properties, but fundamental aspects of music's social functioning. While music making may establish novel social relations in immediate practice or allow performers to attach themselves to alternative imagined communities, these actions may at the same time depend on, and therefore reproduce, the wider social and institutional configurations that underlie the musical practice.

4.5 **Ambiguous musical practice**

In this section, I draw upon the insights from Turner, Butler, and Born to advance a notion of *ambiguous musical practice*. This notion, I argue, could serve as a tool for the social analyst of musical performance and practice, who seeks to understand such practices in terms of their capacity for promoting social change, but in a way that explicitly retains a view of the simultaneously enacted socially reproductive processes. The notion of ambiguous musical practice directs attention to three dimensions of musical practice. First, ambiguity refers to a fundamental *bidirectionality* of music making in terms of its social effects. Second, the notion of ambiguity refers to the *multiplicity of meanings* produced in musical practice. Third, ambiguity refers to the *in-betweenness* of musical performance. In the following, I discuss how these aspects can be drawn out of the theoretical ideas outlined above, how they are interrelated, and how they might inform analysis of music as a means of social transformation.

As the most central assertion, the notion of ambiguous musical practice denotes how music making must be seen as involved in both processes of social transformation and reproduction. This assertion is not new in socio-musical studies, where music has been conceived in terms of how it functions to stabilize existing categories and identities, as well as how musical performance contributes to transforming them. However, employing Butler's notion of performativity and subjectivation, music's functions as a consolidating/destabilizing force within the social must be seen as tied together in a way that renders it impossible to consider each of these dimensions without the other. Thinking of musical agents as discursively constituted means that their capacities for producing

change within a given social context depend upon a reiteration of the norms that constitute the domain of the sayable and the doable.

While the fundamental paradoxes concerning human subjectivity and agency find a philosophical basis in Butler's notions, I find that the bidirectionality—the simultaneity of the transformative and the reproductive forces—implied in the notion of ambiguous musical practice is most accurately articulated by Bourdieu's (1991) concept of *rites of institution*. Without denying the obvious transformative effects of the rite—the 'social magic' that is achieved in ritual performance—Bourdieu guides our attention toward the entities and the premises that are not subject to change, but rather that are consolidated, concealed, and naturalized as a concomitant and (in Bourdieu's view) more fundamental function of ritual action. Analyzing music making as ambiguous musical practice entails questioning not only how participants are enabled to transform social relations, but what social relations are simultaneously being reinforced, concealed, and naturalized in musical performance.

In this way, the bidirectionality of ambiguous musical practice is closely connected to how music making produces a *multiplicity of meanings*. Born suggests that musical sociality must be understood as plural socialities. Music is involved in the production of social relations on multiple planes, which allows for producing contradictory and conflicting meanings and relations concurrently. Thus, Born's perspective invites consideration of music's "multiple simultaneous forms of existence," the way that music's mediations are at once "sonic and social, corporeal and technological, visual and discursive, temporal and ontological" (Born, 2012, p. 268).

This aspect can be connected to Turner's ideas of the multivocality of liminal performance and its capacity for "moving people at many psycho-biological levels simultaneously" (Turner, 1969, p. 129). For Turner, a characteristic of performances and rituals are their "many-leveled or tiered structure," which makes "these genres flexible and nuanced instruments capable of carrying and communicating many messages at once, even of subverting on one level what it appears to be 'saying' on another" (Turner, 1988, p. 24). These meanings and messages are not to be read as a script; rather, they gain their full meaning in the situated act of performance, through their use in the ongoing social process of a given group of people. Thus, as both Born and Turner emphasize, musical performance involves the experience of a multiplicity of meanings and effects on many levels of social reality, but importantly, these meanings are experienced in a single, unified musical event. The notion of ambiguous

musical practice advanced here emphasizes the need to carefully consider the complexity, paradoxes, and conflicts that potentially emerge within musical performance and practice.

The multiplicity of meanings that musical performance produces can, in turn, be connected to the third aspect of ambiguous musical practice, the *in-betweenness* of musical performance. This aspect is connected to Turner's notion of liminality and the way performance establishes a particular frame in which everyday social relations are temporarily suspended. In performance, as Schechner's (1985) notion of restored behavior elucidates, performers are simultaneously "not me" and "not not me" (p. 113), which enables them to explore and try out alternatives to the existing social reality and infuse into their sense of self what they might have been or wish to become. Similarly, in Born's model of the social mediation of music, musical action and experience are situated between the immediate and the imagined. This model also makes clear, however, how musical experience cannot be detached from its embeddedness in specific social and institutional formations, and the norms, premises, and structures that guide and condition that experience. The multiplicity of meanings involved in musical performance means that performers always navigate a complex field of many, and potentially contradictory, mediations and discourses that are stabilized or transformed over time.

The in-betweenness of ambiguous musical practice is also connected to conceptualizing agency within musical performance and practice. While Butler's notion of agency particularly depends on the reiterative structure of the norm that allows agents to destabilize the norm through false citations of convention, Mahmood's notion of docile agency emphasizes how norms can also be inhabited, consummated, or reached for in a variety of ways that, in turn, produce different forms of subjectivity. I wish to suggest that the performative space, due to its liminal character as a space set apart from the everyday, and the way it engenders multiple socialities, can be a particularly suitable place for negotiating or trying out different forms of subjectivity. While such a negotiation must still be guided by existing structures of authority and legitimacy, musical performance may enable performers to inhabit norms differently through the way such performances mediate a range of socialities and meanings simultaneously, which produces a highly ambiguous and indeterminate space. Yet, also as stressed above, the ambiguity of musical performance is tied to both transformative and reproductive potential. The in-betweenness of musical performance may therefore both conceal the processes in which norms are

reiterated and reinforced, and enable performers to invoke the authority and legitimacy of some norms to counter or transcend others. To determine the nature of such paradoxical effects of musical practice and performance requires attention to the actual processes of music making as a situated act, influenced and constrained by local conditions and local politics.

By directing attention toward the bidirectionality, multiplicity of meanings, and in-betweenness of musical performance and practice, the notion of ambiguous musical practice is advanced as a conceptual framework specifically suited for addressing participatory music making as a means of social transformation. This conceptualization allows for attending to music as a means of social transformation while retaining a critical attitude toward the ways that music making may be involved in processes of social reproduction. As such, this conception can contribute to the development of critically informed perspectives within the field of musical-social work in particular, and music education in general.

5 **Methods**

Understanding musical practice as ambiguous musical practice implies attention to the musical processes as they unfold and how the participants and their audiences experience and interpret them, but also to the institutional structures in which music is performed, how these performances are informed by past performances (of music, identity, and culture) and how they, in turn, come to influence future ones. These interests have directed me toward ethnography as the methodological framework for this study, and the use of participant observation and interviews as the primary methods for constructing the empirical data. As a hallmark of anthropology, the methods of ethnography are utilized by researchers who seek deeper and more detailed understanding of human social life as it unfolds in its natural context. Ethnography implies an encounter between the researcher and the researched; the researcher enters a social context, becomes a part of the everyday practices of the people of the field, and from this position, investigates the social processes of interest. This means that in trying to understand the social world using ethnographic methods, the researcher becomes “the research instrument par excellence” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 17), which implies a wide range of methodological and ethical considerations. In this chapter, I reflect upon the methodology applied in the present research project, outline the research design and how the data was collected and analyzed, and consider the ethical dilemmas involved.

The empirical data for the present research was collected during four relatively short periods of field work in 2016 and 2018, amounting to a total of 41 days in the field, raising the question of whether this research actually can be labelled ethnographic—a label that for some implies a considerably longer engagement in terms of time actually spent in the field. However, the research presented here builds upon a much more extended interaction with the field. In 2012, I lived in Lebanon for eight months, five of them in a Palestinian refugee camp, during which time I participated in the social life of the Palestinian community and as a volunteer teacher in the music program in Rashidieh. Further, during this stay, I wrote several shorter (unpublished) music education papers as part of graduate courses at Aarhus University, and a book chapter about the cultural exchange activities (Boeskov, 2013a). After I returned to Denmark, I also incorporated perspectives from these texts into my master's thesis (Boeskov, 2013b). In this way, even as my 2012 stay is not a part of the present research project initiated in 2015, it nonetheless provides me with important background knowledge and experience for the study, both in terms of the development of a cultural sensitivity (Liamputtong, 2008) and experience with dealing analytically with music making in this specific context. Based on these considerations, I maintain that the present study should be seen as ethnographic in nature, and in the following section, I consider what this choice of methodology entails.

5.1 Ethnographic tensions

Rather than a fixed set of methods, Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) conceive of ethnography as a particular way of looking at the world, as “a distinctive analytical mentality” (p. 230). This mentality exhibits a commitment to careful attention both toward how people understand themselves and what they say about their experiences of the social world, but also toward the social processes in which these understandings and experiences are embedded, and the implications of contexts and circumstances of which the people in question may not even be aware themselves. As Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale (2015) suggest in their introduction to the qualitative research interview, research participants can be perceived as subjects in two senses; as experiencing and acting subjects able to articulate their reasons and motivations for action, and as subjects of particular discourses, ideologies, and power relations that influence how they talk and what they talk about (p. 3). This double attention is a central analytical perspective in the present research.

When conducting and analyzing interviews, I pay attention to my interlocutors' experiences and interpretations of participating in the music program, but I also notice "the perspectives they imply" and "the discursive strategies they employ" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 97). Not only is what is said important, but also how it is said, what cultural information the participants draw upon, and how musical performances are linked to specific experiences and articulations of identity, culture, and agency.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss how the ethnographic analytical mentality produces four sets of tensions central to the dynamics of fieldwork (p. 230ff). The first tension concerns the view from within against the view from the outside, the *participant* versus the *analytical* perspective. The ethnographic researcher must be committed to understanding the perspectives of the people studied and suspend her own immediate, commonsense, and theoretical assumptions about what is going on. However, at the same time, ethnographic studies usually aim at the development of an analytical perspective; an understanding of the field that differs from, or is even in conflict with, the participants' own understandings of their social worlds. For example, it is a general assumption of this study that cultural identities are not pre-existing within particular individuals; rather such identities are seen as performatively constituted in cultural praxis. However, my interlocutors generally understand their cultural identities to be innate; Palestinianness is perceived to be an inborn quality that is merely expressed, rather than constituted in musical or other sociocultural practices. In this way, the analytical understanding departs from the perceptions held by most of the people in the field, but, importantly, I do not take my interlocutors' assumptions about their cultural identities to be false or something to be simply disregarded. Rather, I see their experience of musical performance as an expression—and not constitutive—of identity as an ideological effect of the performance itself. In this way, the participant perspective is taken into serious consideration, but not uncritically adopted by the researcher, who is committed to producing an analytical understanding of the issues in question.

Second, ethnography implies a tension between the *particular* and the *general*. While ethnographies usually investigate one or a few cases in great depth, most of them nonetheless attempt to draw some general conclusions that can be learned and applied to other contexts as well. They attempt what Robert Yin refers to as an "analytical generalization" (Yin, 2016, p. 104). The question is on what grounds such generalizations can be made. Can the findings of ambiguous

outcomes of the music program in Rashidieh possibly be generalized in a way that renders them useful in other contexts, without effectively robbing them of their distinctive characteristics? Or would such a generalization lead to a reduction of these experiences that turn them into a reflection of the analyst's preoccupation with ambiguity, rather than resembling any real process of the social world? Although strenuous work, ethnography requires the researcher to work consistently within the delicate balance between the particular and the general, as it is through careful attention toward the specifics of the field that insights that are relevant to other contexts as well are produced (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 234).

The tension between the particular and the general is tightly connected to the third pair of tensions: *process* versus *structure*. Ethnographers typically adopt a processual view of sociality, emphasizing the fluid and changing character of identity and culture and the contingent and unpredictable nature of human social life, which necessitate highly detailed accounts of the local context. However, when interpreting the events of the field, the researcher often employs analytical concepts that presuppose some kind of general patterns, in order to produce findings that transcend the immediate context and have relevance for a wider group of readers. Thus, the imperative to treat social life as processual collides with a need to fix and capture social processes in general categories. The present study advances a view of musical sociality that perceives sociality as constituted by four distinctive planes. In my view, such a model provides a highly useful "thinking tool" that expands our understanding of musical-social work. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the patterns or social forms that we seek to capture by using a specific terminology are not so much reflected in the model as the model constructs our interpretations and experiences of such phenomena.

These issues are again tied to what Hammersley and Atkinson discuss as the fourth set of ethnographic tensions, between *discovery* and *construction*. While ethnography in the modern era presupposes a social world "out there" waiting for the ethnographer to discover it, postmodernist and poststructuralist thought has called such assumptions into question (see e.g., Alvesson, 2002; St.Pierre & Pillow, 2000). Increasingly, ethnographers have come to admit that the social phenomena they study are at least partly constructed by the researcher, who always encounters the world with a specific set of assumptions and concepts that influence how that world is seen, and how, in turn, it is represented in the ethnographic text. From this perspective, the research text cannot be seen as a

simple reflection of the social reality. Rather, as Deborah Britzman (2000) argues, “In poststructuralist versions, ‘the real’ of ethnography is taken as an effect of the discourses of the real; ethnography may construct the very materiality it attempts to represent” (p. 28). Nonetheless, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note, ethnographic research, like any other form of research, presumes that there exists some kind of social reality of which we can gain knowledge, and further, that new and better understandings of this reality can be developed (p. 236). Although this knowledge depends upon “the perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, (inter)textual, political and cultural circumstances that form the backdrop to—as well as impregnate—the interpretations” of the empirical material (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 6), it does not follow that attempts to interpret the social world should be abandoned. Rather, as James Clifford (1986) reminds us, it should be acknowledged that ethnographies are always “partial truths.” The social reality that emerges in such texts is dependent on and cannot easily be separated from the author’s biography, values, interests, the chosen analytical perspective, and her interpretive repertoire, and they should therefore be treated as open and preliminary, rather than as closed and final interpretations of the social world.

The four ethnographic tensions described above are unresolved, maybe unresolvable, yet productive if held in balance (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 236). In this way, ethnographic knowledge can be seen as produced in the movement from one side of the dichotomic tensions to the other, and this movement itself is necessary for capturing the complex processes of human social life. As a methodology, ethnography rests on a conception of multiple, rather than singular, realities, but also on the assumption that it is possible to arrive at valuable understandings of such realities through careful considerations and meticulous study. The ethnographic tensions discussed above stand as reminders of the need to continuously question the findings presented in this project. Rather than authoritative truths, these texts should be read with due note of their inherent partiality and provisionality. Yet, my hope is that the interpretations offered here will inspire readers to continuously question their own assumptions of how music functions within musical-social work, if not to arrive at absolute truths about such processes, then at least as part of a continuous effort to improve the thinking and the practices upon which these assumptions are based.

5.2 Positionality

Ethnographic knowledge is produced by a researcher entangled in the social reality he or she seeks to expose. Therefore, as Conquergood (2013) underlines, this knowledge can never be “abstracted from its historical and dialogical conditions” (p. 21). This necessitates consideration of the particular circumstances under which research data is produced, most importantly the positionality of the researcher within the field-work setting and the power relations between the researcher and the research participants. These issues become particularly salient when doing intercultural research, where historical and contemporary power imbalances, and embodied traces like gender, class, and race, influence the research situation and how people talk and represent themselves (Hofvander Trulsson & Burnard, 2016). Reflecting upon issues of positionality should not be seen as a way of neutralizing the researcher in order to substantiate claims of objectivity and truth. Reflexivity does not grant the researcher an objective position from which to observe. Rather, it commits the researcher to reflect upon her position as a participant in the field that produces certain responses. These responses are not to be disregarded, and may themselves be valuable sources of knowledge. Hammersley and Atkinson write:

[T]he fact that as researchers we are likely to have an effect on the people we study does not mean that the validity of our findings is restricted to the data elicitation situations on which we relied. We can minimize reactivity and/or monitor it. But we can also exploit it: how people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 16)

In what follows, I discuss how my own position in the field influences the research, with attention to general issues of power between the researcher and the researched; and how I, through my engagement in the music program, inhabit a specific position from which to explore the significance of the music activities.

As a white male from the global North, I cannot claim a neutral position in the field. In comparison to the Palestinian refugees, I enjoy a position of great privilege, holding political and social rights, power, wealth, and freedom. To my interlocutors I may come to represent “the Western world” on which the Palestinian community to a large extent depends for survival on a day-to-day basis, e.g., through organizations like the UNWRA, and in terms of the recognition necessary for the Palestinian refugees to obtain their political rights. This position influences the research in a number of disparate ways. On one hand, my

status as a Westerner grants me access to spaces and centrally placed people within the Palestinian community. On the other hand, it is quite likely that this status may also cause certain assumptions, experiences, and opinions to be articulated and others to be repressed. As Allan (2014) has discussed, within the Palestinian communities is a social expectation of what stories foreign researchers or development workers should be told—stories that fit into an overarching nationalist narrative about Palestinian suffering, resistance, and grand political claims of the right of return. What Allan illuminates, however, is that underneath the ideologically informed and highly standardized accounts of the Palestinian refugee experience, other stories may be buried, stories of more complex forms of belonging and remembering, and more pragmatic forms of everyday survival. What I must therefore consider is how my background as a Western researcher potentially incites certain responses from my interlocutors. Yet, as Lotte Buch (2009) has discussed, such standardized responses can also be analyzed in terms of their status as socially acknowledged truths that give the researcher insight into the moral economy of the field.

The Palestinian refugees depend upon relations to the world outside the refugee camps on both an individual and an institutional level. For Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS), the Palestinian NGO running the music program, this dependency materializes in direct economical dependency on donor subsidies from international partners from the West. To the participants, teachers and administrators of the music program, I am therefore not just “a Westerner,” but I appear in the field as an associate of the Norwegian organizations and institutions that historically have funded the music activities and that continue to be important partners—and donors—for BAS. Even though I am Danish, not Norwegian, and personally have nothing to do with the financial situation of the program, to many of my interlocutors, I still represent the Norwegian partners.¹³ From my previous experience as a teacher in the program, I have witnessed how many activities are set in motion whenever the Norwegians visit the program, to give a good impression and make the program “look good” in the eyes of the Norwegians, in order to secure future funding. Therefore, it is highly likely that this dependency influences how some of my interlocutors interpret our relationship and are prone to express viewpoints that they think I would like to hear.

13 My employer, The Norwegian Academy of Music has, during 2005–2013, been directly involved in the program by using it as a student practicum (Danielsen, 2013; Storsve & Danielsen, 2013), which means that a number of personal as well as financial relations have emerged between people from the Academy and the Palestinians.

However, there is also a danger of attributing too much significance to this potential bias. Most of the Palestinians I have interviewed for this research project did not seem especially eager to please me, and happily argued with me if they found my understandings to be misguided. Further, when informing my interlocutors about the research before interviewing them, I explicitly stated that I was not only interested in positive stories about the program, but also in potentially negative experiences and critical opinions. During the interviews, I felt that many of my interlocutors, especially the older participants, were willing and able to give nuanced accounts about the program that surpassed simple praise of the huge importance the music program has for the Palestinian community.

It is also relevant to stress that while I am surely closely associated with the Norwegian partner institutions that support the program, through my former long-term engagement as a teacher in the program, I have earned a position that is different from that of the “other Norwegians.” As I have been hanging around the program for long stretches of time, I have seen behind the facades and experienced the ups and downs of the everyday life of the music program, which are not exposed during the occasional visits by the Norwegian partners. Inhabiting a space in-between, I have sometimes used my ambiguous status as non-Palestinian and non-Norwegian to mediate between the two groups in situations of disagreement or misunderstanding.

In this way, the tension between insider and outsider perspectives central to ethnographic fieldwork has also been characteristic of my engagement in the field. In a sense, I am positioned as a foreigner and a cultural novice, with relatively little knowledge of Palestinian language, customs and traditions. This position poses crucial limits to the depth in which the cultural and social life of the field can be understood, and therefore during fieldwork, the ethnographer typically seeks to overcome and surpass it. However, also as discussed above, with respect to the ethnographic tensions, the outsider position elicits opportunities for the researcher; as cultural unfamiliarity makes it possible to question and have the interlocutors explain what they themselves take for granted (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 115). To be intellectually and socially positioned as an outsider can even be necessary for the researcher to avoid the dangers of over-identifying with participants’ perspectives and thereby “failing to treat these as problematic” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 88). Further, as Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (2003) discusses, because the researcher is not a regular

participant in the social field, interlocutors may be willing to discuss sensitive issues that they may not feel comfortable raising elsewhere (p. 107).

While an outsider in many aspects, my former engagement in the music program has also rendered me an insider in some ways and provided me with easy access and a good deal of knowledge about the musical practice and the people involved. This allowed me to save time usually needed for negotiating access and positioning oneself in the field. From the first day I set foot in the BAS social center to observe the music activities, I was warmly welcomed, but also counted upon to take up my former role in the program, and therefore immediately handed responsibility for teaching music. This position provided my participation with legitimacy and allowed me to quickly establish or reestablish trusting relationships with both teachers and participants. On the downside, participating in the program as an engaged teacher rather than as a “distant” observer gave me limited time to reflect upon the music activities as they occurred. However, in a context where qualified music teachers are in constant demand, I found it ethically infeasible to insist on a position as an observer only, not using my capabilities as a music teacher to actually make music happen.

Following the main line of this research, my position can certainly be described as ambiguous. Sometimes positioned as the “acceptably incompetent” novice of the field, and in other situations as the expert music teacher with the concomitant authority, my engagement in the field was characterized by a range of different positions and roles, each with their potential and limitations in terms of knowledge production. That the main focus of this research turned out to be national identity and belonging may therefore not entirely be caused by its obvious prominence, although I maintain that these issues are indeed central in understanding the significance of the music program in Rashidieh. Due to my position as a foreign researcher and an associate of the funding organizations, issues of national identity, recognition, and marginalization may surface more easily in conversations, and therefore felt to be more significant when analyzing the empirical material. Other themes such as gender, which is not treated in any depth in the present study, would definitely also amount to an interesting perspective when coming to a deeper understanding of the social significance of the music program. However, while I did ask questions related to gender issues, I felt that being a male researcher in a context where traditional customs of separation of the sexes are held in high regard made it difficult for me to pursue these issues while, at the same time, behaving in a culturally appropriate way. As discussed throughout this chapter, the findings

presented here should be regarded as a product of my particular engagement with the field and its “dialogical conditions” (Conquergood, 2013, p. 21) and not in any way as an exhaustive or authoritative account of the significance of the music program.

5.3 Conducting the research

The empirical data for this research project was produced over the course of four periods of fieldwork: March 2016 (five days), April 2016 (eleven days), May 2016 (fourteen days), and February 2018 (eleven days). During fieldwork, I lived in Rashidieh, participated in the music activities on Fridays and Sundays, conducted semistructured interviews with participants, teachers, and administrators from the program and immersed myself in the social life of the camp in order to understand the significance of the music program in its local context. Generally, the first two periods of fieldwork were dedicated to participant observation. In the third fieldwork period (May 2016), I also conducted most of the interviews. Between the third and fourth period of fieldwork, I analyzed the data before I returned to the field in February 2018 to conduct a couple of interviews to supplement the previous data with perspectives I felt were missing. Further, I used this visit to discuss my preliminary findings with various people inside and outside the refugee camp, to gain more perspectives and strengthen the validity of my analyses (see also section 5.7).

5.3.1 Participant observation

The most important context for participant observation was the bi-weekly music activities in the social center in Rashidieh. These activities typically begin at ten o'clock in the morning and last to three o'clock in the afternoon. During this time, I hung out at the social center, provided assistance to teachers and acted as a teacher myself when needed, but I also had plenty of opportunities to socialize and chat with teachers and participants. My strategy for participant observation in this context was largely exploratory. Focusing on how the music program participants acted in the musical practice, I paid attention to how they interacted with each other, their teachers, and the objects of the musical practice (such as instruments, costumes, props, scores), and how they undertook different roles and positions within the activities.

Another important context for participant observation was the *Nakba* concert, which was held on 13 May 2016 in the UNESCO Palace, a big concert hall in Beirut, Lebanon.¹⁴ This celebration involved Palestinians from all over Lebanon. The participants from the music program contributed to this event with drama, dance, and musical performances. While the bi-weekly music activities constitute the everyday core of the program, events like the *Nakba* concert are important highlights for both participants and teachers in the music program. The performances presented at this event were prepared months in advance, and they were the topic of much lively discussion both before and afterward. From my own experience in the music program, I have come to see the events, whether commemorative events hosted in the BAS social center or the cultural-exchange activities with Norwegians, as important focal points for the music activities. The everyday, ordinary practice of the music program gains a great deal of its significance through the extraordinary events at which the participants perform music and dance for Palestinian or international audiences.

In connection with the *Nakba* concert, BAS hosted a conference in Beirut with the theme *Being Palestinian: Human rights, identity and mental health*. I attended this conference, which provided me with insight into how important issues for the Palestinian community are negotiated within this institution, and how the music program may be seen in relation to this. Apart from the mentioned contexts, I also spent time during fieldwork visiting teachers, social workers, and some of the participants' families, to understand the significance of the music program in its local contexts. Further, the BAS organization often publishes videos and pictures from the music program on their social media sites, which has allowed me to follow the program from a distance when not working in the field.

5.3.2 Field notes

I captured my experiences as a participant observer in field notes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 141–147; Spradley, 1980, pp. 63–72). Due to my involvement in the music activities, field notes were mostly produced during breaks or at the end of a day's sessions. After returning to my room in the afternoon, I would usually sit by myself trying to remember what had happened and elaborate on the hasty notes I had jotted down during the activities. The field notes are

14 See article 3: "Birds from Palestine."

a mixture of descriptions of situations, activities, people, and interactions, questions to ask in interviews, ideas for analytical perspectives and remarks about things to pay attention to in further observations. During the analytical phase of the research, the field notes have often been consulted, and they provide the background material for descriptions of situations and context in the research text.

5.3.3 Video recordings

In the two first periods of fieldwork, I also made video recordings of the music activities. My initial plan was to subject these recordings to closer analysis at later times, which would allow me to observe without having a fully formed understanding of which phenomena or kinds of actions are of immediate interest (Rønholt, Holgersen, Fink-Jensen & Nielsen, 2003, p. 17). I imagined that the video recordings would capture social interactions, let me review situations, and thereby also enable me to “re-frame, re-focus and re-evaluate the analytic gaze” (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff, 2010, p. 6) as the research process went on. My position as a teacher in the field, however, made it difficult to use this strategy. Many of the recordings I made were coincidental and simply uninteresting. However, even though I changed my initial plans, some of the recordings came to good use. During interviews, I used the videos as a form of stimulated recall (Lyle, 2003) when I showed the interviewees video clips of themselves engaged in music activities and performances to support the conversation. By letting the participants talk about the meaning of specific events that they saw on the video clips, I gained more information about how meaning is ascribed to the music activities in general. Especially when interviewing the youngest participants, who sometimes had a hard time answering my questions, I felt that this technique was useful.

5.3.4 Interviews

During fieldwork I conducted formal interviews with sixteen participants from the music program, three teachers, one social worker, and one administrator from BAS. Further, I engaged in several informal conversations about matters related to the research with people from Rashidieh and from neighboring

camps not associated with the music program or BAS.¹⁵ The purpose of interviewing the participants was to understand what significance they attributed to their participation in the program and the different activities in which they engaged. Teachers, administrators, and the people from the community were interviewed in order to obtain information on the broader cultural and social significance of the music program in its local context. This understanding was further developed through the informal conversations with a range of people inside and outside the refugee camps.

When selecting interviewees among the participants of the music program, I pursued a diverse group in terms of gender, age (10–21 years), experience in the program, and the instruments they played. Based on my observations, I chose interviewees that I felt might offer interesting perspectives for understanding the social processes within the music program. This could be participants I had experienced as heavily engaged in specific activities or performances about which I was curious to know more, but also participants who were placed in more peripheral positions in relation to such activities. The participants were interviewed in pairs and in a location where I assumed they would feel most comfortable (the BAS center), in order to create a safe situation for the interviewees (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 20). The two oldest participants, teachers, and administrators were interviewed alone.

When interviewing the participants, I was assisted by a language assistant, a social worker from the BAS center in Rashidieh who is not directly involved in the music activities. The use of a language assistant necessitates careful consideration. As Monique Hennink writes, “Language assistants, just like researchers themselves, bring their own perspectives and background to the research and calls for reflexivity need to embrace this added layer of subjectivity” (Hennink, 2008, p. 26). The presence of the language assistant adds a new dimension to the interaction in the interview setting, and the quality of the language skills, interview skills, and sense of the research topic of the interpreter are bound to influence the quality of data a great deal. Further, using a translator from the organization I worked with could be problematic as participants might be more reluctant to express critical viewpoints concerning the program.

15 One of these conversations turned into an interview that was recorded and transcribed and subsequently used as part of article 3: “Birds from Palestine.” This informant has been fully informed about the research project as required by the ethical approval of the research, granted by NSD (see section 5.6.1).

Yet, collaborating with a language assistant can also be a great asset for a cross-cultural research project, especially if one conceives of the interview process as working *with* rather than *through* the interpreter (Edwards, 1998; Temple & Edwards, 2002). As Hennink argues, the involvement of a cultural insider may provide further nuances and depth to the data by contributing with “vital knowledge to the research process in terms of information, cultural interpretation of the data and contextual implications of the study findings” (Hennink, 2008, p. 31), insofar as the language assistant is properly informed of the research aims and purpose of interviewing (Liamputtong, 2008, 2010).

In the present case, I have experienced the involvement of the language assistant as a great resource for the research project. I did not sense any skepticism toward the presence of the interpreter on behalf of the interviewees, neither any reluctance to express critical viewpoints. On the contrary, the language assistant helped to provide a safe environment for conversation, especially during the interviews with the youngest participants. Before interviewing, I had a long conversation with the language assistant about the scope of the research and how I wanted interviews to be conducted, and a declaration of confidentiality was signed (see appendix 1). When conducting the interviews, I asked questions in English, which were then translated by the language assistant. The participants would then answer in Arabic and the language assistant would translate their answers back to me, a difficult exercise because of the complexity of translating, especially considering that Arabic words do not necessarily have an English equivalent (see also Liamputtong, 2010, p. 144). The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder, and shortly after they were conducted, the language assistant and I worked together to transcribe and translate all Arabic statements to English. This collaborative process provided opportunities for discussing and clarifying specific words or phrases used by the interviewees and opened up a range of new cultural insights. The language assistant was not present at the interviews with the two oldest participants or with the teachers, administrators, and people from the community, as these were conducted in English.

The interviews were conducted as semistructured interviews, meaning that certain themes and central questions were prepared in advance. At the same time, this form of interview is an open form that lets the researcher pursue specific answers or topics taken up by the informants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 150). The interview guides were directly informed by my observations, which means that some of the questions were about particular situations or roles to

which specific participants were related. Although interview procedures done this way were individualized, some common themes were touched upon in all interviews. These concerned background information (age, experience in the program), significant experiences (what do you especially remember from being a part of the music program?), questions about experiences with particular activities (instrument tuition, dance training, concerts and performances, cultural exchange), roles in the music program (student, teacher assistant, performer), the music (Palestinian, Norwegian, English music), and the role of musical performance in the life of the participant and in the Palestinian community in general (see appendix 2 for a standardized version of the interview guide). Generally, interviews with teachers, social workers, and administrators were more open and centered around fewer themes, most importantly how the music program can be seen in connection to issues of identity, culture, empowerment/marginalization, intercultural collaboration, and recognition (see appendix 3).

5.4 Transcribing the interviews

As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) point out, transcribing the interviews is also a way of transforming them “from an oral language to a written language” (p. 204), and, as such, is itself a form of analysis. The transformational character of transcription is obvious when considering the part of the interviews that also involved translation from Arabic to English. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), choices regarding how to transcribe, and to what degree of verbatim detail, should depend upon the intended use of the transcripts and what forms of analysis they are intended to support (see also Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 150). Highly detailed verbatim transcriptions, including such elements as pauses, repetitions, and tone of voice, may be necessary for linguistic analysis and psychological interpretations of interviews, but may be unfit for emphasizing other aspects, such as the general meaning of the interviewees’ stories. Further, ethical considerations should influence these choices, as transcriptions, insofar as these are published as part of the research texts, are primary means of representing the interviewees’ own voices. A verbatim transcription that includes repetitions, breaks, and incompetent language use can be ethically problematic, especially when representing individuals and groups of low social status (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 214).

Due to the above considerations, I have decided to transcribe interviews in a way that focuses particularly on communicating the overall meaning of what was said and to gently edit interview statements—for example by correcting grammar mistakes—to enhance readability and to ensure that the reader perceives the interview subjects as I do, namely, as knowledgeable and competent human beings. Because of language barriers, it has not been possible to subject interview transcriptions to member check. Even the Palestinians who speak English with some level of proficiency are usually quite inexperienced English readers. Processes of member checking have been conducted by discussing the overall interpretations and findings of the research project with various members of the community (see section 5.7). It is therefore important to state that I take full responsibility for any inexactitude concerning statements provided by the research participants, who can and should not be held responsible for how their accounts are represented here.

5.5 The process of analysis

The analysis of the data was conducted with an abductive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Tavory & Timmermans, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Abductive analysis is associated with the pragmatist philosophy of Charles S. Peirce and is a particular form of reasoning different from both inductive and deductive approaches. While inductive analysis assumes that theory can be built from empirical data, a deductive approach would take a specific theory or hypothesis as a starting point before turning to observations of empirical phenomena. Abductive reasoning is positioned between these approaches and “aims at generating novel theoretical insights that reframe empirical findings in contrast to existing theories” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 174). In the form suggested by Iddo Tavory and Stefan Timmermans (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), abduction relies on the researcher’s ability to adopt and apply a broad spectrum of analytical tools (theories, experiences, local explanations) when encountering observations that are surprising or unexpected, according to preexisting frameworks. Continuously revisiting the data and subjecting it to different modes of interpretation makes it possible for new ideas and observations to emerge that allow for better or more refined understandings of the social world.

As described above, at the beginning of the fieldwork I attended the musical practice with a broad focus on the social, cultural, and political significance of the musical practice, as well as how individual participants experienced their involvement in the music program and what opportunities for meaning making and agency this involvement entailed. In terms of theoretical assumptions, at this stage I was particularly inspired by anthropological and performance theory in the tradition of Turner and Schechner (see section 4.1) and its potential coupling with prominent (ethno)musicological ideas of music, sociality, and agency advanced by Small (1998), Turino (2008), and DeNora (2000, 2003). After concluding the first three periods of fieldwork (March, April and May 2016), I engaged in a close reading of the interviews and my field notes, in order to get well acquainted with the material and to identify themes that could serve as interesting ways in for a deeper understanding of the musical practice. Using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, I tentatively coded the interviews inductively with a set of codes that referred to the participants' own expressions and experiences, which generated categories such as "Palestinian identity," "positive emotions," and "learning to play." However, parts of my material seemed to place themselves somewhat in opposition to the main categories established in the thematic coding process, which largely affirmed the positive image of the program and its transformative potential disseminated in earlier research (see section 2.2.1). One example was my interview with Khalil and Hassan, two teenage boys from the program, who had effectively undermined the interview by their parodic performances of Palestinian nationalist rhetoric. Similarly, in my conversation with Najad, a young Palestinian woman from a neighboring camp, I was offered a quite different version of how young Palestinians experienced the national education provided by the Palestinian NGOs from that of the music program participants (see article 3: "Birds from Palestine" for my analysis of these interviews).

These tensions were for some time left unresolved; yet, gradually, they became central to my analytical attention. In the preliminary analysis I conducted at this stage, and which can be found in article 1: "The Community Music Practice as Cultural Performance," I particularly investigated my material in terms of how music making could be connected to processes of social transformation, which was the most central question at this point of the research, although my focus was primarily to develop an analytical gaze to investigate such transformative processes by applying the anthropological theory associated with Turner. As I engaged more deeply with these ideas, I felt they began to open up different

ways of considering the ambiguity I felt to be present in my data. What came to my attention was how processes of transformation that I identified in the material seemed to be intimately linked to processes of reproduction. I felt this in the sense that while musical engagement, without doubt, was experienced as personally rewarding and provided the participants with desired opportunities for action, the music program was also inscribed in a set of social and institutional relations that could be interpreted as, in some ways, constraining. These constraints were particularly tied to issues of national identity and experiences of belonging.

As I continued to grapple with the tension between the transformative and reproductive aspects of the musical practice, I began pursuing different lines of inquiry for unravelling it. Feeling that the musicological understandings on which I had based my work were insufficient as an explanatory framework, I searched for other models that could illuminate these aspects of my data. I found that Born's (2011, 2012) model of the social mediation of music (see section 4.4.1) provided me with an appropriate tool for digging deeper. I revisited my data using Born's four planes of sociality as an analytical lens to explicate how the musical practice contains contradictory or ambivalent processes of transformation/reproduction, and I wrote a short analysis of these issues, which is published in article 2: "Moving Beyond Orthodoxy." Here, I used the experiences of the two music program participants, Hanin and Ali, to establish what Norman Polkinghorne (1995) refers to as a "narrative configuration" (p. 5); a coherent narrative that integrates various empirical sources, e.g., descriptions of actions, events, statements, and contextual information, so as to generate a meaningful story that illuminates the issues in question. I chose the accounts of these participants because I found that they involved particularly rich sources of information in relation to the themes I wanted to pursue. Adjusting the investigative lens to focus on these participants and conducting a narrative analysis of their experiences in relation to Born's four levels of musical sociality opened up the empirical material in a new way and allowed me to see how the tensions that were present in the data in general could be understood by reading the participants' experiences as mediated by underlying social and institutional formations.

Parallel to this process, I read and re-read historical and anthropological accounts concerning the construction of Palestinian identity and experiences of belonging (e.g., Allan, 2014, 2018; Hammer, 2005; Holt, 2010; Khalidi, 1997; Khalili, 2004, 2007, 2008; Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 1979, 1994; Schulz, 1999, 2003; Segal, 2016a,

2016b) in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the processes of identity formation for the Palestinian refugees and its political, social, and cultural significance. Of particular importance was Allan's *Refugees of the Revolution* (2014) and Lotte Buch Segal's *No Place for Grief: Martyrs, Prisoners, and Mourning in Contemporary Palestine* (2016b). These anthropological accounts deal with the difference and contradiction between the grand narratives of belonging and identity that underpin the central political claims of the Palestinians, and the everyday experiences of grief and loss, and strategies for survival that inform the lives of individual Palestinians living under occupation or in exile. I found the detailed and insightful analyses of Allan and Segal to reflect some of the ambiguities I had encountered in my own material concerning issues of national identity and belonging.

Once again, I revisited my empirical data, but this time with a focus on how music making was connected, both in the musical practice itself and in interviews, to enactments of Palestinian identity and to the constitution of specific modes of belonging to Palestine. A second round of close reading of all material and coding, again using NVivo as a tool, produced a new set of categories with headers such as "representing Palestine," "educating the new generation," and "resistance through music." During this process, I also returned to Lebanon for the fourth period of field work (February 2018), where I conducted a couple of additional interviews dealing with some aspects of the theme in question that I felt a need to understand more thoroughly. The outcome of the analysis at this stage is presented in article 3: "Birds from Palestine" and focuses specifically on how the participants of the music program are constituted as national subjects in and through their engagement with the musical practice, as well as the ambiguous effects of this constitution.

This process inspired me to return to developing the theoretical framework of the research by employing Butler's concepts of performativity and subjectivation, a conceptual framework that had lingered in the background all along, but that I now felt a pressing need to put to use. In this round of analysis, I once again attended to my empirical data, but this time with a more theoretically informed approach, searching my material for processes of subjectivation and moments of discursive agency. This analysis is presented in the fourth article of the thesis, "Music, Agency, and Social Transformation."

5.6 Ethics

The ethnographic tensions outlined in the beginning of this chapter are not just connected to methodological issues, but also hold ethical implications. As the researcher constructs rather than discovers ethnographic truths, the image of the researcher as a neutral observer that encounters the world in order to objectively describe it cannot be upheld. Poststructural and feminist critiques of science production have shown that there is no such thing as value-neutral or value-free science (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6; Said, 1978; Skeggs, 2001, p. 429). Specific interests of power and domination inform and direct the research of academic communities. Furthermore, social science must be understood as a practice with consequences—and thereby an ethical practice—as the explication of understandings in a given society also is a way of challenging and changing them (Hastrup, 2009, p. 15). While this implies an obligation for the researcher to bring forward and reflect upon the ethics dimensions of the research as a whole, it does not mean that problematics of ethics can always be overcome. Rather, as Lynn Meskell and Peter Pels (2005) argue, seeing ethics as embedded in the research praxis constitutes the researcher as a mediator among the interests of the people studied, university administrations, ethics committees, the academic community, and the public in general, to all of whom the researcher has connections and responsibilities, and this position is therefore rife with ethical dilemmas. In the following section, I discuss the most pressing ethical aspects of the present research project.

5.6.1 Informed consent

One of the most basic ethical requirements for the social researcher is the obtaining of informed consent, either in written or oral form, from the participants (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities [NESH], 2016). Informed consent entails the participants voluntarily agreeing to be part of the study, having been informed beforehand of the research theme, scope, and aims, and given the opportunity to withdraw their consent at any time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 210). The process of obtaining consent and the handling of personal information has been subjected to review and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) (see

appendix 4).¹⁶ Due to the use of video recordings during the first field-work phases, the NSD approval required that informed consent be obtained from all participants involved in the program, and for participants below the age of 16, the consent of their parents. The participants themselves were informed orally in Arabic by the teachers and me, and all consented actively to participation. Consent from parents was obtained through a letter of information (see appendix 5) which was translated into Arabic (see appendix 6) by a social worker from the BAS organization and distributed to the parents, who signed and returned them. For interviewees, informed consent was obtained in a separate process. All interview participants were informed orally and through a letter of information (in Arabic and English, see appendices 7–8), and for interview participants below the age of 16, parents also consented by signing the written letter of information. As required by the ethical approval from NSD, this letter made clear that participation was voluntary, all personal information would be anonymized and kept safe, that consent could be withdrawn at any time, and that the language assistant had signed a declaration of confidentiality.

5.6.2 Anonymity

As the specific music program investigated here has been the subject of numerous reports, presented on the Norwegian Academy of Music's web pages and investigated openly by scholars, I have found it purposeless to attempt an anonymization of the music program itself or the organization running it. Yet, this underscores the need to make sure that the participants' individual identities are protected. The politically sensitive nature of questions regarding Palestinian identity and the fact that some of the viewpoints expressed by participants may be regarded as controversial in the local context have prompted me to carefully construct my analyses in a way that thoroughly preserves my interlocutors' anonymity. Given the relatively small number of participants in the music program, even contextual details like age, instrument, or descriptions of particular experiences (e.g., trips to Norway or participation in a specific performance) can be highly revealing. At the same time, I found that the focus on the individual experiences of ambiguity implied in the analyses sometimes required me to provide the reader with detailed information about specific conditions and experiences that potentially could be personally revealing. In

¹⁶ Due to changes in the research design, the project has been re-reviewed twice by NSD consultants. Subsequent approvals can also be found in appendix 4.

order to ensure my interlocutors' anonymity, I have therefore carefully altered selected aspects of the personal information in ways that preserve the analytical points but, at the same time, make it impossible, also for the teachers and the participants themselves, to attach specific statements or experiences reported in the research to particular persons.

5.6.3 Dependency and reciprocity

While all conditions for ethical approval posed by the NSD were followed, the research process is not free of ethical issues that prompt careful consideration. Obtaining informed consent implies that interlocutors participate freely and willingly. However, the process of obtaining consent itself must be seen as embedded in larger structures of dependency that question simplified assumptions of voluntariness. At an organizational level, this dependency is connected to my association with Norwegian individuals and organizations that fund the music program. While the director of the BAS organization immediately approved of my initial request to do a research project on the music activities in Rashidieh, the degree to which the director felt he actually had a choice remains open to question. Can organizations that (partly) depend on funding from foreign institutions reserve themselves from research initiatives proposed by those very same foreign partners? In the same way, many of the children that participate in the music program come from families that depend on support from BAS in various ways, e.g. for social support, insurance, or health assistance. Given these relations of dependency, can participation in the research project be deemed voluntary? It would be naïve to do so entirely; however, it would also be a mistake not to consider the mutual benefits inherent in a research project like this one. Just as the research project is entangled in asymmetrical relations of dependency, the research process is also connected to relations of reciprocity. As a basic moral principle found in ethical guidelines from the such organizations as the American Anthropological Association (2012) and the Association of Social Anthropologists (2011), the principle of reciprocity implies that the relation between researcher and those researched should be based on mutuality, meaning that the research should be of benefit not only to the researcher but also to the people studied.

On an organizational level, the present research project must be considered part of a greater collaborative relation between Norwegian music educators and organizations and Palestinian institutions. This cooperation includes the

funding of the music project, the ongoing education of the Palestinian music teachers, and arranging of trips to Norway for groups of Palestinian participants and teachers. As a senior official from the BAS organization told me, the music program in Rashidieh has proven a great asset for the organization, and music and dance activities have now spread to many of the organization's other centers in Lebanon. The ability to perform music and dance on a more professional level has enabled BAS to represent the Palestinian community at Lebanese and international music festivals, thus allowing them to communicate about their situation and living conditions in Lebanon and establish relations and partnerships with the outside world. Also, many of the participants I interviewed talked about the huge significance the music program has for them. They emphasized especially the possibility of travel (to Norway and other countries) and of establishing relations with people outside Lebanon as personally significant. Many also underlined the wider importance of communicating with outsiders about the current political and social situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Raising such awareness, my interlocutors believed, will incite action by the international community and potentially lead to positive change. Participating in a research study like the present one also was seen as a way of communicating about the Palestinian refugee issue to a foreign audience. Although I doubt that my research will lead to significant changes for the Palestinians, I am glad to contribute to raising awareness about their intolerable situation in Lebanon. More appropriate, I believe, is it to suggest that for my interlocutors, the opportunity to express themselves will lead to positive change at a personal level, as the interviews and the possibilities for self-expression that these entail may provide them with positive experiences of empowerment (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 35). Finally, when talking to parents of the music program participants about my research, they unambiguously gave me the impression that they approved of their children participating in the research project, just as many of them expressed how they saw the music program itself to be of great benefit to their children.

While the research project involves problematic relations of dependency, it is my hope that it will also strengthen the already ongoing cooperation with Norwegian and foreign partners in ways that will benefit Palestinians on both individual and collective levels.

5.6.4 Representation

As described above, the participants of this study may have engaged in the research process with specific expectations or hopes of social betterment through the research's dissemination of their situation. However, this communication inevitably relies on my representation of the Palestinian community, and this representation is not solely directed toward communicating about the issues that my interlocutors find important. Rather, it is informed by a specific research agenda and the interests of an academic community, which are not defined by nor necessarily relevant to the lives of the participants. As also discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the analytical focus and research agenda may contradict the participants' self-understandings, and such tensions can even be seen as opposing the interests of the people studied.

In relation to the present research, the political situation of the Palestinian community in Lebanon entails representing Palestinian national belonging as ambiguous and Palestinian identity as contested or as anything other than an inborn and inherited individual component might endanger the fundamental political claims of the Palestinian community (see also Allan, 2014, p. 34). Treating identity as performatively constituted, and therefore in some sense "made up," may be seen by some to underpin an assertion attributed to prominent Israeli agitators that there exists no such thing as a Palestinian people, even less a Palestinian people with a legitimate claim to the land that is now called Israel (see also article 3: "Birds from Palestine," footnote 6). This assertion is part of a historic and ongoing attempt to establish a predominantly Jewish past within the territories of Israel/Palestine and consequently erase traces of any Arabic or specifically Palestinian presence (Peteet, 2005, pp. 34–46, see also section 2.1.2). While I acknowledge the reality of this ideological struggle and the suffering it produces for the Palestinian refugees, I find it beyond my responsibility to my interlocutors to reproduce its logic uncritically.

More important, however, is the question of whether my interlocutors, who trustfully shared with me their personal stories and experiences, feel misrepresented in a research project that contains a view of these matters that departs from the somewhat essentialist position described above. The academic ambition of this research project over the course of the study, became the illumination of processes of ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradiction within the musical performance of Palestinian national belonging and identity. It is possible that some of my interlocutors would have reservations about the

findings presented here and the suggestion that some within the younger generations of Palestinians may experience their relation to Palestine differently than their parents and grandparents. While this does cause me some concern, I find that not including the explicit and implicit criticisms of the Palestinian national narrative that I encountered during my fieldwork is also unacceptable, since it would deny the legitimacy and existence of these positions. Discussing the findings of this study with Palestinians in and outside the refugee camps in Lebanon suggests to me that these positions indeed exist, but also that they are controversial.¹⁷

What is needed here, I suggest, is a sense of double loyalty that acknowledges the precarious political situation of the Palestinian refugees and the institutions that represent them, and at the same time encompasses the perspectives that do not easily fit into the grand national narrative about Palestinian experiences of belonging and identity, perspectives that are central to the academic ambition of this research project. I have attempted to materialize this double loyalty in thorough contextual descriptions of the music program and the existential, political, and social issues that the Palestinian community faces, while at the same time emphasizing the individual experiences and instances of agency that exist within the program, which render any simplified conclusions about “Palestinian identity” or “Palestinian experience” problematic. I do not see myself in any way capable or in an appropriate position to speak on behalf of the Palestinian refugees in matters that concern their political future. However, as I acknowledge that any representation of this community may be used against them and my responsibility as a social researcher of “avoiding harm” (NESH, 2016, p. 19), I urge the reader to consider the findings presented here as specifically crafted for a discussion of the social significance of music making and, therefore, not to be used for advancing this or that political claim on behalf of the Palestinian community.

This brings me to consider another important ethical aspect of this research, how the research engages with the category of “the Other,” an issue that becomes particularly salient when considering the Palestinians’ social position as defined by and constrained by unequal relations of power. The point is that the cross-cultural research must be understood as entangled in such relations. As a white, male, Western, and therefore in all respects a privileged researcher, I hold the power to represent the people of the field (Hofvander Trulsson & Burnard, 2016; Lee, 2016). I exercise this power by “writing them into

17 This assertion is also supported by the work of Allan (2014) and Maria Holt (2010).

being,” thus defining how and from where the researched subjects can speak (Spivak, 1993). As Deborah Youdell (2006) discusses from a similar analytical perspective as the one adopted here, the research process itself can be seen to be “wholly implicated in processes of ongoing subjectivation . . . even as these subjectivities form the object of study” (p. 514). Yet, as Youdell also contends, there is no easy solution to this issue. Nonetheless, an important way this thesis partly relieves this tension is by focusing on the discursive and docile agency of the participants and how they themselves—through their musical actions—render otherwise stable categories problematic. To the best of my abilities, I have sought to represent the people of this study in a way that stays close to their lived experiences, offers varied and textured accounts of identities and attitudes, and challenges rather than reinforces stereotypes (Fine & Weis, 2005; Lee, 2016; Liamputtong, 2010). In this way, I aim for this research to become “resonant work”, “respectful, responsible, rigorous, and resilient” work that “reverberates and resonates in and through the communities it serves” (Stauffer & Barrett, 2009, p. 20).

5.7 Considering the validity of the study

In the final section of this chapter, I wish to reflect upon what is often referred to as the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the research; how this research can be regarded as valid knowledge that also pertains to other contexts than the one under study. In a positivist research paradigm, these terms refer to the *objectivity* of the study and designate how research findings (ideally) should be free from bias, value-neutral, and replicable and verifiable by others. However, this notion of objectivity has been displaced in constructivist approaches to social research, which emphasize how knowledge and truth are produced in discourse (Foucault, 1972), and which also underlines its ethical dimension and the recognition that knowledge is used to serve specific interests and not others. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the ethnographic account offered here is “partially true” and can never be more than a product of a specific engagement in a field defined by unequal relations of power. Its findings are constrained by the perspectives applied as well as the interpretive repertoire and imagination of the researcher. So, how can we think of validity in connection to the present research? And to what extent are the findings of this study generalizable?

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) discuss how questions of validity must concern the research process as a whole, from the formulation of initial research interests to the dissemination of results. Each step of the research process should be conducted in an appropriate and coherent way, so as to make sure that the research in fact does contribute with valid knowledge and corresponds to “real” phenomena in the social world investigated. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 279) argue that such processes of validity can be understood in a communicative sense as “dialogical intersubjectivity,” which points to how validity and coherence of the research are continuously tested by engaging in dialogue with research participants as well as the academic community. With respect to the latter, this research has been validated through continuous discussions with supervisors, colleagues at the Norwegian Academy of Music, and at international music education conferences, which have informed and tested the research validity at all stages of the process.

The study also sought to establish a dialogical intersubjectivity in connection to the research participants. As Bruce Johnson and Larry Christensen (2008) discuss, validity in qualitative research implies consideration of “the degree to which the research participants’ viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood by the qualitative researcher and portrayed in the research report” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 277). In this case, it is relevant to consider whether the experiences and statements I discuss throughout this research project resonate with how the participants understand these themselves. A common method for ensuring that this is actually the case is member checking. In interview research, this typically means letting the informants read through their transcribed interview in order to confirm its correctness, or it could entail the researcher engaging participants in discussion of the analysis itself.

As described above, in the present research, validation of interview transcripts was made difficult because of the language barrier. The interview transcripts were therefore primarily validated by discussing them with the language assistant. However, I have also intended to validate my analyses by discussing them with my interlocutors themselves during my visit to the field in February 2018. Yet, the fact that my analytical perspectives were foreign to many Palestinians and that my findings in some sense questioned locally accepted truths about Palestinian identity made me question the appropriateness of directly asking interlocutors to verify them. I also felt that this would force participants with socially divergent viewpoints to openly assume contentious positions. Further,

when I arrived in Lebanon, I found that due to work obligations and university studies, several of my key interlocutors were out of town at the time of my visit. Instead of validating my analysis by discussing it with the research participants themselves, I therefore decided to do so through a range of conversations with people associated with the music program or the BAS organization, Norwegians with intimate knowledge of the music program, and with Palestinians and Lebanese from the local community.

To a large extent, these conversations have strengthened and informed the analyses presented here. However, it also became clear that some Palestinians reject the claim that the construction of a primordial national identity risks concealing other ways of imagining a sense of national belonging. Instead, it was argued, confirming this identity is the only way to liberation and, as such, constitutes a necessary and inevitable point of departure for every Palestinian growing up in Lebanon. Considering the political situation of the Palestinian refugees, I understand this viewpoint. Yet, as Ruba Salih and Sophie Richter-Devroe (2018) have also recently discussed, I see no reason why Palestine could not be imagined “beyond national frames.” Considering the story of “Ali” narrated in article 4: “Music, Agency, and Social Transformation,” music may in fact be an effective way of doing just this. Yet, these issues are contested within the social field I have investigated. Due to the academic interest of this study, I have found it important to highlight these discrepancies, even if some of my interlocutors might find this questioning of national unity to amount to an inappropriate representation of the Palestinian community, and thus question its validity.

The discussion above also concerns a broader issue, namely, that the particular case under investigation is not solely studied in order to unravel its specifics. Rather, the ambiguous social processes I describe in this research project are investigated with the purpose of illuminating such processes in musical-social work in general. While researching in this context obviously implies an ethical responsibility to the Palestinian community and the individual research participants, I also have a responsibility to the scholarly community of which I am a part, to deliver new knowledge that contributes to the field’s development. This implies questions of the study’s analytic generalizability (Yin, 2016): To what extent can the notion of ambiguous musical practice developed here be used to illuminate the social processes of other musical practices?

I believe the wider applicability of the notion is still to be tested. I regard this study as exploratory, in the sense that it seeks to develop a conception

that responds to recognized issues within the field of music education. Most notably these include the tension that while music can be seen as a resource that individuals can put to use for social and personal development, music educational practices are at the same time entangled in social and institutional formations marred by inequality (see section 1.2). There is a sense in which the notion of ambiguous musical practice advanced here will be most applicable to contexts in which there is a clear discrepancy between the goals, desires, and needs of the participants (if they can even be said to share these) and the rationality of the social and institutional structures through which these needs are met. For example, if white, middle-class adults are musically addressed through structures built by other white, middle-class adults, these are likely to be experienced as unambiguous. However, as a number of recent studies have illustrated (see discussions in chapter 3), power relations as well as implicit assumptions of community and identity are crucial topics of investigation for gaining a deeper understanding of musical-social work.

The specific issues of national identity and forms of belonging that I have explored in connection to the music program in Rashidieh constitute an example of a contentious aspect of identity formation that is potentially negotiated, transformed, or reproduced in musical performance. As such, the specific analysis presented here may not be directly transferable to other contexts. Yet, if Dyndahl and Ellefsen are right that music educational practices constitute a field in which “students negotiate, renegotiate and identify with narratives of themselves as male/female, straight/queer, white/black, native/foreign, local/cosmopolitan, young/grown-up . . . and . . . experience a sense of belonging and connection to high/low social class and/or culture as well” (Dyndahl & Ellefsen, 2009, pp. 15–16), then I suggest that, if closely examined, all such practices are likely to involve some paradoxes or conflicts. The notion of ambiguous musical practice may be a tool to unravel some of these.

6 Summary of articles

In this chapter, I briefly summarize the content of the four research articles that comprise the core of the present thesis. A further discussion of the findings is presented in the following chapter. At the time of writing, article 1 and 2 have been published, while article 3 and 4 have been accepted but are yet to be published.

6.1 Article 1: The community music practice as cultural performance

*Boeskov, K. (2017). The community music practice as cultural performance: Foundations for a community music theory of social transformation. International Journal of Community Music, 10(1), 85–99. doi: 10.1386/ijcm.10.1.85_1*¹⁸

This article was written and published in an early stage of the research process. Its primary aim was to extend community music thinking of music as a means of social transformation for marginalized individuals and groups, by drawing on perspectives from anthropological theory and performance studies. Small's

¹⁸ This article was published as part of a special issue of the *International Journal of Community Music* devoted to community music in the Nordic countries, which was edited by Brit Ågot Brøske and myself. As with the rest of the papers included in this journal issue, the article was reviewed by two blind reviewers, whose suggestions were followed. The editorial process was overseen by Brit Ågot Brøske.

(1998) theory of musicking is placed as a central conception by which the field of community music has come to understand music's transformative potential, most significantly through the idea of musicking as a way of experiencing and enacting "ideal relationships," an idea that I suggest might lead to overly positive accounts of community music as a space of social change. The article considers how Small's ideas can be seen as convergent with anthropological theories of performance, but also how the ideas of Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1988, 1990) and Schechner (1985, 2003), as well as critics such as J. Lowell Lewis (2013), can bring more complexity and nuance into conceptions of music's social significance. By pointing to a preliminary analysis of the Palestinian music program in Rashidieh, the article suggests that rather than a means of social transformation, participatory music making in this context should be seen as inherently ambiguous, due to the way music seems to allow for certain aspects of the participants' social experience to be transformed, while affirming and reinforcing other dimensions.

6.2 Article 2: Moving beyond orthodoxy

Boeskov, K. (2018). Moving beyond orthodoxy: Reconsidering notions of music and social transformation. Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education, 17(2), 92–117. doi: 10.22176/act17.1.92

The second article of the thesis examines some of the dominant conceptualizations of music as a means of social transformation within the field of music education, more specifically the seminal works of Small (1998) and DeNora (2000, 2003). The central argument of the paper is that these conceptions primarily regard music as a resource for action and experience by which individuals and groups achieve positive change within their social worlds. Through a critical examination of their central ideas, and drawing on the scholarship of Hesmondhalgh (2008, 2013) and Born (2012), it is suggested that these conceptions need to be expanded by perspectives that more readily acknowledge how such transformations are constrained by the social and institutional formations that substantiate the musical engagement. As a corrective to these omissions, Born's model of the social mediation of music is advanced as a framework that allows for dealing with the complex, and potentially antagonistic, processes by which social relations are established in musical performance and practice. As an illustration of how this model can inform social analysis of music educational

practice, the article presents a brief narrative analysis of the Palestinian music program that shows how music making in this context is involved in a mix of transformative and reproductive social processes with potentially ambiguous consequences for the young Palestinian participants.

6.3 Article 3: Birds from Palestine

Boeskov, K. (accepted). Birds from Palestine. Performing national belonging in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. Music & Arts in Action. (The journal will publish a revised version of the article).

While article 1 and 2 primarily concern the development of theoretical and analytical perspectives that allow for nuanced conceptions of music as a means of social transformation, article 3 ties the discussion closely to the empirical data produced during my field work in Rashidieh. The article considers how the music activities and performances constitute a form of national education and how the music program itself can be said to impose a specific narrative of national identity and belonging. By analyzing interviews with participants and a young Palestinian who is not part of the music program, the article draws attention to the different stances the Palestinian youths adopt toward the imposition of this narrative and the moral imperative of remembering Palestine. While most participants uncritically adopt its terms and accept the importance of staying closely connected to the homeland, the ironic attitude toward these issues adopted by Hassan and Khalil, two teenage boys participating in the music program, reveals that the national narrative is not necessarily fully congruent with the lived experiences of all young Palestinians growing up in the camps. This interpretation is further validated through an interview with Najad, a young Palestinian woman not associated with the music program, as she scorns the Palestinian NGOs for not adapting their policies to the needs of the young generation of Palestinians who may hold a different relationship to the homeland from that of their parents and grandparents. The study concludes by considering other studies of musical-social work that point to ambivalent effects of participatory music making and how such activities may both function as a source of communality and a sense of belonging and, simultaneously, as a powerful constituent of social realities that may work contrary to the wishes and needs of the participants.

6.4 Article 4: Music, agency, and social transformation

Boeskov, K. (in press). Music, agency, and social transformation. Processes of subjectivation in a Palestinian community music program. Nordic Research in Music Education Yearbook (Vol. 20).

The final article of the research project also explores the empirical data and extends the findings of article 3 by examining how the participants' agency is constituted in the music program. For exploring this issue, the article draws on Butler's (1993/2011, 1997a, 1997b, 1999) notions of performativity and subjectivation and supplements these with Mahmood's (2001, 2005) concept of "docile agency." The analysis shows how the music program establishes a particular model of Palestinian subjectivity for the participants to adopt. Further, it is shown how this subjectivating process defines the participants' sense of agency, most significantly through the way they understand their musical participation as aligned to the socially imperative of "remembering Palestine" and as a form of resistance toward the marginalizing structures that determine their lives as refugees. The analysis, however, also draws attention to how the authority and legitimacy associated with the form of national belonging enacted in musical performance can be put to use by participants for a range of idiosyncratic purposes, some of which transcend and challenge other lines of authority within the social context of the refugee camp. Most notably, nationalist musical performance can be seen to afford the young female participants, Daleen and Hanin, with the necessary legitimacy to pursue their interest in music and thereby contest the conservative gender norms that usually govern the conduct of young women. Likewise, the legitimacy that Western pop music has gained through its introduction into the music program by the Norwegian partners enables Ali to perform a hybrid Eastern/Western identity that for him signifies an alternative and more generation-specific form of belonging and identity. The article concludes by suggesting that rather than seeing musical performance in this context as a radical form of self-creation or as a subversive act that displaces social norms, it may be productive to regard these musical actions as instances of docile agency that enable participants to inhabit norms in different and sometimes unexpected ways.

7 Discussion of findings

In this chapter, I discuss and elaborate on the findings of this research project, as reported in the four articles and in relation to the research questions posed in chapter 1, in light of the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3.

The first part of the chapter is devoted to the empirical part of the project. Here I discuss how the participants' subjectivities are constituted within the program, and what forms of agency this constitution entails. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss how music as a means of social transformation has been conceptualized in the field of music education. Then I suggest how this research project may contribute with ideas that extend or challenge these perceptions, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the ambivalent or paradoxical effects of participatory music making. This leads to a discussion of the music program as an ambiguous musical practice.

7.1 The constitution of subjectivities within the music program

The first research question is: *How are the participants' subjectivities constituted within the music program in Rashidieh?*

Both previous research on the music program and my own empirical data suggest that the music activities entail a wide range of resources by which

the participants develop their personal and collective identities and establish positive relations to self as well as others. The participatory music making allows for experiences of relatedness and communality among the participants, which led one of the participants, Hanin, to describe the music program as a family and the other participants as her brothers and sisters (“Birds from Palestine,” p. 211; see also Ruud, 2011, p. 67; 2012, p. 91). Further, attending the program enables the participants to transform the image of their personal and collective selves, most notably through the way musical learning and performance provide experiences of pride that raise their self-confidence and feelings of self-worth. These aspects were expressed, for example, by Omar and Batoul (“Music, Agency, and Social Transformation,” pp. 239, 242; see also Ruud, 2011, p. 68; 2012, p. 91). On a collective level, musical performance contributes to experiences of recognition of the participants’ cultural identities, especially through intercultural encounters with Norwegians, where shared music activities produce feelings of mutuality and respect (“The Community Music Practice as Cultural Performance,” p. 161; see also Boeskov, 2013a). It is outcomes such as these that have received most attention in previous research, both in studies connected to the music program in Rashidieh and in studies of musical-social work in general. These studies are supported by conceptualizations that emphasize musicking as a way of establishing and maintaining positive social relations, whether understood in terms of “ideal relationships” (Small, 1998), “social synchrony” (Turino, 2008) or as a medium for negotiating and achieving desirable identities (DeNora, 2017).

In article 1 of the present thesis, “The Community Music Practice as Cultural Performance,” I adopt a set of ideas developed within anthropological and performance theory for understanding music’s capacity as a means of social transformation. Closely associated with the conceptions mentioned above, this framework draws attention to musical performance as a space set apart from the everyday; a space connected to supposition, play, and the imagined, in which experiences of *communitas* occur. By understanding musical performance in Rashidieh as *liminal* activities, attention is drawn to the ambiguity of the performative meanings; as a space *in-between*, musicking extends and challenges the existing roles and identities available to the performers. Thus, this perspective emphasizes the capacity of music to elicit a temporary suspension of the quotidian and to produce a range of alternative roles and subjectivities that allow for enacting and experiencing alternative social relations.

This theoretical perspective illuminates important aspects of how subjectivities within the music program are constituted and transformed. However, in order to fully account for these complex processes, I have found it necessary to expand this conception. While musical performance may open up for alternative visions of sociality and identity, the question remains of how these are embedded in and influenced by larger networks of meaning and power. In terms of the theoretical framework advanced here, this means that the levels of action and experience—what Born (2012) refers to as the planes of “immediate practice and performance” and “imagined communities”—must be seen as mediated by the wider social and institutional formations that underlie and condition the musical practice.

What appeared especially significant during the analysis of my empirical data was how the musical practices were connected to specific assumptions about Palestinian national identity. These issues are explored in article 3, “Birds from Palestine,” and article 4, “Music, Agency, and Social Transformation.” The argument advanced in these texts is that the positive experiences of self and community achieved through the participatory music making within the music program in Rashidieh are preconditioned by the participants’ adoption of a specific notion of Palestinian identity and sense of belonging that are effectively communicated through the music activities themselves. As I show in the analysis of the program, the music activities are offered as powerful means by which the participants articulate a sense of belonging to particular ideas and values connected to Palestinianness, most significantly the importance of remembering the homeland and the continuous advancement of the central political claims of the Palestinian community.

In this way, the experiences of pride, self-worth, commonality, and intercultural recognition that previous studies of the program have advanced as its most significant positive outcomes must be seen as intimately connected to these socially and institutionally sanctioned meanings underlying the musical practice. Building this argument, I show how Omar connects a feeling of pride in musical learning to the expression of loyalty toward the moral imperative of remembering Palestine (“Music, Agency, and Social Transformation,” p. 239), and how Batoul’s experiences of self-worth are found when, as a representative of the Palestinians in Lebanon, she can show foreigners that the Palestinians have talents even though they are refugees (“Music, Agency, and Social Transformation,” p. 242). Further, Farah expresses how the strong sense of commonality found within the band’s performances is significant because it

communicates to the audiences that the participants are “one hand,” a determined and capable unit that eventually will free Palestine (“Birds from Palestine,” p. 213). Hanin regards cultural-exchange activities as possibilities for representing the Palestinian national identity in a favorable way, which is important in terms of achieving the political goals of the Palestinian community (“Moving Beyond Orthodoxy,” p. 187). While music making may also be connected to more idiosyncratic purposes—which I discuss in the next section—a comprehensive and adequate understanding of how subjectivities are constituted within the music program includes consideration of how the music activities offer the participant a template for national belonging that, in important ways, mediates the participants’ actions and experiences within the program.

In article 4, “Music, Agency and Social Transformation,” I describe this as a process of subjectivation, a notion that emphasizes how subjectivities are fashioned within existing social norms. By taking up the tools for identity negotiation offered by the musical practice, the participants simultaneously subject themselves to the terms under which their subjectivities can be established and negotiated. It is important to stress that, for most participants, this process was experienced as empowering and rewarding. As I have also tried to show throughout this research project, the BAS organization has succeeded in establishing a highly inclusive musical learning environment that supports these positive experiences. Yet, the present research illuminates the musical community built within this environment establishing a set of boundaries that, in crucial ways, constrain the possibilities for identity formation, and that these limits (at least for some participants) have some ambivalent consequences. In the process of establishing solid and coherent notions of Palestinian identity, the music program excludes other possible forms of identification or alternative lines of solidarity and belonging that are not deemed as interesting, desirable, or useful in the social and institutional context in which the program operates.

While the music program allows for subject constitution that in significant ways alters existing relations and experiences by which the participants can come to understand themselves, these processes are tied to processes in which underlying social and institutional values, beliefs, and identity categories are validated and reinforced. As this research shows, rather than solely a means of positive social transformation, participatory music making in this context comprises an ambiguous space in which socially transformative and reproductive forces intersect in ways that both enable the production of desirable

subjectivities and impose the boundaries within which these subjectivities can be meaningfully achieved and negotiated.

7.2 Agency within the musical practice

This assertion will lead us to consider the second research question for this thesis: *How do participants gain agency through musical performance and in what forms?*

For any understanding of music as a means of social transformation, a central discussion concerns the notion of agency, i.e. the possibilities for action, or how and to what degree musical agents can negotiate, challenge, extend, and transform the social relations in which they are embedded. The previous studies of the music program in Rashidieh have generally found that the music activities involve a range of opportunities for extending the participants' agency. The musical learning achieved through participation in the program is seen to offer "alternative ways of understanding one's life," and "a repertoire of roles which will partly challenge the limits they usually meet and which will open new possibilities and thus a hope about how to shape their own future" (Storsve et al., 2010, para. "Learning and identity"). Such possibilities are especially connected to the way the music activities constitute a distinct space in which experiences of mutuality and recognition can come to the fore through musical interaction (Boeskov, 2013a). And, as Ruud (2011, 2012) notes, while music making may be inadequate as a response to the massive social and political marginalization and deprivation of the Palestinian community, the music program does offer opportunities for experiences of meaning, participation and belonging that allow for a sense of control, identity development, and possibilities for action, including political action. Thus, in the previous studies of the program, the music activities are depicted as resources through which the participants extend their possibilities for action and develop their personal and collective identities.

In article 4, "Music, Agency, and Social Transformation," I problematize these conceptions by addressing the participants' agency as instances of *discursive agency*. Following Butler (1993/2011, 1997a, 1997b, 1999), agency must be thought of as constituted within existing norms, which are then reaffirmed in the subject's own acting. The possibility for resistance lies in the way such norms must be continuously reiterated in order to sustain their legitimacy, a process that introduces a certain instability and the possibility of subversion. However, as I

discuss with reference to the work of Mahmood (2001, 2005), agency should not solely be mapped upon an axis of reproduction/subversion. Instead, employing Mahmood's notion of *docile agency*, I show how norms can be inhabited and consummated in various ways, and how instances of agency may draw upon and contest different lines of authority and legitimacy.

I draw on this conception of agency when I advance a central argument concerning the constitution of the participants' agency within the music program. In order for the participants to exercise and extend their agency, their actions must be legitimized by some kind of authority within the social field. In article 4, I discuss three different instances of agency and how they are premised upon a preexisting and socially recognized order. First, I consider how through musical performance the participants are enabled to resignify Palestinian identity and dissociate it from denigrating terms like criminality, terrorism, and displacement and instead attach to this identity category positive connotations of "humanness." Second, I point to how musical performance may enable female participants to exceed some of the gender norms to which they are normally subjected. While young women living in this context are sometimes discouraged from participating in the musical activities because of conservative perceptions of proper conduct, I point to how invoking the moral codes of feminine decency and Palestinian nationalism can provide the female participants Hanin and Daleen with the necessary legitimacy for them to pursue their interest in music. Finally, I explore the case of Ali, a young saxophonist who uses the legitimacy that Western pop music has achieved within the context of the cultural-exchange program to distance himself from an Arabic identity and perform a hybrid Eastern/Western identity. Thereby, Ali asserts for himself a more generation-specific identity that transcends "the national" as the primary form of identification.

Seen in this way, the musical practice offers various resources for the participants to put to use when performing and constructing their personal and collective selves. The crucial difference between the conception of musical agency advanced here and that found in the former studies of the program lies in how the agentive capacity of music making is not solely ascribed to the musical practice itself, but is also connected to the structures of authority and legitimacy located within the social and institutional context of the musical practice. Yet, these structures cannot be seen as fully determining the participants' agency. As Butler has shown, the social and discursive formations within which the subjects act are vulnerable to false citations of convention that may "have the

effect of challenging existing forms of legitimacy, breaking open the possibility of future forms” (Butler, 1997a, p. 147). However, in the context of the music program, agency is not primarily connected to subversive action that displaces existing social norms. Rather, it seems that participants make use of specific lines of authority, most notably the legitimacy of Palestinian national politics, to resignify, negotiate, or extend other norms or categories within which they conduct their lives, e.g. the moral codes pertaining to the proper conduct of young women. However, the possibilities of invoking alternative authorizing structures should not be seen as limitless. It is highly questionable, for example, whether Hanin and Daleen could retain their claim to feminine decency if they decided to join Ali in performances of Western pop music. In this way, agency is distributed relative to existing hierarchies of legitimacy, without necessarily being fully decided once and for all.

Similar to Bourdieu’s (1991) discussion of *rites of institution* (see section 4.2), agency within the musical practice can be seen as dually connected to a transformative and a reproductive function. The transformative potential of music making concerns how participants are enabled to elaborate and perform an alternative sense of self using the resources the musical practice provides. The reproductive function is connected to how these resources rely on wider social and institutional structures that are then reinforced and legitimated at the very moment the musical agents make use of the resources on offer. While musical performance offers the participants specific possibilities for repositioning themselves in the social space, the boundaries of that space are simultaneously reinforced and naturalized as the terms within which social reality can be adequately interpreted. There is a sense, though, in which these boundaries themselves are also subject to reconfiguration in the musical performance. As the participants of the musical practice accept their position as docile agents of a particular structure of authority, they are granted some opportunities for inhabiting this structure in unexpected ways that, over time, may congeal and provide the participants with alternate ways of imagining their futures.

While I maintain that the sources of the participants’ agency should be located on social and institutional levels as much as on the level of musical practice itself, it is important to consider the role of musical performance when subjects negotiate and extend the discursive boundaries within which they are constituted. I believe that the sense of in-betweenness or ambiguity that is ascribed to performative action in the tradition of performance studies holds an explanatory force for understanding how performers can play with or explore

the boundaries of the norms, without risking social exclusion. Inside the frame of cultural performance, the identity of the performers is rendered ambiguous—in the words of Schechner (1985), they are simultaneously “not me” and “not not me” (p. 113)—and, therefore, it is not always fully determinable for the audience or for the performers themselves in relation to what social codes the performative actions should be judged, aside from the purely aesthetic ones. This ambiguity can be utilized for rendering existing identities and social relations unstable. The performative frame opens up a liminal space in which meanings and relations are not fixed, and it is in this space of the in-between that young Palestinians are enabled to resignify their cultural identity, escape the limits of gendered norms, and transcend the national as the primary category for self-understanding, while simultaneously—and paradoxically—reaffirming the deeper levels of their social constitution.

7.3 Critiquing the dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation

As stated in the introduction, this research project has been driven by questions of how music can become a means of social transformation for a socially marginalized group like the Palestinians in Lebanon. While the topic of music and social change has generated great interest in recent years among practitioners as well as researchers, idealized understandings of the power of music continue to characterize the field of musical-social work, a tendency that has been criticized by several scholars, highlighting the conflictual or ambivalent effects of music making. In article 2, “Moving Beyond Orthodoxy,” I claim that these idealizing tendencies can be connected to the dominant conceptualizations of music as a means of social transformation located within the field of music education, and the inability of these conceptions to fully account for the ambivalent effects of musical performance and practice. In the present research project, I particularly engage with the work of Small (1998) and DeNora (2000, 2003), who are among the most influential theorists of music and processes of social transformation within the music educational field. While these scholars are certainly not the only theorists to provide conceptions of the link between music making and social life,¹⁹ their common focus on the musical event and

19 A range of music education scholars have written about musical learning, processes of transformation, and the significance of music and musical learning for human social life (e.g. Allsup, 2016; Elliott, 1995; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Jorgensen, 2003; Kenny, 2016; Westerlund, 2002). It

the significance of music as a constitutive part of the social world makes them particularly interesting to examine in depth, in relation to the present research. In the following, I briefly substantiate my choice of these authors as the most relevant with whom to engage, to come to an understanding of the dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation, and reiterate and elaborate on my critique of their perspectives.

The work of Small has been a catalyst for the growing attention to participatory music making as a means of social change that characterizes the field of community music. Over the course of his three books—*Music, Education, Society* (1977), *Music of the Common Tongue* (1987) and *Musicking* (1998)—he develops a notion of musical performance whose greatest significance is its potential for creating experiences of communality and participation with the capacity of transforming society. Small's belief in the importance of music in human social life and his assertion that every human being has capacities for engaging in music (see e.g., Small, 1998, p. 8) have been adopted as an underlying philosophy of community music (see e.g., Veblen & Olsson, 2002). As also Mary Cohen (2011) has suggested, Small's concept of musicking "provides community music researchers and practitioners a theoretical framework that directly supports our work" (p. 281). While not all community music scholars refer directly to the writings of Small, I argue that his notion of musicking as well as his ideas of the significance of music in human social life have become so integrated that they can be considered constitutive of the field itself.

Likewise, the work of DeNora has had immense influence in many areas of musical scholarship, including the fields of music education and musical-social work, for understanding music's role as a constitutive part of human life. While Small's concept of musicking cements a notion of *music-as-doing* within music educational thinking,²⁰ DeNora's work establishes the perspective of *music-as-action* as a fundamental way of understanding the social significance of music making, especially through the notion of musical affordance. The shift of attention from what music means to what it makes possible, which DeNora introduces in her groundbreaking books, *Music in Everyday Life* (2000) and *After Adorno* (2003), highlights active music making as an instance of human agency and a means of personal and social transformation. DeNora's ideas and

is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all of these conceptions against the one I develop here.

20 David Elliott's (1995) similar concept of *musicing* has also been pivotal in this regard.

concepts have become central in recent attempts to understand music's role in identity formation, as well as for social organization.

The works of Small and DeNora also play a central role in the relatively few theoretical accounts that have emerged within the field of musical-social work. While this field has been accused of relying too heavily on simplified or anecdotal evidence of music's transformative power (Baker, 2014; Bergh, 2010; Kertz-Welzel, 2016) and idealized understandings of community as "always-already inclusive" (Yerichuk, 2014, p. 146), within the field of community music therapy is a tradition of more rigid theorizing of music as a form of social action. Community music therapists such as Brynjulf Stige, Mercedes Pavlicevic, Cochovit Elefant, Ansdell and Ruud (Ansdell, 2014; Pavlicevic & Ansdell, 2004; Ruud, 1998; Stige, 2002; Stige et al., 2010) have produced comprehensive theoretical underpinnings of music as a means of social transformation, and these accounts rely heavily on the works of Small and DeNora.²¹

Indeed, Small and DeNora's conceptions of music as social action offer vital ideas and highly useful perspectives for coming to a deeper understanding of the significance of participatory music making. The purpose of my critical discussion of their ideas, presented in article 2, "Moving Beyond Orthodoxy," is not in any way to disqualify them. Rather, I seek to build upon and extend their ideas in order to provide the field of musical-social work with analytical tools that more adequately capture the potentially ambivalent or conflictual outcomes when music is utilized as a means of social transformation. Both Small and DeNora write about such ambiguities and are fully aware of music's potential to harm as well as to heal. However, within their work lies a propensity to depict music as a resource in a way that downplays how more ambiguous social effects may accompany the benefits of music making.

In Small's case, this is particularly evident in his idea of "ideal relationships," denoting how musicking establishes and allows for the experience of social relationships as the musical participants imagine or wish them to be. Just as Turner envisions the reflexive function of cultural performances, Small sees musical performance as a way for people to understand the real constitution of their social world and to imagine how that world may be changed. Underlying Small's ideas is thinking in which musicking is connected to a quest for restoring the fractured relations that constitute our social world. As Hesmondhalgh

21 See, for instance, Stige et. al. (2010, p. 294) and Ansdell (2004; 2014, p. xiii) where the work of Small and DeNora is acknowledged as core inspirations for understanding how music helps in therapy and everyday life.

(2013) suggests, this is a thinking “whereby people have a powerful pre-existing inclination towards communality and collectivity” (p. 90), and musicking, especially in its participatory, non-Western forms, is advanced as a means of overcoming the increasing individualization and alienation caused by modern societies.²² However, by advancing musicking as a particularly valuable form of human sociality that enables people to explore and affirm desirable social relationships, Small too readily ascribes a liberating and edifying function to musical performance, and avoids questions of how the sociality established in musical performance is mediated by a range of potentially conflicting desires, motives, experiences, and relations of power. What appears problematic in Small’s thinking is that music, especially in its participatory form, is seen as fundamentally connected to experiences of communality, understanding, and reconciliation of contradictory processes. This makes his conceptualization unfit for exploring the ambiguous effects of musical participation, as instances of both transformative/reproductive, inclusive/exclusive, revealing/concealing processes of social action.

While DeNora’s (2000, 2003) concept of musical affordance implies that music both enables and constrains social agents, DeNora also primarily emphasizes music as a resource for action and experience. This becomes particularly evident when her ideas are put to use in analysis of musical-social work. In a recent book chapter, DeNora (2017) uses community music as an example in a discussion of how desirable subjectivities can be achieved in real-time through musical engagement. Arguing that identities are exchangeable, malleable, hybrid, and constructed relationally, DeNora shows how music may enable individuals to refuse unwanted identities associated with illness and distress and instead positively transform their relations to the self and the surrounding world. These ideas of music as a resource for transformation of identity are based on DeNora’s claim that an adequate understanding of such processes must be explored in a situational perspective, directing the attention to music as a “medium through which the social is temporally configured, through which difference takes shape from moment to moment” (DeNora, 2003, p. 157).

I argue that DeNora’s conception of musical affordance faces two concerns. First, reiterating the critique that Hesmondhalgh (2008) poses, the conception of the self that DeNora launches risks exaggerating the ability of individuals to structure their own life and manage their social relations through the use

²² Hesmondhalgh (2013, p. 100) directs the same critique against another important theorist for the field of musical-social work, namely Turino (2008).

of music. Neglected are the difficulties individuals face when attempting to construct a positive sense of self due to psychological, social, and historical factors. Second, an exclusive focus on how music works on a micro-social level disregards how the musical engagement itself is embedded in wider social structures and relations of power. What is too easily overlooked is how instances of agency may depend on particular authorizing social structures and institutional arrangements that cannot adequately be accounted for when employing a situational perspective in the social analysis of musical practice. Emphasizing music as a resource for “world building” (DeNora, 2000, p. 44; 2003, p. 46) risks the socially reproductive, constraining, and repressive aspects of social music making disappearing from view.

In summary, the work of Small and DeNora has proven particularly useful for exploring how music making provides people with resources for establishing, exploring and negotiating desirable social relations. This conception has come to dominate the field of music education and musical-social work in terms of understanding music as a means of social transformation. However, as discussed above, what remains unclear in this line of thinking is how various contextual factors constrain such instances of agency, and how musical actions are related to and embedded in wider social relations of power that potentially produce a range of ambivalent or conflictual effects.

7.4 Understanding community music as ambiguous musical practice

In this thesis, I argue that the dominant conceptions outlined above must be expanded in order to fully account for the ambiguous processes when music becomes a means of social transformation. This brings us to the final research question: *How can these conceptions be extended in order to accommodate thinking about ambiguous social processes within community music practice?*

As discussed in the opening sections of this chapter, the previous studies of the music program in Rashidieh emphasize how the music activities offer resources that enable the participants to extend their agency and transform their personal and collective identities. The present research shows how these instances of agency depend on social and institutional structures of authority and legitimacy. Therefore, participatory music making in this context is not exclusively tied to an expansion of the young Palestinians’ possibilities for action, but also

to processes of social reproduction that guide and constrain the constitution of the participants' subjectivities. Such paradoxical or conflictual processes, I argue, cannot be fully captured by the dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation discussed above. In order to extend these models, over the course of this research project I have developed a notion of ambiguous musical practice, a conceptualization that provides an alternative view of music as a means of social transformation.

In section 4.5, I describe how the notion of ambiguous musical practice directs attention to three interconnected dimensions: bidirectionality, multiplicity of meanings, and in-betweenness. By pointing to the bidirectionality of musical practice and performance, the notion of ambiguous musical practice entails exploration of processes of social transformation through their connection to processes of social reproduction. Contrary to the dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation, from this perspective, music making is not first and foremost examined as a space for exploration, affirmation, and celebration of ideal relationships (Small, 1998); nor in terms of how music is used by performers to "regulate, elaborate, and substantiate themselves as social agents" (DeNora, 2000, p. 47); nor "to effect transformation, to suffuse and infuse identities, and to refuse and confuse unwanted or uncomfortable identities" (DeNora, 2017, p. 60). While these perceptions certainly may be relevant for understanding the social effects of music making, based on Butler's concepts of subjectivation and performativity, the notion of ambiguous musical practice postulates the need to interpret such transformative capacities of music against the socially reproductive function of musical performance and practice. As the analysis of the music program in Rashidieh illuminates, while music making provides the participants with a range of possibilities for constructing desirable notions of self and community, such enactments at a deeper level reproduce specific perceptions of what it means to be a Palestinian, and under what terms a sense of belonging and community can be meaningfully achieved. Emphasizing the bidirectionality of musical performance entails constant attention to how processes of social transformation and social reproduction intertwine.

Analyzing music making as ambiguous musical practice thereby directs attention to the multiplicity of meanings produced in musical practice and performance. The dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation involves a tendency to privilege a micro-social perspective on musical practice—how musical agents put music to use in specific situations for specific

purposes—that risks disregarding how musical practice and performance are embedded in wider social and institutional formations and relations of power. As I suggest with reference to Born’s model of the social mediation of music, music making can be analyzed in terms of the immediate and imagined social relations it engenders, how musical actions and experiences mediate and are mediated by preexisting social-identity categories such as gender, race, nationality, locality, and how the musical practice itself is dependent on specific institutional structures that are reproduced, negotiated or potentially transformed through musical performance. The notion of ambiguous musical practice underlines the need to address the multiple socialities constituted in musical performance and practice, how these socialities interfere and potentially produce a range of complex and conflictual social outcomes.

In my analyses of the Palestinian music program, I show how music making is put to use by the participants for a range of purposes that stabilize existing local perceptions, values, and identities, but also how the multiplicity of meanings enables some participants to transcend social norms by invoking the authority and legitimacy of other meanings simultaneously enacted in musical performance. This capacity can be understood through the term *in-betweenness*, the third aspect of ambiguous musical practice. Connected to Turner’s (1969, 1982) notion of liminality, *in-betweenness* refers to musical performance as a space set apart from the everyday, in which existing social relations are potentially negotiated, rendered problematic, or have their constructed and arbitrary nature revealed. As Small and DeNora also emphasize in different ways, musical performance can allow for social relations and identities to be experienced differently, even resisted or subverted.

Relying on the work of Mahmood (2001, 2005), I suggest that in the context of the music program in Rashidieh, such instances of musical agency should be seen as a form of docile agency, in that musical performance does not seem to displace social norms through their musical actions. Rather, musical agents rely on the authority of some norms in order to transcend others. Musical performance facilitates this process by placing the performers in an ambiguous space *in-between* structures of authority and legitimacy, allowing for certain possibilities and freedom of movement. The notion of *in-betweenness*, however, should not be conceived solely through its transformative potential. As Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of *rites of institution* illuminates, the liminal experience of musical performance can also contribute to the concealment and reinforcement of deeper levels of the social and institutional formations underlying the musical practice.

The performances that offer the young Palestinians a range of opportunities for inhabiting social norms in alternative ways are the same that reinscribe the participants in a specific narrative, dictating how a meaningful existence must be based on identification with a particular version of Palestinian national belonging and politics. In this way, the in-betweenness of musical performance is connected to both transformative potential through a temporary suspension of existing social relations, but also to social reproductive processes in which underlying forms of sociality are concealed and reproduced.

Emphasizing the bidirectionality, multiplicity of meanings, and in-betweenness of musical performance and practice, I propose the notion of ambiguous musical practice as a possible way of interpreting and understanding music as a means of social transformation. The usefulness of this conceptualization, I argue, is that it allows the social analyst of musical-social work to explore the transformative potential of particular musical practices, while retaining a critical view of how musical performance may at the same time reinscribe and reinforce existing social relations.

8 **Concluding thoughts**

The aim of this study is to extend dominant conceptions of music as a means of social transformation by developing an analytical framework that allows for dealing with the paradoxes and ambiguities of community music and music educational practice. In a field characterized by idealistic and romanticizing tendencies, this research project adopts a self-critical stance. By drawing attention to the ambivalent social processes of musical-social work, I seek to emphasize what music educational conceptions of transformational music making often may disregard or leave out of consideration. In this final section of the thesis, I wish to reflect on how this study and the notion of ambiguous musical practice can engage in a dialogue with some of the prevailing ideas of the transformational capacity of music making within community music and musical educational scholarship. The scope of this reflection does not allow for an exhaustive discussion of these issues. Therefore, it should merely be seen as an attempt to hint at the directions in which such dialogues might continue. My hope is to provide the reader with a clearer sense of how this study might inspire and inform community music and music educational scholars, as well as the present and future practitioners working within these fields.

8.1 The paradoxes of community music intervention

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the prevalent notion of community music portrays it as an “act of intervention,” as an event that responds to issues of social injustice and marginalization by providing inclusive and empowering spaces for communal music making. The nature of this intervention is non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian. Placing emphasis on participation, empowerment, and cultural democracy, community musicians work *with* and not *on* people. They facilitate music making rather than teach it, they respond to the local needs and wishes of people rather than impose foreign or standardized ideas of what the participants “really” need. As Ben Higham writes, many community music practitioners are attracted to “the notion of the organic, bottom-up, people-focused, ‘other’ and non-institutional nature of [community music] activity” (Rimmer, Higham & Brown, 2014, p. 18). The leading self-conception in the field can in this way be said to imagine community music as operating from outside or on the margins of the established, the authorized, the legitimate and dominant culture. It is from these cultural interstices that community music is thought to intervene in existing frameworks and social relations. It is from this position that the community musician responds to the call of the “Other” in order to address issues of social injustice and marginalization (Higgins, 2015).²³

Yet, there is a danger that this particular notion of community music and its emphasis on active music making as a transcendence of boundaries may cause practitioners and scholars working within the field to disregard the ways such activities may also contribute to the reproduction, reinforcement, and concealment of social constraints, categories, and identities. By picturing community music work as operating from the margins of the established social discourses, it becomes unclear how such activities themselves are entangled in authorized discourse and already established institutional formations that uphold the very inequality and constraints community music seeks to break with.

Mark Rimmer (2018) addresses this issue in a recent text in which he discusses the frequent connection between community music and “youth” or “at-risk” youth. Rimmer discusses how governmental policies targeting these groups are often built upon implicit assumptions and understandings of young people as “being in deficit, as not yet fully formed,” and therefore to be subjected to the

²³ Higgins’ (2006, 2012) notion of the community music facilitator as a *boundary-walker* is symptomatic for this self-image.

care of adults who can “encourage their adjustment to pre-existing norms and institutions” (Rimmer, 2018, pp. 204–205). There is a danger, argues Rimmer, that by aligning themselves with policies that build upon such “deficit” narratives of youth, community music activities may become “employed as part of a broadly remedial effort, with the effect, however unconsciously, of reinforcing the kind of stereotypes of ‘youth’ which ultimately set limits on the possibilities for their empowerment” (Rimmer, 2018, p. 207). As community music seeks to respond to issues of social injustice, there is a chance that the social and institutional infrastructure through which such responses are articulated produces a range of paradoxical outcomes.

This theme is also apparent in the work of Kristine Ringsager (2018), who discusses the use of rap music as part of the Danish welfare state’s integration project. Ringsager shows how hip-hop culture is being advanced as a tool to include and empower disadvantaged youth with ethnic minority backgrounds, on the basis that hip-hop is ‘their culture’ and, therefore, constitutes a proper space for identification and expression. While Ringsager notes how hip-hop workshops provide the participants with meaningful musical and social experiences, she also argues that these activities may at the same time enforce processes of Othering and exclusion. As the programs work to build proper citizens and integrate a specific group of people into the society, they also function as markers of distinction that point out “a range of ‘uncivilized’ bodily and social forms of behaviours, categories and persons as problematic” (Ringsager, 2018, p. 260). Thus, Ringsager argues that these programs do not merely alleviate a defined social problem. They also ascribe certain values and understandings to the problem and, in this way, participate in constituting a social reality that reproduces existing social distinctions and hierarchies.

The present study points to another example of how such paradoxical processes are played out in community music work. When active music making is offered as a tool by means of which the young Palestinians counter their experiences of marginalization and neglect, the music program at the same time imposes a particular frame for national belonging that powerfully shapes how and in what forms Palestinianness and resistance can be adequately conceived. In this way, music activities do not simply respond to issues of social injustice and marginalization, but also, in crucial ways, take part in the formation of those very issues and provide a template that sets the stage for particular ways of defining and addressing social problems, while discouraging others. Thus, what the work of Rimmer (2018) and Ringsager (2018), as well as the present research,

draws attention to are the subtle processes by which community music activities contribute to the constitution of frameworks that provide participants with a range of opportunities for meaningful experience and action, and simultaneously are involved in the naturalization and reinforcement of categories and assumptions that may work contrary to the goal of empowerment and inclusion. The central argument of this thesis is that for scholars and practitioners to come to fuller understandings of the consequences of community music work, awareness of these issues must be cultivated.

A potential path for future research would be to look into how community music practices are constituted in the nexus between the social rationales of the institutions that direct or fund music activities, the social-identity categories, such as race, class, gender, generation, nationality, locality, that are reproduced, negotiated, and/or transformed through music making, and the immediate and imagined social relations established in musical practice and performance. This requires analyses that attend to the actions and experiences of the participants, observe and explore how social relations are established in musical practice, and critically investigate how these actions, experiences and relations mediate and are mediated by wider social and institutional formations. Rather than imagining community music as an intervention from outside the boundaries of the established and dominant culture, this perspective presumes that such practices depend on, and thus in some sense also reproduce, existing frames of legitimacy and authority. By tracing how socialities are constituted and negotiated across these different planes of sociality and analyzing their intersections, the complex and potentially contradictory workings of community music are more likely to come into view.

8.2 Music education as ambiguous musical practice

Within the broader field of music education, scholars have more readily acknowledged music education's complicity in reproducing social hierarchies and ideologies in ways that undermine educational ideals such as equality, democracy, and human flourishing. Yet, a number of scholars have discussed how music educational practices may challenge existing relations of power in ways that empower students to more freely participate and construct their musical, personal, and social selves. Advancing an open philosophy of music education, Randall Allsup (2016) imagines music education as an explorative

quest, in which norms and traditions are constantly put into question, reframed, and renegotiated in a collaborative process between learners and teachers. By envisioning music education as a common search for a “third meaning,” Allsup seeks to “assemble a sense of how life and art can lead both teachers and students to explore larger and richer arenas of meaning and experience” (Allsup, 2016, p. ix). Ruth Wright (2019) shares this vision of music education as a radically open and emancipatory endeavor when she calls for music educators to envision and establish utopian spaces, “not in the sense of unattainable perfect futures but in terms of encouraging spaces of social experimentation and resistance, encouraging the collective, reengaging communities with the political” (Wright, 2019, p. 225). In the same vein, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos argues for a creative musical praxis, in which musical improvisation and composition “function as processes of instituting musical practices, of creating forms of musical practices that envision non-suppressive forms of social organisation, while becoming the springboard of the critical reasoning concerning the foundations of musical practices” (Kanellopoulos, 2013, p. 169).

Characteristic for the work of Allsup, Wright, and Kanellopoulos, as well as that of other progressive music educators, is the common search for philosophical and pedagogical foundations on the basis of which music education practices can be conceived of as emancipatory, inclusive, and democratic spaces, based on the needs and desires of the students, aiming for their well-being and flourishing. As much as I share the vision of music education as a liberating force in society, I wonder if the preoccupation with what music education might *become* leads to a neglect of developing understandings of what music education currently *is* and the mundane processes in which students engage in music educational practices that are at once transformative and reproductive, inclusive and exclusive, open and closed. As I have discussed in this research project, in the particular context investigated here, the social transformative functions of music making, i.e., the way music making enables the young Palestinians to alter their social experiences, seem invariably connected to the reproduction, naturalization, and concealment of a deeper level of sociality, in this case the imposition of a specific template of national belonging and identity. While I agree with Allsup (2016) that norms should be taught as open and subject to change, the present research gives reasons to consider how norms may not merely be seen as oppressive constraints; they can also be seen as lines of authority and legitimacy that provide participants and students with possibilities for transforming aspects of their social worlds. As I have shown

in this thesis, there may be cases where individuals utilize norms for carving out spaces of freedom and movement, for crossing other lines of authority and legitimacy, and for invoking collective or idiosyncratic senses of self that contradict how they are placed by unjust social forces. Such processes should not necessarily be seen as liberating endeavors in which norms are subverted. Rather, I argue that this form of agency is better understood as an instance of “docile agency” that allows for the transcendence of some norms with the price of others being reinforced.

As music education scholars envision musical practices as creative spaces of emancipation and resistance, they do so while relying on an idea of “the liminal.” Although this idea is articulated in various ways, it refers basically to a relative autonomy of musical practice and performance as a space set apart from the everyday relations of its social context. However, when musical practices are conceptualized in terms of liminality, in-betweenness, a “third meaning” or “third space,” there is a tendency to primarily imbue this condition with progressive and emancipatory potential as a space in which the constitution of the social is revealed, and new and better forms of social organization can be experienced and enacted.²⁴ Exhibiting acute awareness of how music education is entangled in issues of injustice, domination, and inequality, music education scholars have sought to develop models that point to how music educational practices can be lifted out of the negative influences of their institutional embeddedness and turned against such systemic forces of oppression. This is obviously a noble and important aim, but a potential consequence is that less attention is given to other fundamental functions of “the liminal,” the reproduction and concealment of the social and institutional forces that allow for such transformational spaces to emerge in the first place; and how transformative musical practices may in this way be involved in the constitution of other boundaries within the social, producing a range of unexpected consequences.

The notion of ambiguous musical practice developed here directs attention to the intersection of these functions. The usefulness of this concept is not that it provides solutions to how music educators might eliminate the unintentional effects of their work. Rather, I see it as an aid for music educators to gain a deeper understanding of the social dynamics of their practice and for coming to terms with its paradoxes. The notion of ambiguous musical practice is not advanced as a replacement for normative philosophies of music education, the

24 As discussed in section 4.2, this critique has also been directed against the field of performance studies.

ideas of what music education should strive to *become*, which rightfully enjoy a prominent position within the field. Rather, the conception developed here is meant to contribute to critical examinations of the paradoxes and ambiguities that inevitably pertain to music educational practice, to help the field acquire nuanced understandings of the ambivalent consequences of our work. As also identified in the introductory chapter of this thesis, a potential task for future research is through analyses of music educational practices in a range of different contexts to develop deeper understandings of how such activities function simultaneously as progressive/conservative, transformative/reproductive, inclusive/exclusive forces in our societies. The notion of ambiguous musical practice could provide a starting point for such explorations.

Dyndahl (2015a, p. 30) suggests that the recognition that music education is involved in “positive” as well as a “negative” processes of human life may be unbearable for many music educators. However, as I see it, this recognition can also lift a burden off the shoulders of people within our profession. Without the task of constantly reminding ourselves and each other of the overwhelmingly positive impact music has—or could have—on our communities and societies, we are set free to engage fully, honestly, and openly in our work, while embracing the inevitable shortcomings and failures as signs of our humanity rather than markers of our personal inadequacy to effectuate a romanticized idea of the transformative power of music. Conceiving and conducting musical practice and research from within the ambiguous and paradoxical reality of human life can become a liberating endeavor as well.

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List of papers

Paper 1

Kim Boeskov (2017). The community music practice as cultural performance: Foundations for a community music theory of social transformation. *International Journal of Community Music*, 10(1), pp. 85–99.
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Paper 2

Kim Boeskov (2018). Moving beyond orthodoxy: Reconsidering notions of music and social transformation. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 17(2), pp. 92–117. doi:10.22176/act17.2.92 *

Paper 3

Kim Boeskov (accepted). Birds from Palestine: Performing national belonging in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. *Music & Arts in Action*. **

Paper 4

Kim Boeskov (in press). Music, agency, and social transformation: Processes of subjectivation in a Palestinian community music program. *Nordic Research in Music Education Yearbook (Vol. 20)*.

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Paper 1

Kim Boeskov

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The community music practice as cultural performance

Foundations for a community music theory of social transformation

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Abstract

This article outlines a conceptual framework informed by anthropological and performance theory that allow for a deeper understanding of the connection between community music practices and processes of social transformation. By conceiving the community music practice as a cultural performance, attention is drawn to the complex relation between the meanings and relationships experienced inside the musical practice and how these affect and transform the relationships that constitute the broader social and cultural world of the participants. The discussion reveals that the relationships enacted in community music practices involving socially marginalized groups are better understood as inherently ambiguous, which challenge the idealistic perspectives often encountered in community music research.

Keywords

Social transformation, community music, cultural performance, Palestinian refugees, musicking, cultural identity

Introduction

At the heart of community music is a longing for musical practices that transform people, places and society. Based on a conviction that everybody has the right and abilities to make music and a commitment to cultural democracy, the field of community music exhibits special attention towards the inclusion of marginalized or disadvantaged¹ groups and individuals with no access to musical participation (Veblen and Olsson 2002). Lee Higgins emphasizes community music's expressive function as he understands such practices to articulate 'a community's local identities, traditions, aspirations, and social interactions' (Higgins 2012: 4). Community music practices involving socially marginalized groups can thus be seen as transformative responses to social injustice. As an active intervention, community music constitutes 'a form of thoughtful disruption', which 'denotes an encounter with "newness", a perspective that seeks to create situations in which new events innovate and interrupt the present toward moments of futural transformation' (Higgins 2015: 446).

In this article, I discuss the relation between community music practices and what I will refer to as processes of social transformation. I define this term the following way: Social transformation are processes in which individuals' or groups' relations to themselves, each other and their surrounding world are transformed. These relations are to be regarded as the frameworks of meaning that guide interpretation of the objects, actions, symbols and identities that constitute the social and cultural world. Processes of social transformation are essential for community music practices involving socially marginalized or disadvantaged individuals and groups, because they potentially allow for criticizing or challenging experiences of marginalization and exclusion and simultaneously enable the construction and articulation of alternative and more desirable subject positions and notions of social and cultural identity.

Understanding the connection between active music making and processes of social transformation is central to the field of community music. My impression

1 In this article I use the terms 'marginalized' and 'disadvantaged' well aware of the danger that placing people in such categories tends to reinforce marginalization as the designation only restates the fundamental issue of individuals and groups not being allowed to define themselves and have their own sense of social and cultural identity recognized. I use the terms cautiously in relation to the Palestinians in Lebanon (see more below) because I find it important to acknowledge that the structures of political, social and cultural marginalization that determine the lives and experiences of this group are very real and in multiple ways inform the music making and all other social and cultural practices of this community.

is, however, that both community music practitioners and researchers base their work on what I find to be overly optimistic views of music's ability to affect positive change. In a recent critique of the philosophical foundation of community music Alexandra Kerz-Welzel (2016) argues that the field is characterized by a lack of critical reflectiveness and a consistent emphasis on positive aspects of music making that disregards the potential negative sides. This article attempts to address these issues by providing a theoretical framework informed by anthropological and performance theory adequate to assist us in the demanding task of developing genuine and valid understandings of community music's transformative potential. In many ways the outlining of the anthropological theory matches and substantiates already established ideas of the transformative potential of active music making, especially Christopher Small's (1998) theory of musicking that I take to exemplify general assumptions towards this issue held in the field of community music. The discussion will reveal, however, that transformative processes in musical practices involving marginalized groups might be more conflictual and ambiguous than parts of community music research tend to acknowledge.

Community music in a Palestinian refugee camp

The theoretical perspective I seek to develop is informed by my experience of a community music project in the Palestinian refugee camp Rashidieh in South Lebanon. The Palestinians in Lebanon are long-term refugees and have for generations lived in exile and constant insecurity in over-crowded refugee camps. They are denied of basic human rights such as the right to own property or the right to work, and they refer to themselves as 'the forgotten people', because they feel neglected by the international community that fails to change or even acknowledge this unsustainable and unjust situation (Roberts 2010).

Since 2003, the Palestinian organization Beit Atfal Assumoud has cooperated with Norwegian music educators in running a community music programme in Rashidieh (Boeskov 2013; Ruud 2011; Storsve and Danielsen 2013; Storsve et al. 2010). The programme provides music and dance activities two times a week for 40–80 children and adolescents from the camp. The activities are led by five local Palestinian musicians, and the Norwegian music educators and music students visit the camp three to four times a year to introduce new musical material, perform with the participants and support the local teachers. Groups

of Palestinians have also visited Norway and other countries and performed and taught Palestinian music and dance.

In 2012 I lived in Lebanon for eight months and participated in the community music programme as a music teacher. Through this stay I have gained insight in the musical practice and its social, cultural and political context. As a part of the field work for my on-going Ph.D. study, I have spent 30 days in the camp during the spring months of 2016 where I observed the music activities and conducted interviews with nineteen participants, teachers and administrators of the programme. In the following I do not attempt an exhaustive analysis of these empirical data, instead I draw on field work experiences to illustrate how the anthropological perspective discussed here might be relevant to the field of community music.

A performative perspective

The anthropological theory that informs my work is connected to what has been called the performance turn in anthropology (Conquergood 1989). This perspective suggests that culture and identity are not firm categories but must be seen as relations continuously created and enacted through the various social and cultural practices we engage in and the symbolic resources available to us. Relations of identity and culture are not stable or given, they are *performed*, as the philosopher James Clifford writes, ‘Twentieth-century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions. Everywhere individuals and groups improvise local performances from (re)collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols, and languages’ (1988: 14).

The performance turn in anthropology has influenced the movements in musicology that led scholars to leave behind a work-oriented concept of music in favour of thinking of music as performance. From this perspective music becomes a meaning-producing activity in the centre of our social and cultural lives, as Nicholas Cook puts it, ‘To call music a performing art, then, is not just to say that we perform it; it is to say that through it we perform social meaning’ (2012: 193). Whether conceived as a ‘cultural’, ‘anthropological’ or ‘praxial’ turn, the understanding of music as performance of social meaning has been embraced by important theoretical contributions to both music education as well community music and community music therapy (see e.g. Bowman 2005;

Elliott 1995; Elliott and Silverman 2015; Pavlicevic and Ansdell 2004; Ruud 1998; Stige 2002; Stige et al. 2010).

One of the most notable contributions is Christopher Small's book *Musicking. The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998) in which he outlines his concept of *musicking*, a term that has been widely adopted and applied in community music theory and research. According to Small, the significance of music is not to be found in musical works, but in the *doing* of music, the musicking, and in the musical *event* in the broadest sense, the totality of the musical performance. He builds on the anthropologist Gregory Bateson's theory of biological communication and gestural language (see Bateson 1972, 1979) when he explains that, 'The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies' (Small 1998: 13). These relationships between sounds, people and place are significant in that

they model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world. (Small 1998: 13)

Small believes that through participating in a musical performance individuals and groups are able to explore, affirm and celebrate the ideal relationships brought into existence. These relationships are not necessarily the same as those that exist outside of the musical performance, but they are desired relationships 'brought into virtual existence so that those taking part are enabled to experience them as if they really did exist' (Small 1998: 183). Thus, Small highlights the ritual character of performance. Through musicking we are allowed to explore the ideal relationships, try them on and experience them in our own bodies (Small 1998: 96) and in this way affirm to ourselves and others who we truly are or wish to be.

Small's concepts of musicking and ideal relationships seem suited for understanding the transformative potential of active music making, which is underlined by the vast influence Small's writing has had on the field of community music. As Mary Cohen (2011) asserts, Small's theory provides community music educators and researchers with a conceptual framework for understanding their work. In my view, however, Small's idealistic notion of musicking as an enactment of ideal relationships can easily be used to over-simplify how the meanings experienced in musical performance affect and transform the relationships that constitute the broader social and cultural world of the performance

participants. Whether or not community music research explicitly relates to Small's notion, I find it to be generally assumed in the field that the meanings and relationships generated in the community music practice are inherently positive or 'ideal', i.e. such practices are understood to constitute joyful, empowering and inclusive spaces that counter experiences of marginalization and exclusion. Further it is believed that these positive meanings have the power to intervene in and transform aspects of the participants' lives. Small's theory substantiates these beliefs, however, as I intend to show, while community music practices certainly can be said to possess a transformative potential, the relationships enacted in such practices should not necessarily be understood as 'ideal'. As Small also posits, the relationships generated in a musical performance are immensely complex and certain performances might fill us with contradictory or negative feelings (Small 1999). Following this assertion, I suggest that rather than ideal, the relationships enacted in community music practices involving marginalized or disadvantaged individuals and groups are better perceived as ambiguous or even conflictual.

The discussion undertaken here addresses the complex relation between engaging in a musical practice and processes of social transformation. While acknowledging the assertion that music and musicking must be seen in its social and cultural context to be appropriately understood, which is clearly articulated by Cook and Small as well as music education philosophers such as David Elliott and Marissa Silverman (2015) and music therapists such as Brynjulf Stige (2002) and Even Ruud (1998), the perspective I seek to develop reveals that the transformative potential of music gains its force not only through its embeddedness in a social and cultural context but also through its separation from our ordinary life, as an extra-ordinary event that disrupts the flow of life in significant ways. To bring the complex relation between ordinary life and the extraordinary event into critical attention, I propose to conceptualize the community music practice as a cultural performance.

The community music practice as cultural performance

Small's theoretical contribution builds on anthropological theory, and by drawing attention to both the act of musicking and the totality of the musical performance, he clearly articulates the dual sense of performance central to anthropological studies of the same, that performance is both a *doing* and an

event framed in time and space (Bauman 1978). Anthropologists often refer to such events as cultural performances, which is a unifying concept for a diverse range of cultural events or organizations such as rituals, weddings, festivals, plays, dances, musical concerts, etc. The term was coined by the cultural anthropologist Milton Singer who sees such cultural performances as distinct from other activities in that they are framed; they have a beginning and an end, consist of a special set of actions and activities, they include performers and often an audience, and they tend to happen in distinct places marked as or turned into performative spaces. Singer believes that such performances are significant in that they encapsulate the culture of the people enacting them, and that people use such performances as expressive or communicative acts to exhibit their culture to themselves and to others (Singer 1972; see also Turner 1988: 23).

The community music practice in the Palestinian refugee camp Rashidieh can certainly be understood as a cultural performance in this sense. The cultural centre of Beit Atfal Assumoud is every Friday and Sunday through the facilitation of dedicated community musicians transformed into a performative space where special activities, actions and interactions take place between participants or between participants and an audience. As Small also pointed to, such activities possess an expressive potential; through the performance of music and dance the participants can express and affirm their cultural and social identities, or more accurately as pointed to earlier with reference to Clifford (1988), they construct these identities through the use of the symbolic resources that become available to them in the performance setting.

The transformative potential of cultural performances, which is what is of interest here, is highlighted by Victor Turner who is regarded to be one of the most important contributors to the anthropological theory of ritual and performance. Like Singer, Turner understands cultural performances as expressive, but he also notes their *redressive* function in the way that such events are often utilized when a social group is trying to cope with a crisis or going through some kind of transition. In a *social drama*, as Turner labels these processes, when social order is disturbed, rituals and performances are means of reworking or re-establishing sound relationships inside a social group or between a group of people and their surrounding world (Turner 1974: 35–41, 1988: 74ff).

Turner builds on Arnold Van Gennep's theory of rites of passage when he states that ritual performances encompass a *liminal* phase that sets the performance participants in a state 'betwixt and between', a state imbued with ambiguity and uncertainty (Turner 1969: 95). In the liminal phase the quotidian reality is

suspended. The roles, arrangements and organizations upheld in the normal, everyday structure of society are questioned or inverted. This process allows people to 'play' with the familiar. It frees the participants from their normal social positions and obligations, places them in new relationships and allows them to explore, if only temporarily, alternative models of society, culture and identity (Turner 1982: 27).

Turner's ideas have inspired music scholars (see e.g. Pavlicevic and Ansdell 2004; Ansdell 2014; Boyce-Tillman 2009; Ruud 1992, 1998; Stige et al. 2010) as well as performance theorists to explore the liberating and transformative potential of performance for various cultural or societal marginalized individuals and groups. I suggest that this line of thinking offers insights that are pertinent to central aims of many community music practices, including the music activities in the Palestinian refugee camp Rashidieh. In the following I will consider some of the foundational concepts in order to understand how liminal conditions are established, how they enable performers to become aware of and transform their experience of relationships, and how the performance context is connected to everyday life.

The performance frame

As pointed to above, a central characteristic of cultural performances is that they are framed, which in the most basic sense points to the fact that such performances are separated in time and space from other social and cultural practices undertaken by the participants. A frame, in the anthropological sense,² however, points to something more significant, in Turner's words, it is an 'invisible boundary [...] around activity which defines participants, their roles, the "sense" or "meaning" ascribed to those things included within the boundary' (Turner 1988: 54).

The frame is not only separating the performance context from everyday life, it is also guiding interpretation by ascribing meaning to what happens inside the frame. Bateson refers to this as *metacommunication* and suggests that a message includes information of how that same message and other messages included in the specific metacommunicative frame are to be interpreted (Bateson 2004: 128).

2 The concept of framing was developed in anthropologist Gregory Bateson's (2004) theory of metacommunication and the sociologist Erving Goffman's (1974) idea of frame as an organizing principle for social experience.

Anthropologist Richard Bauman argues that performance can be understood as a distinct interpretive frame that enable performers to communicate on a different level than everyday interaction allows for (Bauman 1978). Bauman believes that a performance frame is established in that the performer assumes 'accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content' (Bauman 1978: 11). Not only what is communicated but *how* it is communicated becomes an inseparable part of the message. This induces 'special attention to or heightened awareness of the act of expression' (Bauman 1978: 11) that lifts experiences out of the ordinary, sets them apart from the everyday and instills them with special significance.

The expressive nature of performance means that it is directed towards someone; performance exists to be witnessed by an audience. This audience, however, as performance theorist Richard Schechner points to, could be an actual audience, but it might also just be the performers themselves, God, or some transcendent 'Other' (2003: 22). The implication of an audience entails that the performance of culture and identity happens in a social space and is negotiated between the performers and their audience, whether real or imagined.

When a performance frame is established the communicative potential is expanded. Take Jimi Hendrix's legendary performance of *The Star Spangled Banner* at Woodstock in '69 as an example.³ The performance frame attaches ambiguity, complexity and even contradiction to the symbols and meanings enacted in the performance which allows for a higher or more complex level of communication, but also for misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or even deliberate rejection to occur. The established frame must be recognized and accepted by the people taking part in its enactment to be effective, but such a consensus can never be guaranteed.

This ambiguity marks performance as a field of imagination and creativity with a great transformative potential. Meanings and relations are not fixed and can therefore be reinvented and recreated in new ways. Further, the ambiguity and complexity of meaning and what Turner calls the multivocality of symbols (Turner 1982: 27) employed in the performance are great resources in the social process of transformation of meaning, as this indeterminacy enables people with different standpoints, positions and beliefs to share in the same experience. Conflicting experiences of meaning are tolerated and can be worked upon and negotiated among the performance participants. Music (and dance) holds a

3 <https://vimeo.com/90907436>. Accessed 10 October 2016.

special potential for facilitating these processes as it coordinates participants' actions as well as their attentional and affective states, while music's inherent ambiguity at the same time allows for individual interpretations and experiences without losing its integrity as a shared and collective endeavour (Cross 2005; Kapferer 1986). However, this ambiguity also allows for rather complex and contradictory feelings to be present simultaneously, an important point I will return to below.

The transformative potential of a community music practice is connected to the interpretive frame established in the performance context. The ambiguity of the frame produces a liminal condition in which the meanings of symbols, identities and relations brought into the frame are questioned or subverted and in which new meanings and relations are allowed to emerge and to be experienced by participants.

Performance as restored behaviour

The frame is not present prior to performance, it is created in and through the performative acts. But the participants' ways of acting are to a large extent determined by the structure of a given musical practice and the positions and roles that a particular performance setting offers to the performers, which can be illuminated by pointing to the concept of *restored behaviour* (Schechner 1985: 35ff).

Restored behaviour is, in Schechner's view, a fundamental characteristic of performance. The term highlights the rehearsed character of performed action; it is not spontaneous like everyday social behaviour but more or less prescribed by the rules and roles established by the performance context. To perform is to take on a role, to act in a way that belongs to the role one is performing. Therefore, the role and the behaviour associated with the role can be said to exist separately from the performer herself. Engaging in the performance allows the performer to distance herself from her own person and exist as 'someone else', but, as Schechner notes, 'this "someone else" may also be "me in another state of feeling/being," as if there were multiple "me's" in one person' (1985: 37). The performance of roles enables in this way experiences of alternative versions of the self and thereby also alternative experiences of the self in its relations to others.

In performance participants are released from their 'normal' selves and the social roles they usually inhabit and can try on new ones. Performing, however, does not entail a complete abandonment of the performer's 'normal' identity. Rather, as Schechner argues, performance opens a space in which performers are simultaneous 'not-me' and 'not-not-me'. This double negativity emphasizes the creative and imaginative potential of the performance frame as it according to Schechner 'rests not on how things are but on how things are not' (1985: 113).

Even though role-playing most immediately is associated with theatre, the notion is, in my view, also suited for understanding the way community music practices allow for participants to occupy and experience themselves in roles not accessible outside the musical practice. An important part of the Palestinian community music programme is the cultural exchange activities that allow the Palestinian refugees to forge relationships to Norwegian music educators and music students through joint performances of both Palestinian and Norwegian music. These experiences are important because the feelings of recognition and acceptance attributed to performing music together challenge the feelings of neglect so dominant in the Palestinians' self-understanding (Boeskov 2013). When performing with the Norwegians, a certain performance frame is established in which the reality of ordinary life is suspended and substantially different relations and experiences of meaning are constructed. And because these experiences are related to and embedded in the performative actions, the alternative relations and the feelings of recognition connected to them can be 'saved' and 'restored' or re-enacted in performance, even without the physical presence of the Norwegians.

The participants are in this way through active music making and the roles available to them in the musical practice both enabled to temporarily suspend their 'normal' social roles and to establish new and alternative relations to each other and the surrounding world. These roles and meanings can be re-enacted and affirmed in future performances and become part of a general sense of being. As Schechner points to in words that strongly reflect Small's idea of ideal relationships, 'Restored behaviour offers to both individuals and groups the chance to rebecome what they once were – or even, and most often, to rebecome what they never were but wish to have been or wish to become' (Schechner 1985: 38).

Thus, the anthropological notions of frame and restored behaviour provide us with a deeper understanding of how marginalized individuals and groups through musical performance are enabled to enact and experience alternative

meanings that challenge existing feelings of marginalization and exclusion. As Small's notion of ideal relationships also articulates, the musical practice potentially allows for an experience and exploration of more desirable or ideal relationships to ourselves, each other and the surrounding world, and thus for processes of social transformation to occur. However, as I intend to show in the following sections, a too simplistic view of the power of music to affect such transformations may lead us to disregard the ambiguous and sometimes conflictual nature of these processes. Further exploration of anthropological ideas of performance suggests that cultural performances must be regarded as the simultaneous enactment of both existing and alternative relationships. This suggests a more complex relation between the musical practice and its surrounding social and cultural world than Small's notion of ideal relationships seems to allow for.

The simultaneous enactment of existing and alternative relationships

As pointed to above, the Palestinian participants are through their engagement in the musical practice enabled to perform and experience feelings of recognition and accept. This, however, leads us to an important insight. As the relationships enacted in performance receive their meaning due to the fact that they are alternatives to the existing marginalizing structures, parts of these structures are simultaneously re-enacted and affirmed. The Palestinians' experiences of recognition when performing with the Norwegians are meaningful only on the background of existing feelings of neglect. The experience of alternative or ideal relationships – and thus the transformative potential of performance – is intimately linked to the reiteration of existing relationships and how performance brings these relationships into attention.

The enactment of existing relationships is closely connected to what Turner calls the *reflexivity* inherent in cultural performances; the way performance enables the participants to 'turn, bend, or reflect back upon themselves' (Turner 1988: 24), to become audiences to themselves and thereby to become aware of the relationships they are embedded in and that constitute their social and cultural identity. Turner finds that the liminal condition of cultural performances and the suspension of quotidian reality allow people 'to think about how they think, about the terms in which they conduct their thinking, or to feel about how they

feel in daily life' (Turner 1988: 102). Performance, however, has a dual function as a simultaneous experience of both existing and alternative relationships, as Turner articulates when he suggests to view a cultural performance as 'the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting "designs for living"' (Turner 1988: 24). This is also what the notion of liminality expresses, as it refers to an experiential condition 'betwixt and between' two modes of existence. In this way, performance constitutes both the reality as it is currently experienced and the emergent sense of life as it could be.

This assertion draws attention to the complex relation between performance and everyday life. The pertinent question seems to be: How are the performed meanings and relationships incorporated into the lived realities of a marginalized group? Turner and Schechner have suggested that cultural performances (of all genres) both are informed by and influence the social processes of the cultural and social context they are a part of (Schechner 2003; Turner 1990). Cultural performances can be seen as continuously responsive to immanent social and cultural issues and are in this way important parts of the dynamic (re)production of social and cultural life as the performed meanings feed back into and inform the implicit rhetorical structure of a given society. Turner, however, has been criticized for emphasizing the transformative potential of performance and disregarding that ritual and cultural performances often serve to reinforce social normativity (Lewis 2013: 68).⁴ Whether or not one finds this to be a fair critique, it is important to acknowledge, as anthropologist and performance scholar J. Lowell Lewis (2013) points to, that the relation between performance and everyday life involves both affirmative and transformative processes in complex constellations.

Lewis explores possible performance/everyday life-relations⁵ and draws attention to the way particular performances allow for both socially reinforcing and transformative processes to occur simultaneously. In carnivals, for example,

4 I believe the same critique could be directed at Small when he states that the affirmative function of a musical performance is connected to the enactment of ideal relationships (1998: 183) and thus neglects that musical performances just as well can enact and reinforce relationships that are less than ideal.

5 Lewis (2013: 76) distinguishes between five types of performance/everyday life-relations: reinforcement, inversion, neutralization, reformation and transformation. He makes clear that this is not a complete typology of possible relations between cultural performances and everyday life but tools to help uncover some of the effects that are significant in particular performances. The categories are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary, a specific performance could potentially involve all types of relations at some point or at some level.

the inversion of gender norms and status positions can be seen as processes that challenge certain structures in society, but such processes can equally well serve to reinforce social normativity as the inversions are bounded within a distinct frame that depicts how chaotic life would be without the normative social structure. The carnival is a chance to 'let out steam' without really challenging status quo. On the other hand, as Lewis points to, such inversions may 'intrude' into daily life and slowly change the values and perceptions of a community (Lewis 2013: 91).

The Palestinian community music programme provides an example of how a musical performance can entail both transformative and affirmative functions at the same time. The performance of Palestinian music and dance is important to the participants because it allows them to show their cultural heritage to outsiders and represent Palestine in a positive way. Performing this music is conceived to be acts of resistance towards the unjust social and political structures that determine the lives of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Through musicking alternative images and experiences of Palestinian identity can be explored and celebrated (Boeskov 2013). At the same time, the music project works as a place of cultural and ideological transmission. It is a clearly formulated goal for the Palestinian organization running the music programme that the Palestinian children through music and dance are taught what it means to be Palestinian, that they learn to be proud of their national and cultural identity and to identify with the fight for the return to the lost homeland. The musical practice contributes in this way to the reinforcement of certain ideas, values and attitudes towards important social and cultural issues. However, to an outsider, it seems that the musical practice also indicates rather narrow boundaries to what feelings and versions of Palestinian identity that can be legitimately expressed. Living as a refugee in exile supposedly gives rise to a broad range of emotions and thoughts that could inform the musical expressions. Although the inherent ambiguous nature of music and performance could potentially give room for the expression of individual feelings of sorrow, defiance or difficulty towards what it means to be a young Palestinian refugee, my general impression is that such nuanced responses to the ongoing social crisis are being precluded by a strong dominant narrative.

The musical practice in the Palestinian refugee camp can in this way be said to involve a complex mix of transformative and affirmative processes that both liberate as well as restrict participants' experiences in certain ways. While the practice allows for transformation of some meanings and relationships,

certain aspects of identity are at the same time reinforced and affirmed. The performance frame enables a temporary suspension of the ordinary realities, but the alternative relationships that appear are intimately connected to these realities and place the performers in between. These processes, whether transformative or affirmative, cannot be thought of as enactments of unanimously 'ideal' relationships, as Small's concept implies, but are better understood as inherently ambiguous. This does not mean that the community music practice does not possess transformative potential. On the contrary, I believe this practice certainly must be seen as a dynamic force in the Palestinian community with significant impact on the participants' lives. However, in my opinion, emphasizing Turner's notion of liminality rather than Small's concept of ideal relationships leaves us with a less idealistic but more genuine idea of what community music practices might mean to marginalized groups. Considering community music practices as ambiguous and conflictual rather than utopian spaces will lead both community music researchers and practitioners to acknowledge the complexity and fragility of enacting social transformation through music.

Concluding remarks

In this article I suggest that the concept of cultural performance provides a useful starting point for understanding the transformative potential of community music practices. Conceiving community music practices as liminal events draws attention to how alternative meanings are allowed to emerge through the enactment of a performance frame, but it also reveals the complex relation between the performance context and everyday life and how performance potentially both affirms and transforms subject positions and social and cultural aspects of identity in highly ambiguous and sometimes conflictual ways. Although an invaluable contribution, I will argue that Small's notion of ideal relationships and its implied positive connotations does not provide us with a sufficiently nuanced framework for understanding how processes of social transformation occur in community music practices involving socially marginalized groups. The conceptual framework presented here could be further developed and put to use in future in-depth empirical analyses of community music practices and contribute to more adequate understandings of the connection between community music practices and processes of social transformation.

Implications for community music practice and research

In this final section I will discuss the implications of these ideas for future community music research, and how community music educators might draw upon these insights when thinking about their own practices.

A rather straight-forward proposition would be to assert that community music practices have transformative potential insofar as they address social and cultural issues important to the participants. The importance of *facilitation*, a concept central to much community music theory, comes to mind here. As Lee Higgins points to, facilitation must be understood as ‘a process that enables participants’ creative energy to flow, develop, and grow through pathways specific to individuals and groups in which they are working’ (Higgins 2012: 148). I would suggest that facilitation seen in light of the above can also be seen as a kind of *framing*, a process in which community musicians draw attention to important issues and set the conditions for a particular interpretive frame to be established that allows the participants to experience alternative meanings, reposition themselves in relation to these meanings and through performative actions enact different versions of reality. The facilitator must therefore, in cooperation with the participants, work to secure that participants are allowed and empowered to engage in the musical practice in roles they themselves find appealing and help participants to fill these roles and transform them into what they believe to be adequate or interesting ways of relating to themselves, others, and their surrounding world.

This means that transformation is achievable insofar as the participants are able to construct different relations to the symbolic content of performance. I would suggest that for the performers this requires what Sidsel Karlsen calls ‘musical agency’ (2011, 2012). According to Karlsen, musical agency has both an individual and a collective dimension having to do with individuals’ capacity for action in relation to music and, with reference to Barnes (2000), the *accountability* and *susceptibility* needed to enable actors to engage in meaningful musicking together. Thus, transformative action through musical performance is possible when performers are able to engage creatively with the symbolic content of the musical practice in a socially accepted way, in other words, in a way that both performers and audience (if any) consider to be musically interesting and socially appropriate. This points to a close connection between the participants’ musical development and processes of social transformation, a theme that seems pertinent to both community music and music education research.

Finally, conceiving the community music practice as a cultural performance reveals the intimate connection between the enactment of alternative relationships and re-enactment of existing ones. This proposition should caution us to consider not only what relations are potentially being transformed, but also what relations that are simultaneous being affirmed and reinforced. Further, I find that by placing a strong emphasis on how a community music practice enables alternative relations and meanings to occur, we risk failing to recognize that community music practices involving marginalized groups sometimes – or maybe always and maybe necessarily – also contain feelings of sorrow, sadness, ambivalence or even anger as the structures of marginalization and exclusion are illuminated in performance. Undertaking such practices comes with a heavy ethical responsibility of dealing with these feelings in appropriate ways.

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Paper 2

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Moving beyond orthodoxy:

Reconsidering notions of music and social transformation

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Moving beyond orthodoxy

Reconsidering notions of music and social transformation

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Abstract

Critical scholars have noted a tendency in the field of music education toward idealization of the socially transformative power of music and a disregard of the counterproductive or ambiguous outcomes of social music making. In this article, I discuss some of the dominant conceptualizations addressing music as a means of social transformation, and I argue that these conceptions need to be expanded to fully account for these complex processes. By applying a theoretical model derived from critical musicology dealing with music's mediation of the social on multiple levels, I propose an analytical strategy more attentive to the antagonistic and ambiguous social effects of musicking. This strategy is exemplified through an analysis of a music program in a Palestinian refugee camp, and I show how such critical analyses of musical sociality potentially result in recognition of a complex intersection of transgressive and normative functions of musical practice.

Keywords

Music education, social transformation, the power of music, musical sociality, critical musicology, Palestinian refugees.

Music has transformative powers. This belief has, at least since Plato, informed our thinking about the connection between music, humans, and society and led to the promotion or the prohibition of specific forms of musical engagement in different historical eras and localities. In our time, music and the arts are almost unanimously celebrated for their positive influence on human life, and the belief in the transformative power of arts is so widely shared and deeply held that it, according to Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, “represents something close to orthodoxy amongst advocates of the arts around the world” (Belfiore and Bennett 2008, 4).

Progressive forces in the field of music education have long denounced the claim that music “in itself” or particular music styles could be inherently beneficial or a universal good. As Wayne Bowman (2010) writes, the belief that music should be “inherently valuable, invariably desirable, and unconditionally good,” is “all nonsense” (3). Rather, as praxial music education philosophers have repeatedly stressed, the value of music is contingent on its social circumstances and how it is used (see e.g. Regelski 1996, Elliott and Silverman 2015). It constitutes, in the words of Thomas Turino (2016), a “social resource” that can be used “effectively for good or ill” (297). For Turino, music’s positive value as a social resource is especially pronounced in what he terms *participatory music making* (Turino 2008, 2016). As inclusive, non-competitive and voluntary practices, such activities “can be potent resources for social change” (Turino 2016, 298).

The participatory ethos Turino describes is the guiding principle of many music educational practices seeking to utilize music’s powers in the promotion of social inclusion, belonging, and social justice. Often associated with the field of community music (Higgins 2012; Higgins and Willingham 2017; Veblen, Messenger, Silverman and Elliott 2013) or inspired by the Venezuelan music program El Sistema, these practices are founded on the premise that “everyone has the right and ability to make and create music” (Veblen and Olsson 2002, 730), and they are celebrated for their alleged success in bringing about positive social change through active music making.

However, while accounts of music educational practices suggest that music does indeed contribute to processes of social change, some critical scholars have noted in such reports a tendency to idealize music’s transformative powers.¹

1 See, for instance, Arild Bergh and John Sloboda’s (2010) review of literature on music and conflict transformation, the critical accounts of El Sistema by Geoffrey Baker (2014) and others (Baker, Bates and Talbot 2016; Boia and Boal-Palheiros 2017), Alexandra Kertz-Welzel’s considerations of Adorno’s critique of music education (Kertz-Welzel 2005), historical and

These scholars leave us with the impression that social analyses of music educational practices tend to overemphasize the positive effects and disregard ambiguous and counterproductive aspects of music making. Considering this, Geoffrey Baker (2014, 16) points to a need for increased attention to the contradictory workings of musical practices, how they may entail “both positive and negative effects simultaneously” and how “claimed benefits may come with hidden costs or countereffects.” Likewise, Wayne Bowman asserts that despite music educators’ good intentions, the consequences of musical actions may be quite ambiguous:

For one thing, the results of instructional and musical actions are seldom uniform and predictable; and, for another, results interact in complicated ways. A consequence that is desirable on one level or in one way may be quite undesirable on another. The consequences of human action, then, are seldom singular, are often entangled with each other in complex ways, and may well be at odds with each other. (Bowman 2009, 4)

I suggest that to account for the full range of consequences of social music making, including the ambiguous outcomes that Baker and Bowman point to, and thereby move beyond idealizing tendencies in the social analysis of musical practice, music educators must be equipped with analytical tools that not only let them examine the positive *or* negative effects of music making, but also reveal their complex entanglement. More specifically, when seen in connection to practices that seek to use music as a means of social transformation, this complexity can be seen as the simultaneous occurrence of processes of social transformation and social reproduction. Put in other words, social music making that at one level allows for a transgression of some confining aspects of the social experience of its participants may at the same time also potentially reinforce other parts of the social formation in ways that may not serve the interest of the people involved.

In this article, I argue that some of the dominant conceptualizations of the connection between music making and social life are inadequate to fully account for such complex processes. Instead, these theories emphasize the transgressive potential of musicking, that is, how musical agents actively and intentionally fashion their social worlds through musical means and disregard constraining

philosophical critiques of community music (Kertz-Welzel 2016; Yerichuk 2014), Chris Philpott’s (2012) discussion of the justification of music in the curriculum, Sigrid Røyseng’s notion of “ritual rationality” (Røyseng and Varkøy 2014) and Petter Dyndahl and Øivind Varkøy’s (2017) discussion of music education and equity/inequity. According to Geir Johansen (2017), these accounts can be seen as examples of a recent tendency of increased self-criticism in the field of music education.

aspects, the way such practices also function to uphold and reinforce social normativity. I attempt to show how these theories can be expanded by adopting an analytical perspective from critical musicology, represented by Georgina Born, which more readily acknowledges the complex and potentially contradictory or ambiguous processes of social music making.

Understanding music and social transformation

A basic premise for any social analysis of music is that music is not detached from our experience of social reality but concerns our existence as social, historical, and political beings. As ethnomusicologists, popular music scholars, and music sociologists have shown, music is a constitutive element of our social and cultural world, a medium that not merely reflects the society or the beliefs of a given group of music makers, but through which social meaning and relationships are generated and performed. Implied by this perspective is the idea that music making can also be connected to processes of social transformation, a potential that is specifically addressed in the work of Christopher Small and Tia DeNora.

These two scholars contribute with very different perspectives. Whereas DeNora's work belongs to the interactionist tradition of music sociology, Small's much less stringent theorizing draws on the philosophy of Gregory Bateson and anthropological theories of ritual. What unites them, aside from the fact that they both have had a significant impact on the field of music education, is that they have provided fairly elaborated and informative accounts of the social significance of music making. With a shared interest in "the musical event," their theories deal with questions of how music is implicated in the constitution of the social world and how, therefore, it also can be involved in processes of social transformation. In the following, I will discuss these theories with specific attention to how their conceptualizations allow for deeper understanding of the ambiguous consequences of social music making.

Small and music as ideal relationships

In *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998), Christopher Small suggests that instead of thinking of music as sounds, a score, or a musical work, music should primarily be understood as something people do. For

capturing this idea of music, he coins the term *musicking*, which he defines as this: “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (9). Small’s emphasis on process rather than product leads him to state that musical meaning cannot be found in the musical sounds alone but must be located in the musical performance in the broadest sense, an event which Small believes to be of profound social significance.

Small conceives the musical event as a social ritual that allows its participants to experience, affirm, and celebrate what they believe to be ideal relationships “between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world” (13). These relationships are generated by the innumerable sounds, objects, actions, and interactions that constitute the performance and are immensely complex, “too complex to be articulated in words” (13). Musicking, however, “provides us with a language by means of which we can come to understand and articulate those relationships and through them to understand the relationships of our lives” (14). For Small, musicking also holds a transformative potential. Musicking not only expresses actual relationships but also allows for desired relationships to be “brought into virtual existence so that those taking part are enabled to experience them as if they really did exist” (183). In musicking, “participants not only *learn about* those relationships but actually *experience* them in their bodies” (96). Musicking is, in this way, a performance of social meaning that allows, at least temporarily, for exploration and affirmation of what has not yet materialized, but what participants imagine might be a shared future to come.

While Small’s idea of musicking, without doubt, has expanded our understanding of music as the performance of social relationships, his theory nonetheless seems to simplify the connection between music and social life. The most apparent problem in Small’s theory is the advancement of the idea that “[e]ach musical performance articulates the values of a specific social group, large or small, powerful or powerless, rich or poor, at a specific point in its history” (133).² Even though internal differences may result in the division of “subrepertoires,” Small sees “an overriding unity” within culture reflected in the musical practices of a given group. Thus, in a musical performance, a group of people articulates: “This is who we are” (133–4). However, the suggestion that music in some way mirrors an underlying social structure has repeatedly been challenged by music

² See also Hesmondhalgh (2013, 91–92) for a similar critique of Small’s theory.

sociologists as it seems to take for granted that social groups or “cultures” consist of coherent wholes and that specific forms of musical performance are causally linked to particular social positions (or in Small’s case, ideas about ideal relationships).³ When Small interprets the symphony concert as an articulation of Western industrial middle-class values, he neglects that this event can be experienced in different ways, and these experiences can again be put to use for various purposes, which do not all entail the affirmation of a specific set of values. This does not mean that no links exist between musicking and social structures. Small is right in pointing out that musicking is a well-suited instrument for generating and articulating a shared sense of identity. However, as Peter Martin (2006, 64) suggests, rather than seeing social groups as already existing entities, which then use music to articulate their values, “it is more productive to examine the ways in which a sense of participating in a distinct collectivity is *produced* through such collaborative activities and experiences.” This means that if participants take musical actions to be expressive of their social identity, rather than articulating a pre-existing identity connected to a shared set of values, this identity is a performative achievement, constituted in the musical act and maintained and negotiated in musical and other cultural practices.⁴ Whereas Small seems to suggest that musicking provides access for participants to understand the “real” constitution of their social worlds, I will argue that a more primary function of the musical performance is to conceal the arbitrary nature of these experienced social relationships and thereby naturalize and implicitly legitimate the existing social order.⁵

However, while Small regards musical performances as means of expressing and understanding the values of a specific social group, he does not seem to believe that musicking necessarily is an effective means of imposing such values. He maintains a strong sense of individual agency by suggesting that the “who we are” consists of individual “who I am’s,” and that, even if reality is socially constructed, “no individual is bound to accept unquestioningly the way it is constructed” (134). If the ritual does not express the ideal relationships of individual participants, then, Small suggests, “it will arouse no resonances”

3 See Martin (1995, ch. 4) for an elaborated discussion of the links between musical and social structures.

4 This is what Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity has illuminated. As she writes, “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler 1999, 33).

5 Pierre Bourdieu discusses this function of social rites in the essay *Rites of institution* (Bourdieu 1991, 117–26).

(96), which means that just as rituals can be used to secure group coherence and conformity, they can also be used by individuals “to distance themselves from communities to which they do not wish to belong” (96). As Small writes,

The “who I am” is not as determinate as one might at first sight expect; in the context of the performance, who an individual is, is to a large extent who he or she *chooses to be* or imagines him or herself to be. (Small 1998, 134, emphasis added)

In this way, Small’s theory depicts musicking as a positive resource that can effectively be used by actors to reflect upon their social relationships and maintain or construct a desirable sense of self. However, I argue that this view underestimates the challenges connected to the construction of coherent self-identities as such processes are not just personal undertakings but require social validation. Thus, socio-cultural and institutional values, norms, and hierarchies pose certain crucial limitations that potentially place the individual in a state of conflict or ambiguity. Further, envisioning musicking as a site in which attachments can be freely chosen, Small downplays how some performances are more obligatory than others and how the resistance towards or inability to live up to the standards of identification with such practices may have punitive consequences. While Small often points to the contradictory and complex relationships that constitute the social experience, he maintains that in musicking such “contradictions can be *reconciled*, and the integrity of the person affirmed, explored, and celebrated” (221, emphasis added). By depicting musicking as a tool of reconciliation of contradictory social processes, Small, in my view, evades questions of how musicking is entangled in social and institutional formations of power that place constraints on how subjectivities can be constructed in particular social settings.

Small’s theory of musicking must be acknowledged for its important contribution of providing an expanded view of musical meaning as residing not in “texts” but in music-as-practice. Several scholars⁶ have drawn inspiration from Small and applied his thinking creatively for a wide range of purposes important to the field of music education. As a theory of music and social transformation, however, I argue that Small’s ideas of the connection between musicking and social life do not adequately capture the ambiguous and sometimes

6 From the field of music education, these scholars include Cohen (2007), Frierson-Campbell (2016), Frierson-Campbell and Park (2016), Juntunen, Karlsen, Kuoppamäki, Laes and Muhonen (2014), Kallio, Westerlund and Partti (2014), Karlsen (2011), Nikkanen and Westerlund (2017), Odendaal, Kankkunen, Nikkanen and Vakeva (2013) and Stanton (2018).

contradictory nature of such processes. To fully account for these issues, Small's ideas must be developed further.

DeNora and music as a resource for world building

The music sociologist Tia DeNora has provided a theory of musical sociality that in many respects can be seen as a development of Small's perspective and a correction to some of its omissions. Rejecting models that conceive of music as a reflection of social values or structure, DeNora directs attention to the co-production of musical and social processes. As she writes, "Music is active within social life: just as music's meanings may be constructed in relation to things outside it, so, too, things outside music may be constructed in relation to music" (DeNora 2000, 44). From this perspective, connections between a larger social structure and music making cannot be presumed but must be documented at the level of actual practice.

DeNora seeks to position socio-musical analysis on the "right level" of generality, shifting the focus from "*what* music depicts" to "*what it makes possible*" (DeNora 2003, 46). Employing the concept of affordance, DeNora suggests that an understanding of the relation between music and social reality should focus on the effects of musical engagement, how agents interact and do things with music that allow them to act, feel, or be in particular ways. Music itself works as a dynamic medium of social reality that "provides constraining and enabling resources" for the people who "engage with musical materials" (39). In this way, DeNora directs attention to the situational use of musical material in the production of social life. DeNora depicts actors as they engage in musical practices that "regulate, elaborate, and substantiate themselves as social agents" (DeNora 2000, 47) and thereby highlight some modes of being while suppressing others. She is especially attentive to the way music can be used to enhance certain experiences or states of feeling, control the aesthetic environment and inform subjectivity and action. Although DeNora also points to the way music potentially constrains or controls agents (see DeNora 2000, 3; 2003, 118ff), she is primarily concerned with the ways music provides agency, how it becomes a resource for "world building" (DeNora 2000, 44; 2003, 46).

While DeNora's work, without doubt, constitutes a significant contribution for socio-musical analysis, assuming a situational perspective of musical action and highlighting music's function as a positive resource comes with the danger of failing to acknowledge some of the contradictory workings of musical practices.

As David Hesmondhalgh (2008) points to, the perception of music as a cultural resource risks overemphasizing the positive aspects of music as a tool for self-creation. This idea, Hesmondhalgh maintains, implies that music functions as an autonomous resource that “floats free of social forces” and downplays how “music may become implicated in some less pleasant and even disturbing features of modern life” (333). Hesmondhalgh goes on to discuss how tools for emotional self-management, such as music, that from DeNora’s perspective provide users with increased agency, may, in fact, be used “in dubious ways by powerful interests” (333). Therefore, Hesmondhalgh (2013, 40–41) espouses a view of *constrained agency* that takes seriously the difficulties agents face due to social and historical factors and personal biographies to fashion their own life. Hesmondhalgh’s critique can be seen in connection to Georgina Born’s (2012) warning that assuming a situational or micro-social perspective of musical sociality, in which attention is directed solely to how actors engage with and use musical material, risks neglecting “other dimensions of the social in music,” most importantly “how such socialities are entangled in and mediate wider social relations and modalities of power” (265).

DeNora, however, is not unaware of such macro-social processes, but she insists, referring to the work of Bruno Latour, that all structures “need to be examined in terms of mechanisms of operation, in terms of the agents or [...] ‘actor networks’ within which social patterns and institutions are performed and, for varying lengths of time, consolidated” (DeNora 2003, 38). Social structures exist only to the extent that they are reproduced across time and space, and this leaves a gap for cultural action to fill. As DeNora writes, “one does not simply use culture to ‘do’ (i.e., realise, reproduce) pre-existing or assumed structures [...], one may also tinker with what one takes to be ‘given’ structures, so as to achieve certain cultural ends, aspirations, and aims” (125). It is, therefore, possible, DeNora argues, to identify situations in which “*culture takes the lead*” and permit or afford actors “new ways of being and new social arrangements” (126).

I believe DeNora is right when she points to the way musical or other cultural practices may provide actors with “new ways of being,” however, I argue that this position needs further qualification. First, I maintain that for such alternative social arrangements to come into existence and have some stability and validity, they are themselves dependent on an institutional arrangement, economic backing, or charismatic leadership that provides the necessary authority and legitimacy. Thus, new “affordance structures,” with their own possibilities and constraints, will be brought into existence. These formations can, of course, be

considerably better than the ones they replace, but they will most likely contain their own limitations too. Second, considering Hesmondhalgh's critique of the notion of music as a positive resource, there is always a possibility that such alternative arrangements depend or come to depend on existing social and institutional formations, the very same that they are thought to revolt against or replace. If we insist too firmly on the possibility of every individual to fashion his or her life, we will be more likely to perceive immediate signs of change, for example, new possibilities of action or new social forms, as representing a complete transformation of the social without investigating how or whether these are legitimized by, and therefore in some sense reproduce, the deeper structural conditions that prompted the desire for change in the first place.

Georgina Born and the social mediation⁷ of music

For exploring these complex and potentially contradictory processes, I now turn to Georgina Born's exploration of *Music and the Social* (Born 2012). Building upon Will Straw's (1991) scene theory, Born suggests that an adequate theory of music's social mediation must consider the numerous socialities⁸ produced by music and that these can be analyzed in terms of four "distinct and mutually modulating or intersecting planes" (Born 2012, 263).

The first plane is the level of performance or practice, in which musical engagement produces its own immediate social relations. The second concerns the musical creation of imagined communities that, based on musical or other identifications, constitute virtual collectivities that transcend time and place. The third plane points to the musical conveyance of wider social identity formations such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, or locality, while the fourth deals with the institutional structures that enable musical production, reproduction, and transformation, recognizing how musical practices are always part of specific institutional formations that regulate musical engagement.

7 By using the term mediation, Born emphasizes how musical meaning is constituted by human as well as non-human mediators, i.e., the gestures, bodies, habits, objects, places, institutions, etc. through which the music appears (see also Hennion 2012, 2015).

8 In defining the notion of sociality, Born points to Marilyn Strathern for whom the concept refers to the "creating and maintaining of relationships" (Strathern 1988, 13). An important point for Strathern as well as for Born is that sociality can be conceived as singular as well as plural, and that "[s]ocial life consists in a constant movement ... from one type of sociality to another" (Strathern 1988, 14; quoted in Born 2012, 264).

Born maintains that social analysis of music cannot be reduced to one or some of these planes, neither can simple determinations between the planes be assumed. The planes are irreducible to each other, and even though each plane can be said to have a certain autonomy, the planes of social identity and institutional formation cannot be reduced merely to “context” as these levels of sociality “are folded into musical experience; they both permeate and are permeated by music’s intimate socialities and imagined communities” (267). Thus, better than DeNora’s theory, Born’s model allows for a concern with *scale* (Born 2012, 273). Scale is addressed through a differentiation in terms of analytical levels, that is, the relationships created in immediate performance can be seen as occurring at a distinct level of sociality. This makes it possible to explore both distinctive characteristics of socialities belonging to each plane as well as their dynamic interactions and cross-scalar relations, which again brings attention to how transformations of social relations on one plane may have transformative—or reproductive— effects on another. The model does not entail a fixed procedure of analysis, rather, as a general theory of music’s mediation of the social, the model provides a complex map by the help of which a specific form of musical sociality of interest to the analyst can be traced and explored both in terms of its autonomous workings as well as how it affects and is affected by socialities produced on other planes.

While Born primarily develops this framework to substantiate her general argument “that music necessitates an expansion of previous conceptions of the social” (266), I believe this model is of significant value to music educators who seek to explore the potential ambiguous and conflictual effects of social music making. As Born’s framework entails analyses of how subjectivities and socialities are constituted through a dynamic interplay of social relations adhering to different levels of social reality, a certain fragility and instability are inscribed into such processes. Thus, more readily than the dominant conceptions of music and social transformation, Born’s perspective addresses social relations “in all their complexity as constituted also by difference, contradiction, and antagonism” (274), which allow for more nuanced understandings of music’s social effects.

Analyzing social music making

In this section I aim to show how the expanded view of musical sociality presented above can inform a critical social analysis of musical practice. For this purpose, I will be using my own fieldwork experiences from a music program in a Palestinian refugee camp in South Lebanon. The central issue for this analysis is the question of how the participants in the music program negotiate their social (refugee) and cultural (Palestinian) identities through music making. The scope of this article does not allow for a thorough analysis of the complex workings of music in this setting, however, by drawing attention to how musical socialities are constituted across different planes of social reality, this concise account demonstrates how the analytical perspective employed here allows for the more contradictory and ambiguous effects of music making to come into view. Most importantly, the analysis of the Palestinian music program points to the complex intersection of transgressive and normative functions of musicking.

The analysis is based on the intimate knowledge I have of the Palestinian music program due to an eight-month stay in Lebanon in 2012, during which I participated in the program as a music teacher, and through subsequent visits in 2016 and 2018. During these later visits, I engaged primarily in the musical practice as a participant observer (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Spradley 1980), and I also conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015) involving 23 people, including participants and teachers from the music program as well as social workers and young Palestinians from the camp and neighboring camps. Focusing on the experience of two of the participants, designated the pseudonyms “Hanin” and “Ali,” the following account is constructed as a *narrative analysis* (Polkinghorne 1995), in which relevant actions, events, interpretations, and contextual information are related to one another and presented as a coherent narrative that allows for insight into the theme in question.⁹ While I have attempted to convey my informants’ experiences of their musical engagement as accurately as possible, in order to preserve their anonymity, not all other personal details revealed pertain to these particular persons. However, the narrative is construed in a way to deliver a truthful image

9 Polkinghorne (1995) holds that narrative analyses are “emplotted accounts with a beginning, middle, and end” (12) and therefore, usually involve a focus on the temporal and developmental dimension of human experience. Despite the obvious relevance of this perspective for understanding processes of social transformation in the Palestinian music program, the scope of this article and the limited space allocated for presentation of empirical data necessitate a downplaying of temporality, emphasizing instead the simultaneity of competing musical socialities occurring at different levels of social reality.

of the social conditions and life experiences of young Palestinians growing up in refugee camps in Lebanon.¹⁰

Music making in a Palestinian refugee camp

Hanin and Ali are both in their late teens and live with their families in the refugee camp Rashidieh in the southern part of Lebanon, a two square kilometer plot of land just twenty-five kilometers north of the Israeli border. Although they are Palestinian, they are both born in Lebanon as third-generation refugees as the consequence of their grandparents' expulsion from their villages in the northern part of Palestine following the Israeli-Arab war in 1948. These events, which the Palestinians term *al nakba*, the catastrophe, still mark the lives of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Denied basic human rights such as the right to work or own property, the Palestinians are stuck in an extremely vulnerable position, barely tolerated by their Lebanese hosts and neglected by the international community, which has largely forgotten about the ongoing injustice that has befallen the Palestinians in Lebanon.

A number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political institutions are present in the camp, offering various services to the Palestinians. One of these NGOs is *Beit Atfal Assumoud* (BAS), which in cooperation with Norwegian NGOs and music educators from the Norwegian Academy of Music has established a music program for the children of Rashidieh. Every Friday and Sunday, Hanin, Ali and 40 to 80 other children and youngsters aged 6 to 21 participate in various musical activities, instrumental tuition, band rehearsals and dance training at the BAS social center led by five local musicians with financial and pedagogical support from the Norwegian collaborators. This partnership has resulted in a music program with a highly diverse musical repertoire consisting of traditional and new Palestinian music alongside Norwegian folk music and pop songs and a couple of Beatles tunes.

For both Hanin and Ali, the Norwegian-Palestinian partnership has also resulted in an experience they both regard as personally significant. In 2012, they were part of a Palestinian delegation traveling to Norway for a two-week visit to the

10 For a fuller picture, readers are directed to other research studies related to this music program, including Boeskov (2013, 2017); Brøske (2017); Danielsen (2013), Ruud (2012); Storsve and Danielsen (2013), and Storsve, Westbye, and Ruud (2010). For detailed accounts of the experience of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, see Allan (2014), Hammer (2005), Peteet (2005), Sayigh (1979; 1994), and Schulz (2003).

Norwegian partner institutions. This cultural exchange program has, since 2002, resulted in numerous mutual visits by Palestinian participants and Norwegian youngsters, music students and music educators. For the Palestinians, the cultural exchange activities are important, not only because they allow for rare opportunities to leave the refugee camp and Lebanon, but also because they enable the Palestinians to show that they exist, that they have “a culture,” and to have these cultural expressions acknowledged and appreciated by an international audience. The transformative potential in these activities lies in the way experiences of marginalization and exclusion are being challenged and subverted. This process has been investigated in a study of the cultural exchange activities (Boeskov 2013) through an analysis that draws attention to the intersection of the first (immediate performance) and third (social identity) plane in Born’s model.¹¹ By engaging in a shared performance, playing music, and dancing with Norwegian peers, a form of sociality is “performed into being” that alters the experiences of neglect and exclusion in significant ways. As the study shows, the Palestinian participants experience the music activities as concrete enactments of equality, communality, and mutual respect, and they are, in this way, provided with new ways of understanding themselves and their social and cultural identity as someone who is respected and valued, rather than excluded and marginalized. Also, because the music is not bound to a place or time, these experiences can be sustained and reenacted by the participants as they return to the refugee camp where they continue to perform—for themselves and for others—the music they played together with their Norwegian friends.

In the context of the cultural exchange, the Palestinian participants come to act as representatives of the Palestinian people and culture, and, as suggested above, this affords new ways of experiencing social relationships. However, in Ali’s mind, learning music is not solely about representing the Palestinians. Rather, Ali uses his musical abilities to connect to an international youth culture and thereby to meanings that transcend the boundaries of the refugee camp and his identity as a Palestinian. In terms of analytical levels, I am now adding perspectives from Born’s second plane, which concerns the musical creation of imagined communities, that is, how elements in the musical practice allow for the constitution of virtual collectivities that transcend time and place. For Ali, feelings of belonging to an imagined community are invoked through the meanings he attaches to his musical instrument. Ali plays the saxophone, an instrument not traditionally used in Arabic music and, therefore, brought into

¹¹ The analysis, however, did not use Born’s framework or terms.

the music program by the Norwegian music educators. For this reason, Ali links his instrument to what he calls “Western music.” As it is not possible for Ali to play quarter tones on a saxophone, he nearly always faces difficulties when traditional Palestinian or Arabic music is performed. When asked about this, he responds: “A lot of people tell me that, you are an Arab guy, you should just play Eastern music or Arabic music. I tell them, no, I also like the Western culture. I like English music.” Ali explains how he feels divided between an “Eastern” and a “Western” identity, but that he identifies more with the “Western” and enjoys playing “Western” music rather than the Palestinian songs. Playing the saxophone enables Ali to establish affiliations with a virtual community of (“Western”) musicians, and the way his instrument affords some ways of playing (songs using “Western” scales) and *not* other ways (songs using “Eastern” scales) becomes symbolic for Ali’s attempt to compose a more complex subjectivity that challenges narrow definitions of what a young Palestinian can be or should do.

While Ali’s remarks point to how he intentionally uses music to underline his individuality, they also disclose how social and national identities are negotiated in the music program (now moving to issues concerning Born’s third plane, which concerns the musical mediation of wider social identities). While the repertoire of the music program includes different styles of music from a variety of countries, the performance and learning of this music are often connected to being a Palestinian. For example, Hanin tells me how she learned to sing a song in Norwegian with music students from Norway during a cultural exchange event in the camp. While the Norwegians had suggested translating the lyrics into English, Hanin insisted on singing the song in Norwegian and explained why: “I want to show the people that Palestine can do many things, can sing in many languages.” Musical performance is in this way, even when performing “foreign” songs, connected to the positive representation of the Palestinian national identity. For the Palestinians in Lebanon, national identity is connected to the most central political issue, the Palestinian right of return to their homeland. In the exiled community, there is an outspoken expectation that the young generation will continue the fight to gain this right. Intergenerational transmission of ideas about Palestinian identity and culture is, therefore, an important matter, and the music program plays an essential role in teaching the participants their cultural traditions. Hanin explains how she has experienced this:

Every country has its history, has its culture, and it must always try to keep these things in their minds. And with the help of, for example, Beit Atfal Assumoud [the NGO running the music program], my second family, they always

help us to keep these things. Maybe when I was born, I didn't know what is meant by Palestine or Jerusalem or anything else, but when you see people coming from Palestine to here or see people all the time talking about my culture, traditional songs, the dress of Palestinian girls or boys, I start thinking that I should keep this culture in my mind, to tell other people about it. And a person without culture is nothing. If they ask me "where are you from?" I have nothing to say. I am nothing.

Hanin's understanding of culture as something belonging to a specific country that could and should be kept in the mind of its people illustrates how Palestinian identity and culture is reified in the music program. Songs, dresses, and dances become expressions of primordial cultural identity and means by which the participants can attach themselves to this identity and the values it is believed to stand for. The musical practice functions in this way as an important space for maintaining and displaying Palestinian culture, thereby asserting a unique Palestinian identity and securing the transmission of this identity to the coming generation of Palestinian refugees. Thus, while the musical practice in significant ways alters or challenges experiences of marginalization and neglect and provides participants with resources by which they can belong to their community and attach themselves to broader social and cultural configurations, these transgressive movements are intimately linked to a set of normative processes connected to the imposition of a specific and essentialized version of Palestinian identity related to a particular place and particular cultural traditions.

These normative constraints are also tied to institutional aims and legitimization strategies (we are here dealing with issues pertaining to the underlying institutional formations, which is the fourth plane in Born's model). Representing Palestine is extremely important for BAS, the organization running the music program. While political factions strive for power inside the camps, hosting commemorative events and educating the new generation of Palestinians are seen as uniting and respectable endeavors, providing BAS with important social legitimization in the exile community. The BAS social center in Rashidieh often presents shows during Palestinian holidays such as the commemoration of *al nakba*, the commemoration of the massacres in Sabra and Shatila (1982), or Palestinian Land Day.¹² At these occasions, Ali, Hanin, and the other participants in the music program perform songs of longing towards the lost homeland and choreographed dances depicting the stoic Palestinian pre-1948 peasant in

12 The Palestinian Land Day marks the death of six Arab/Palestinian citizens living in the State of Israel who were killed on March 30, 1976 in a confrontation with Israeli security forces when they protested the Israeli government's plans to expropriate Palestinian land for settlement purposes.

front of an enthusiastic audience of family and friends. These performances are valued for the way they express positive feelings toward Palestinian identity and history; however, they are also significant because they convey how the coming generation of Palestinian refugees identifies with this history. By performing “Palestinianness,” the participants are reinscribed in a certain narrative, acknowledging its legitimacy and accepting its traumatic inheritance through which their past as well as their future is interpreted. This show of loyalty is important to the wider community of Palestinians in Lebanon and especially to the political and social institutions that claim to represent them because it conveys an image of a united and steadfast Palestinian population awaiting the just and inevitable return to their homeland. However, while such performances express the resiliency of the Palestinian community and thereby challenge its continuing marginalization, they also posit this marginalization as the dominant category through which the participants are to interpret their existence.

Without a doubt, the music program offers experiences of genuine joy and excitement through music making to its participants as well as opportunities to perform social relations that challenge pervasive feelings of exclusion and deprivation. That said, it is important to recognize how the performance of these relationships is embedded in certain social, institutional, and political structures that, at a deeper level, define the subject positions, identifications, and social relations available to the participants. These positions are not necessarily experienced as traumatizing or even problematic by the participants themselves. However, based on my fieldwork and the accounts from anthropologists working among the Palestinians,¹³ I find it reasonable to suggest that the young Palestinians growing up in refugee camps in Lebanon are struggling not only against marginalizing structures imposed from outside the Palestinian community but also against the victimization that is enacted from within. Ali’s attempt to resist such normative constraints by identifying himself as “Western” rather than “Palestinian” is one example of how the musical imposition of a predefined social and cultural identity is not uncritically embraced by all participants. In other words, while the music program in many ways provides resources that allow for a transgression of some confining aspects of the social experience of its participants, it is at the same time reinstating and reinforcing other parts of the social formation, which places significant constraints on how subjectivities and socialities are constituted and maintained.

13 See especially the work of Diana Allan (2014, 2018) and Lotte Buch Segal (2016a, 2016b).

Tracing how musical socialities are constituted across different social planes—in Born’s (2012) terms as immediate performance relations, imagined communities, wider identity formations, and institutional structures—composes a heterogeneous and complex picture of how potential conflictual relationships interact across these different levels that constitute our social worlds. Rather than a liberating means of positive social transformation, for the participants in the Palestinian music program, musical performance appears to enter an already existing mix of transgressive and normative identifications and practices. While the analysis undertaken here only superficially addresses the dynamics in this particular practice, I believe it nonetheless demonstrates the potential of expanding the dominant analytical models to arrive at more genuine understandings of the ambiguous outcomes of socio-musical practices.

Reconsidering the transformative power of music

The central argument in this article is that while the dominant conceptions of musical sociality have contributed with significant insights into the transformative potential of music, they do not fully account for the potential ambiguous and conflictual consequences of social music making. I argue that adopting a view which attends to how numerous and potentially conflicting musical socialities are constituted at different planes of social reality, here exemplified by Born’s (2012) model of the social mediation of music, will allow for more coherent and genuine understandings of music’s transformative powers, attentive of the complex intersection of transgressive and normative functions of musical practices.

However, that an expanded view of musical sociality does not necessarily amount to a complete rejection of idealistic claims becomes evident in Born’s discussion of how musical performance may contribute to social transformation. Referring to historical and anthropological research, Born locates this potential in the “autonomy of the socialities of musical performance and practice” which allows for the enactment of “alternatives to or inversions of ... wider hierarchical and stratified social relations” (269). Although Born seems cautious not to attribute too much power to such enactments of alternative structures, she entertains the idea that the autonomous workings of immediate performance potentially create a “utopian social space” (269) through which musical performance acts upon—and potentially overturns—the wider

social relations. While I agree that musical performance is an effective means of fashioning social experience differently, I consider Born's employment of the idea of musical utopia as inexpedient because it suggests that if musical performers succeed in their endeavor, the result is likely to be a positive or desirable transformation of social relations.¹⁴

Instead, I argue that the model of dissociation between the musical practice and social reality implied by the idea of the musical utopia risks concealing how underlying ideological forces guide and control the utopian space. Although seemingly enacting alternative experiences, such performances are not necessarily subversive, but potentially implicated in reproducing other aspects of the social formation and, in this way, contribute to the legitimation and naturalization of social normativity (see also Boeskov 2017). As pointed to in the analysis of the Palestinian music program, while musical performance in this context allows for resistance toward unjust social structures, the musical practice simultaneously contributes to the imposition of a specific version of Palestinian identity, thereby also commanding the adoption of certain attitudes, feelings, and convictions connected to Palestinianness and the acceptance of a particular interpretation of the past, present, and future for the Palestinian refugees. Seen from this perspective, the question for a critical social analysis of musical practice is not, as Born (2012, 269) frames it, whether the musical performance is efficacious in overturning the wider social relations or not. Instead, the task becomes to map out the more complex social workings of musical practices, which are likely to involve transgressive functions as well as mechanisms that tacitly reinforce social normativity.

Failing to address how immediate social relations produced in musical performance are connected to wider social and institutional formations entails a risk of exaggerating the transgressive and transformative functions of musical performance and overlooking the normative or constraining aspects. The result is not only inadequate analyses of music as a means of social transformation. More disturbingly, such analyses also contribute to concealing and naturalizing the power relations upholding the status quo. Disregarding how musicking involves constraining as well as transgressive features may thereby reinforce rather than transform the marginalizing structures that music making supposedly can contest. While musical practices obviously must be analyzed in terms of their specific embeddedness in social and institutional structures,

14 This is further substantiated by considering the definition of "utopia" in the Oxford Dictionaries: "An imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect."

I will argue, following Born, that a common imperative for analysts seeking to understand the transformative power of music is to attend to these relations “in all their complexity as constituted also by difference, contradiction, and antagonism” (Born 2012, 274). I believe this stance will guide the field of music education toward a genuine understanding of the fragile, unstable, and ambiguous power of music.

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Paper 3

Kim Boeskov

Birds from Palestine:

Performing national belonging
in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon

Music & Arts in Action

(accepted)

Birds from Palestine

Performing national belonging in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon

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Abstract

This paper explores the social effects of a community music program in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, with particular focus on how participatory music making is implicated in the constitution of cultural identities, national consciousness, and agency. Using ethnographic methods of participant observation and semistructured interviews, I show how the music program provides young Palestinians with templates for national belonging that become powerful means of social inclusion and experiences of self-worth, pride, and empowerment. However, I also consider whether these effects can be said to rely on the participants' subjection to socially and institutionally valid notions of Palestinian identity and forms of belonging. I argue that musical participation is implicated in asserting an essentialist notion of Palestinian identity that potentially reduces the complexity of the lived experiences of the young Palestinians and excludes other possible modes of belonging and self-understanding. In this way, the analysis draws attention to the ambiguous role of musical learning and performance in musical-social work.

Keywords

Community music; music education; belonging; cultural identity; Palestinian refugees

Introduction

May 2016: The Palestinian/Lebanese NGO *Beit Atfal Assumoud*¹ (BAS) is hosting a concert in the grand hall of the UNESCO Palace in Beirut, commemorating the 68th anniversary of *al Nakba*, the catastrophe, which is the term the Palestinians use to designate the events in 1948 that led to the foundation of the State of Israel and the expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians from their ancestral homelands. Employees, volunteers, parents, and children associated with the organization fill the hall. Approximately a thousand Palestinians from all over the country have come to witness tonight's performance of music and dance by children and youth from the organization's centers in the twelve refugee camps in Lebanon. One of the more spectacular acts is an orchestra comprising more than 60 musicians, aged 6–21, from a community music program run by BAS in the Rashidieh refugee camp. Since 2012, I have been involved in the music program as a teacher and researcher, and tonight I sit among the audience as nervous as the performers, hoping that the hard work the musicians have put into preparing for this concert will pay off. And indeed it does. After a well-received rendition of the Beatles classic "Let It Be," the energy levels are significantly lifted when the two lead singers initiate the song "Ana Falestinie" ("I am a Palestinian"). From my position right in front of the stage, I feel the explosion of commitment from the audience behind me; everybody is clapping, ululating, and waving Palestinian flags to show their excitement. At the same time, I am close enough to the performers to notice how the intense rocking of bodies, focused minds, and occasional smiles exchanged between the musicians reveal that they too are enjoying themselves.

The scene narrated above is one example of how the Palestinians in Lebanon use music and dance to express and construct their identity, articulate and maintain a sense of belonging to their homeland, and assert the continued existence and unity of the Palestinian community.² As for other diasporic communities, musical performance serves as an important means of shaping and articulating a distinct cultural identity and establishing a collective memory of the past (for a review of this research, see Lidskog, 2017). In the social life of the Palestinian

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- 1 *Beit Atfal Assumoud* (The Home of the Children of Steadfastness) is the Arabic name of the organization. The English name is *The National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training*.
 - 2 Several ethnomusicologists have explored Palestinian music and dance as performance of identity, resistance, and belonging (see Belkind, 2014; Kanaaneh, Thorsén, Bursheh, and McDonald, 2013; Kaschl, 2003; McDonald, 2013; and Van Aken, 2006).

community, remembrance is specifically tied to commemorative events, such as the *Nakba* concert described in the opening paragraph. These events are places for articulating a sense of national belonging in stories and symbols, and through the performance of the Palestinian cultural heritage, music and dance. Such occasions function as markers of both the historical events of suffering and the continuous dispossession of the Palestinian people, but also as a show of agency and resistance against the ongoing marginalization (Khalili, 2007). By honoring the past and performing the nation into being, the refugees publicly express the pride, strength, and determination with which they will defend their right to return to Palestine and fight for a life of dignity. This points to another function of commemorative practices and musical performance: Performing the cultural heritage and reiterating the stories and memories of the Palestinian past are educative means of securing a transmission of the national identity to the younger generations of Palestinian refugees with no first-hand knowledge of the land of Palestine. As Juliane Hammer (2005) writes: “For those Palestinians who were born and raised in exile, these memories are their connection to Palestine—their source of knowledge, attachment, and national identity” (p. 43). Learning and performing the cultural heritage are central means by which the coming generation of refugees comes to know themselves as Palestinians.

The view of identity expressed here displaces essentialist notions, in favor of thinking of identity as performatively constituted. The national cultures into which people are born must be seen as discourses that “construct identities by producing meanings about ‘the nation’ with which we can *identify*; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it” (Hall, 1996, p. 613). From this perspective, cultural identities are produced and performed across time and space as people invest in particular meanings provided by the discursive practices in which they engage. Music can be such a process of identification through which people attach themselves to imagined cultural narratives that influence and guide their perceptions of themselves and their social world (Frith, 1996). On a collective level, music is a constitutive part of social life and a vital means by which people locate and relocate themselves in social space, evoke and organize collective memories, and construct, negotiate, and transform social boundaries (Stokes, 1994).

In this article, I explore the connections between musical learning and performance and the maintenance, negotiation, and transmission of Palestinian identity. Previous research has connected the music program in Rashidieh to

positive effects such as experiences of well-being, belonging, and empowerment that subvert or challenge prevailing experiences of marginalization and deprivation (Boeskov, 2013; Ruud, 2012; Storsve, Westbye and Ruud, 2010). I argue in this article that the social effects cannot be reduced to these. What must be considered is the way the musical practice constitutes the conditions for agency and experience; not only how participants, through their engagement in the practice, express and gain ownership of their cultural identities, but also how they are fashioned as Palestinians and subjected to a specific socially and institutionally sanctioned version of national belonging and identity. In other words, the music program not merely provides participants with opportunities for experiencing a sense of belonging or recognition; it also constructs the conditions under which such experiences can be pursued.

Analyzing the experiences of young Palestinian refugees, I show how the music program provides specific templates for national belonging that become powerful means of social inclusion and experiences of self-worth, pride, and empowerment. However, at the same time, I argue that the musical practice contributes to essentializing Palestinian identity, entailing the advancement of an “official” narrative of national belonging among the Palestinian refugees, which may not fully capture the lived experiences of the young generations growing up in the camps. Further, the musical constitution of a national identity founded on a distant past may exclude other interpretive frames, other lines of belonging and solidarity, through which young Palestinians can come to understand themselves and their social world. In the final section I discuss what these insights might entail for understanding music as a means of social intervention.

Methods

The present research builds on ethnographic field work (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) in the Rashidieh refugee camp, undertaken through an eight-month stay in 2012, during which I worked as a music teacher in the program, and subsequent visits in 2016 (30 days) and 2018 (11 days). During these later visits, I primarily engaged in the activities as a participant observer (Spradley, 1980), and I conducted semistructured interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) with sixteen music program participants, three music teachers, two administrators from BAS, and also a few young Palestinians from the camp and neighboring

camps not associated with the music program or BAS.³ I selected the interviewees myself in order to secure diversity in terms of age, gender, and experience in the program. All participants in the study received oral and written information about the research project, the use of video recordings (see below), the confidential handling of personal information, and the ability to withdraw consent. For the interlocutors under the age of sixteen, parents also gave their consent. All names used in this paper are pseudonyms, and revealing personal information has been omitted or changed in order to preserve anonymity. The research process was reviewed and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

The purpose of interviewing the music program participants was to explore the social significance of the activities, in terms of what musical participation is said to *mean* for the actors involved, but also how music becomes a resource that both the organization and the participants themselves can put to *use* for different purposes. The teachers and the administrators were interviewed in order to understand the wider social significance of the music program, its social and cultural context, and the institutional objectives underlying the activities. These accounts were further put into perspective through interviews and informal conversations with Palestinians living in the camps but not affiliated with the music program or with BAS. The music program participants were asked about their experiences with the music activities, how they connected music making to their everyday lives, and what significance they attributed to specific actions, events, and relationships within the program. During interviews, they viewed short video clips I had made of activities and events in the music program, and they were asked to explain what was going on. The videos provided concrete situations and actions to discuss, particularly helpful when interviewing the youngest interlocutors (ages 10–16), who often had difficulties explaining their viewpoints in general terms. While the interviews with the oldest participants, teachers, and social workers were conducted in English, a language assistant helped in interviews with the youngest participants.

As in any other ethnographic study, the present research involves a range of ethical considerations, particularly due to the involvement of children who can be said to be in a vulnerable situation. By interviewing the youngest informants in pairs and in a location they knew and in which they felt comfortable (the BAS center), I sought to create safe situations in which the participants felt able to speak their mind and confident that their opinion and viewpoints mattered and

3 All quotes from interlocutors in the following text derive from these interviews.

were taken seriously. However, as a white male from the Global North affiliated with some of the organizations that support BAS financially, I was particularly aware of the power relations in the interview situation (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, pp. 37–38) and how my position might place the interviewees in difficult situations or influence the interview data, both in terms of how participants might provide accounts that they thought I would like to hear, or how they may have felt obliged to act as representatives of the BAS organization or the Palestinian community in general.

The interviews, however, should not be seen as clear windows into some pre-existing subjectivity. Rather, the interview is a social practice in which meaning is constructed as a result of the situational interaction between the participants. As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) suggest, I read the interviews “for what they tell us about the phenomena to which they refer,” i.e., what participants tell me about their experiences in the music program and the way they use music to negotiate or construct a sense of national identity, but also in terms of “the perspectives they imply” and “the discursive strategies they employ” (p. 97). Therefore, when analyzing the interviews, I specifically looked at *how* the informants (i.e., administrators, teachers, and music program participants) connected music making to issues of national belonging, identity, and culture, the nature of the interpretive constructs the informants applied, and how these were employed.

The Palestinians in Lebanon

In May 1948, approximately 100,000 Palestinians fled to Lebanon during the Arab-Israeli war that erupted as a consequence of the establishment of the State of Israel within the borders of the British Mandate of Palestine. In the following years, the majority of these refugees settled in camps established by the newly formed United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that, to this day, continues to provide shelter, education, health care, and employment to the Palestinian refugees in the Middle-East region. An estimated 260,000–280,000 Palestinians currently reside in Lebanon (Chaaban et al., 2016, p. 23). In spite of their 70-year residence, Lebanese law still considers the Palestinians foreigners, which places them as a politically and socially disenfranchised community, facing legal and institutional discrimination and lacking basic rights, most importantly the right to own property and to work

in a number of the liberal professions. The Lebanese authorities partly justify this discriminatory policy by referencing UN Resolution 194, which states that “[Palestinian] refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date” (United Nations, 1948).⁴ According to both Lebanese and Palestinian agitators, naturalization would weaken the Palestinians’ claims to their national rights in Israel/Palestine. However, Palestinian politics have also compromised these rights. The 1993 Oslo peace process resulted in the Declaration of Principles between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was seen to largely renounce the Palestinian refugees’ right of return in exchange for the establishment of a Palestinian government in the West Bank and Gaza. The refugees in Lebanon felt effectively abandoned and neglected in the political discussions so central to their future (Schulz, 2003, pp. 146–148). Thus, the Palestinians in Lebanon find themselves in a truly marginal position: expelled and persecuted by the State of Israel, discriminated against and barely tolerated by their Lebanese hosts, betrayed by their own political representatives, and largely forgotten by the international community.⁵

The music program

In the Palestinian refugee camps, the NGOs have emerged as the central organizations attending to the needs of the community, providing a wide range of social and cultural services. Through their connections to and funding from the international donor and NGO communities, they have come to occupy important functions both in sustaining everyday life in the camps and as representatives of the Palestinians in Lebanon in international forums. One of these NGOs is Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS), an organization with social centers in all twelve refugee camps in Lebanon, which focuses on supporting the Palestinian community through educational and cultural activities, remedial training, mental-health services, and sponsorship programs. Since 2003, BAS has also run a community music program in the Rashidieh camp in the southern part of Lebanon. Through the voluntary commitment of Norwegian music educators, the program has gradually been built up over the years and now serves 40–80

4 This resolution is reaffirmed by the UN General Assembly every three years (Peteet, 2005, p. 62).

5 For a more detailed picture of the experience of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, see Allan (2014); Hammer (2005); Peteet (2005); and Sayigh (1979, 1994).

children and adolescents, who receive music and dance training two days a week from five local music teachers. The musical activities consist of instrument tuition, orchestra playing, and dance training. With the help of the Norwegian partners, the BAS social center in Rashidieh has been equipped with a PA system, keyboards, xylophones, saxophones, violins, drum sets, Arabic hand drums (*darbeka*), percussion instruments, accordions, melodicas, bouzouks, acoustic and electric guitars, and electric basses, which allow the children to play together in a big and quite unique orchestra.

The repertoire consists of a broad variety of music, both Palestinian/Arabic folk and popular songs, and Norwegian and “international” songs that the Norwegian music educators have introduced over the years. The music is arranged according to the principles of the “multi-use arrangement” (Storsve, Westbye, and Ruud, 2010), a highly flexible model of arrangement that allows the newcomer who only knows how to play a few notes to participate in the music making, alongside more experienced members of the orchestra. By adapting the music to the skill level of each individual musician or group of musicians, this type of musical arrangement includes performers at various skill levels and, at the same time, provides challenges for all musicians. In the dance training, participants learn the folk dance *dabke*, a communal line-dance common throughout the Middle East, which is an important part of every wedding, engagement party, or other happy occasion in the Palestinian community. The younger participants learn the basic steps to this dance known by all generations of Palestinians, while a more committed group of older participants is taught a presentational form of *dabke*. Due to the Norwegian partnership, the music program has also been part of cultural-exchange activities between the Palestinian children and youth and Norwegian children, high-school students and music educators. Norwegian groups have visited the refugee camp and groups of Palestinians have visited Norway on several occasions, where they have performed music and dance for and together with Norwegians.

The music program as national education

For BAS, music activities have become an important part of the social and cultural work of the institution. A main objective for the organization is to “[p]rovide the youth with a platform for self-expression and opportunities to open dialogues with youth from other countries” (Beit Atfal Assumoud, n.d.),

an ambition the music program has effectively contributed to fulfilling by providing opportunities to perform music and dance for and with Palestinian and Lebanese as well as international audiences. The program also serves another central objective of the institution, which is to “[p]reserve the Palestinian identity by preserving its cultural heritage and transmitting it to the new generations” (Beit Atfal Assumoud, n.d.). The cultural heritage constitutes an important means of attachment to the lost homeland for the Palestinians in Lebanon, and traditional music and dance, as well as traditional dress, food, and cultural practices connected to pre-1948 Palestinian life, are highly valued, meticulously preserved, and transmitted to new generations of refugees growing up in the camps. The dispossession of the Palestinian people inscribes such practices with a sense of urgency. As Julie Peteet (2005, pp. 34–46) shows, ideological work by the Zionist movement and the State of Israel has crafted a predominantly Jewish past in the historical land of Palestine, marginalizing and erasing the presence of an indigenous non-Jewish population that could hold any form of entitlement to the land.⁶ Therefore, for the Palestinian refugees, preserving the Palestinian identity is a matter of upholding existence as a people with a legitimate claim to the land of Palestine. Transmission of knowledge concerning origin and history and performing Palestinian music and dance are not only means of preserving the national identity, but also a form of resistance. As a BAS senior official explained to me:

We continue struggling and keeping our identity, [and this] begins from the kindergarten in Beit Atfal Assumoud. Each child should know the name of his origin. His town, his village, where he is from, okay? Just to know. Even from the age of three, he should know that the flag of Palestine is like this, the colors are like this. This is how we raise our children to remain Palestinians.

In this way, Palestinian identity is connected to a territorial origin, and in order to establish a coherent self-identity, the children who grow up in exile must know where they belong. The institutional focus on preservation—which is also articulated in the formulations “keeping our identity” and “to remain Palestinians”—points to an essentialist notion of Palestinian identity. My interlocutors in the music program often depict the Palestinian identity as an inner core existing within all Palestinians in the world. Therefore, performing the Palestinian cultural heritage is seen as a way of reconciling the fractured self,

6 The much-cited statement by Israeli prime minister Golda Meir that before the sixties “[t]here was no such thing as Palestinians ... They did not exist,” which appeared in *The Sunday Times*, June 15, 1969, p. 12 (quoted in Khalidi, 1997, pp. 147, 181) is often taken as the essence of the attempt to deny the existence of a Palestinian people.

caused by the diasporic condition, by providing access to a primordial and immutable national identity. As one of the music teachers stated:

I think the [Palestinian] musical tradition is very important for all kids. Because the traditional music means Palestinian identity. And we teach our kids how to be a real Palestinian. [...] So they like to play traditional [music] because they feel: 'this is mine'. This is my identity. This is what I want to show the people, my identity. My beautiful musical tradition.

The political situation of the Palestinian community renders the employment of such a “strategic essentialism” understandable. As Craig Calhoun (1994) argues, “[W]here a particular category of identity has been repressed, delegitimated or devalued in dominant discourses, a vital response may be to claim value for all those labeled by that category, thus implicitly invoking it in an essentialist way” (p. 17). For BAS and other institutions representing the Palestinian community in Lebanon, essentialization of Palestinian identity is considered crucial for advancing the claims of national rights on behalf of not only the refugees who actually experienced the *Nakba*, but also the subsequent generations who have inherited the consequent dispossession. However, such essentialist notions of identity conceal the constructed or invented nature of tradition, culture, identity, and “the nation” (Anderson, 2006; Hall and Du Gay, 1996; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Wagner, 2016; Williams, 1977). The Palestinian national identity is not so much preserved through the performance of the cultural heritage; rather, such performances are ways of constituting and reifying this identity. While the staging of Palestinian music and dance may be seen as articulations of a pre-existing national identity and, therefore, also as acts of resistance to marginalization, on another level, such performances mark the participants as Palestinians and “in the act of marking, the performance regulates, constrains and otherwise mediates fundamental aspects of what it means to be Palestinian and what it means to ‘resist’” (McDonald, 2013, p. 24).

Strategic essentialism may be a potent (even indispensable) means of asserting and legitimizing political claims on behalf of a dispossessed group. However, the risk of essentialism is a reduction of complex subjectivities to a few core attributes deemed appropriate to substantiate the political aspirations of a given group. For BAS, cultural activities, such as music and dance, are used as a means of asserting an unceasing attachment to the land of Palestine, transmitting a sense of national belonging and pride to the children growing up in the refugee camps, and displaying an image of a unified community that patiently awaits the inevitable restoration of social justice, their future return to Palestine. This institutional strategy entails the emphasis on particular events, stories, images,

and symbols—a “system of representation”—within which the participants in the music program are afforded specific resources for national identification. In the following sections, I will explore how the young Palestinians invest in, negotiate, or resist the imposition of this dominant national narrative as an adequate interpretive frame for constructing their sense of national belonging and identity.

Remembering Palestine, performing the nation

Hanin has been a dedicated member of the music program for eight years and a part of numerous performances, concerts, and cultural-exchange activities, both in the camp and in Norway. However, as a first-year university student, she is now finding it difficult to come on both Fridays and Sundays for the music activities. Nonetheless, she still feels very connected to the music program and the other participants. We are “like one family,” she tells me, “he is my brother, she is my sister. We are always kidding and laughing and have very nice moments with each other.” When I ask Hanin what music means to her, she tells me:

I feel proud when I get to the stage and start singing and the people start asking about this girl, how did they teach her this old song and traditional song. So I just... keep our culture, I help people to keep our culture in their minds.

The importance of “keeping our culture” and “remembering Palestine” is not just expressed by teachers and administrators of the program; it is also a common theme in interviews I held with the participants. Even some of my youngest interviewees, such as Nour and Farah, two twelve-year-olds in the music program, part of the *dabke* team taught the presentational form of *dabke*, talk about remembering. When I ask them why they like dancing *dabke*, they first point to dancing as a way of exercising and strengthening the body. Eventually, they also address its symbolic significance for the exilic community:

Nour: It [*dabke*] is ‘folk’ [cultural heritage] for the Palestinians.

Farah: It reminds us of Palestine.

Interviewer: Why is this important to you?

Farah: Why? Because to remember Palestine.

Nour: Because we are Palestinians, and it [*dabke*] reminds us of our customs and traditions.

Farah: It shows an image, that we don’t forget Palestine, and we do all these things for it [Palestine]. That we will not forget it.

For Farah and Nour, remembering Palestine is important for asserting an attachment to its culture and traditions. However, when Farah articulates how the performance of *dabke* expresses that the participants have not forgotten Palestine, she is also touching upon a moral imperative in the Palestinian community, connected to remembering, or, more accurately, not forgetting.

The importance of preserving the memory of the homeland is a pervasive theme in Palestinian scholarship and literature. The dispossession and prolonged exile pose an existential threat, which means that “[t]he continued existence of Palestine and its people . . . now depends on a consciously remembered history and cultural tradition” (Allan, 2014, p. 42). Forgetting would be tantamount to an erasure of the Palestinian people, rendering years of sacrifices and suffering meaningless. By participating in the music program, the young generation of Palestinians is taught the importance of remembering, which was most clearly articulated by Hanin:

Every country has its history, has its culture, and it must always try to keep these things in their minds. And with the help of, for example, Beit Atfal Assumoud, my second family, they always help us to keep these things. Maybe when I was born, I didn’t know what is meant by Palestine or Jerusalem or anything else, but when you see people coming from Palestine to here, or see people all the time talking about my culture, traditional songs, the dress of Palestinian girls or boys, I start thinking that I should keep this culture in my mind, to tell other people about it. And a person without culture is nothing. If they ask me “where are you from?” I have nothing to say. I am nothing.

Hanin’s understanding of her cultural identity as related to remembrance of the past, dependent on the continued enactment of a cultural heritage and directly connected to a territorial origin, is congruent with how the participants, teachers, and administrators of the program generally portray their self-understandings. “A person without culture is nothing,” Hanin insists, implying that Palestinian culture is not just an aspect of her subjectivity, but that which enables that subjectivity to exist at all.

For Hanin, remembering has become personally significant but, as stated above, commemorative practices also hold broader social importance. Attending performances of the Palestinian cultural heritage enables not only the performers, but also the audience, to renew their connection to the homeland. This is especially significant for the first generation of Palestinian refugees, a group of people treated respectfully in the community as important sources of knowledge about Palestine and living testimonies to the continued attachment to the land. Hanin proudly recalls how after a concert, she was approached by an

old man, a first-generation refugee, who complimented her for her singing and told her: "You are a bird from Palestine." This depiction underlines the symbolic significance of Hanin's musical performance. By singing the songs from the lost homeland, Hanin not only reminds the refugees of their ancestral homeland but also momentarily embodies the Palestinian national spirit. Notably, Hanin proudly accepts the role as a medium for Palestinian memories and identity and her inscription in the national narrative that emphasizes the refugees' unceasing attachment to Palestine. The performance of music is a public display of loyalty toward a collective Palestinian identity shared across generations and a powerful symbol of the intergenerational unity of the Palestinian people.

Explaining what the audience feels when they witness the performance, twelve-year-old Farah invokes a kind of nationalist rhetoric often used by speakers at commemorative events. Using a common Arabic metaphor of how the separate fingers work together as a hand to form a strong unit (see e.g. Peteet, 2005, p. 162), she depicts the Rashidieh band as a united force fighting for justice:

They [the audience] feel happy because they know that we are one hand. [...] We encourage the people to trust us and rely on us; that in our hand [our unity, the unity of the band], [because of] our patience, our courage, we will return back Palestine [free Palestine].

Music and dance can be seen as important resources by which the Palestinian refugees construct and transmit the memory of Palestine from one generation to the next and express feelings of belonging to the homeland. However, performing music and dance also functions as the means by which those in the young generation actively subject themselves to the national cause. Palestinian nationalism provides the discursive formation through which the performance of music and dance is interpreted. This is most clearly articulated by the way Farah not only identifies with the Palestinian cause but also makes use of the language of the Palestinian nationalist discourse to describe the social significance of her own musical performance.

Does Palestine remember us?

As discussed above, remembering Palestine must be seen as a moral imperative for the Palestinians growing up in Lebanon, and, as could be expected, the participants generally expressed loyalty toward the national narrative during the interviews. However, as I exemplify below, a few young Palestinians displayed

various forms of resistance or ambiguity toward this narrative as a meaningful interpretive frame for their musical engagement. Hassan and Khalil are both fifteen years old, and despite the fact that they have been part of the music program for only two years, they have become central members of the orchestra, as well as the *dabke* team. I meet Hassan and Khalil for an interview at the BAS center to ask them about their experiences in the music program. Ten minutes into the interview, I show them a video clip of their *dabke* performance from the *Nakba* concert and ask them what they think about it:

Khalil (in English): Remember Palestine.

Interviewer: Okay.

Hassan: The days of Palestine [expression, referring to pre-1948 Palestine].

Interviewer: The days of Palestine? *Dabke* is important because it is a way of remembering Palestine?

Hassan: Yes.

Interviewer: And what else, what about dancing, do you like dancing?

Hassan (in English): It's amazing.

Interviewer: What is good about it?

Hassan: It strengthens our muscles and skills.

Interviewer: So dancing *dabke* is for your body, and for developing your skills. And also for being Palestinian?

Hassan: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, how is... how does dancing help you remember Palestine?

Hassan: Our heritage. There was *dabke* in the past days, we are still related to our culture and we are still performing *dabke*.

Interviewer: So, it is because it is the old traditions that you still...

Hassan: Yes.

Interviewer: Is it important for you to remember Palestine? Can you tell me why?

Hassan: (Laughing) We don't want to remember Palestine.

While both Khalil and Hassan from the beginning reiterate the "official" narrative and the importance of remembering, Hassan suddenly decides to change the perspective, which makes both the language assistant and Khalil laugh. This clearly encourages Hassan, who continues with a smirk:

Hassan: Does Palestine remember us? Palestine has gone. (Laughing again)

Interviewer: So, why do you dance *dabke*?

Hassan: For fun and entertainment.

Hassan's sudden dismissal of the obligatory nationalist reasons for dancing *dabke* is interesting. However, his joking attitude makes it hard for me to discern the meaning of this turn in the conversation. I try to keep the conversation on track and to bring the more reserved Khalil into the discussion as well.

Interviewer: Do you feel the same, Khalil?

Khalil (in English): Remember our history.

Hassan interrupts, again with a smirk on his face: "History, what are you talking about?" which makes Khalil shut up. While Khalil underlines the importance of remembering, thereby reproducing the national narrative, Hassan seems determined to undermine it. Yet, his use of irony safeguards him from direct attempts to pursue these questions in a serious manner. Eager to get my interlocutors to talk about these sensitive issues, I pose a quite direct question:

Interviewer: Do you really feel that it is important for you to remember Palestine or is it more important just to dance and be with friends?

Khalil: We, the boys, fight through *dabke* and history.

Interviewer: What do you mean by this?

Khalil: Teacher A told us this once. They [Israel] are imitating us, our flags, our history.

Khalil refers to the common idea in the Palestinian community that Israel is stealing the primordial Palestinian culture and branding it as Israeli in order to assert ownership over the land of Palestine. While I have heard this theme retold many times in the music program, the language assistant shows signs of confusion, and, in order to clarify, Hassan continues:

Hassan: Israel is imitating our culture, and we want to support our heritage so that Israel will not take it from us.

Interviewer: So you feel it is kind of a fight against Israel to dance *dabke*?

Hassan: Yes.

Interviewer: And you want to participate in this fight, you want to share this fight?

Hassan: Yes.

Interviewer: For the people living here in Rashidieh, or for the Palestinians everywhere?

Hassan (in English): All the children of Palestine.

The conversation comes to a halt. My direct question about the importance of remembering Palestine did not lead to any discussion of the relevance of remembering or ambivalent attitudes toward the national narrative. As the question largely dismantled Hassan's ability to hide behind an ironic attitude, he

rejoins Khalil in a reiteration of common and legitimate viewpoints concerning Palestinian nationalism. Hoping to delve more into issues of national belonging, I show Hassan and Khalil a video clip of a performance of a Palestinian song at the commemoration of the Palestinian Land Day, which was held at the BAS center a couple of weeks prior to the interview. After seeing the video, Hassan makes Khalil laugh again, this time by imitating the clichés of official speeches used in commemorative events:

Hassan: Our land is Palestine, we will not let it go whatever happens!

While the language assistant translates to me, trying not to laugh at Hassan's imitations, he continues his improvised speech:

Hassan: Since 1948, Israel made us leave Palestine, and we want to fight for Palestine through music and *dabke* to bring its freedom.

Hassan retains his joking attitude and is clearly doing something that he is not supposed to do in an interview with a foreign researcher about the importance of Palestinian commemoration and political claims. He is obviously enjoying himself and the way he has turned the interview into an awkward situation for me and the language assistant. At this point, it is difficult for me to determine whether Hassan's behavior is meant to disrupt the interview or is actually a display of opposition toward Palestinian nationalism. Seeing no way to constructively address this, I merely try to keep the conversation on track:

Interviewer: So, do you like being on the stage and performing like this?

Hassan: Yes, sure.

Interviewer: What kind of feelings do you get?

Hassan (laughing, as he again imitates official speech mode): Having the soul to resist, Palestine my blood, my heart, my soul. I would sacrifice everything for you. Oh, Palestine ...

The last part of Hassan's speech is turned into a song, until both Hassan and Khalil burst into laughter. The language assistant, who can't stop laughing herself, turns to me and says: "Sorry, Kim."

While my language assistant may have felt that this was a failed interview, I strongly disagree. Rather, I consider it an articulation of ambivalence connected to the subjection to the dominant narrative emphasizing the unceasing attachment to Palestine. Such expressions of ambivalence are also discussed by Diana Allan when, in her study of commemorative practices in the Palestinian camps, she argues that "[y]ounger generations born and raised in the diaspora are finding it difficult to absorb originary narratives as part of their own identity

or as a frame for national belonging” (Allan, 2014, pp. 60–61). However, I don’t believe Hassan’s ironic attitude toward the nationalist discourse should necessarily be understood as a complete rejection of the relevance or legitimacy of the official national narrative. Instead, what Hassan’s healthy sense of teenage disobedience illuminates is that there is not a neat fit between this narrative and the lived experience of the third- and fourth-generation Palestinians growing up in the camps in Lebanon. I take this interview to reveal how the young generation intuitively knows that the national narrative is a construction that institutions and Palestinian representatives strategically employ in specific situations for the attainment of particular goals, and not a one-to-one representation of how Hassan and his peers understand themselves and their social worlds. While the music program can serve as a means of asserting a national identity and culture, the way Hassan detaches himself from this narrative by evoking it in an ironic fashion suggests to me that it might also have an estranging effect for the participants who, for some reason, do not identify in full with the specifics of these constructions.

Belonging, on whose terms?

My interpretation of the interview above, as an expression of ambivalence toward the nationalist discourse, is substantiated not only by reference to Allan’s (2014) work,⁷ but also through my own experiences in Lebanon, where I have found that the institutional emphasis on remembering and national belonging is not embraced by all young Palestinians. One example is Najad, a university student living in a Palestinian camp close to Rashidieh. She and I met at a conference in Beirut and decided to meet for an interview so I could gain more perspectives on her life as a young Palestinian growing up in Lebanon. Najad is not involved in the music program, nor with any other NGOs or political factions, which she criticizes for not listening to the experiences and wishes of the young generation of Palestinians. “There is a very big difference in generations, because they can’t understand such things,” she told me, referring to how representatives of the Palestinian NGOs consequently relate Palestinian identity to remembrance of the past. “Old generations are old. And they don’t think forward. They don’t think that the community is changing and developing.” Najad states that she feels connected to Palestine: “I love Palestine,” she

7 See also Allan (2018).

says, but she fiercely opposes the tendency of victimization and the emphasis on national(ist) education found in the Palestinian NGOs. “They [the NGOs] should teach them that, okay, Palestine is our nation, but we are not victims. We will study to maybe someday take back our land. Children should love Palestine because they love it, not because they [the NGOs] say you should love it.” Adopting a more pragmatic stance, Najad insists that her own generation should not let their future be decided by their grandparents’ attachment to the past, and should be free to establish a sense of belonging—to Palestine and to Lebanon—on their own terms. While I do not wish to cast Najad as the “authentic” representative of the young generation of Palestinians in Lebanon, I believe her experience should at least lead us to question whether the music program, despite its open-access policy and inclusive pedagogical practice, nonetheless risks excluding young people who, for some reason, do not wish to subject themselves to the dominant institutional form of national belonging.

Conclusion: The ambiguous role of musical learning and performance

In a discussion of the music program in Rashidieh as health promotion,⁸ the music scholar Even Ruud (2012) argues that the music activities provide participants with heightened vitality and pleasure, as well as a sense of agency, belonging, and hope for the future. These findings are substantiated in the interviews I have conducted in Rashidieh. For Hanin, Nour, Farah, and most of the other participants I interviewed, musical learning and performance are tied to a range of positive opportunities, including the ability to establish a connection to a socially significant narrative of national belonging and identity. By enabling the participants to invest in these subject positions, the music program contributes to feelings of empowerment, belonging, and social inclusion, which, as Ruud suggests, can be seen as essential to creating and maintaining a positive self-understanding and a sense of well-being.

What the present study urges us to consider, however, is whether these effects rely on the participants’ subjection to a specific socially and institutionally valid notion of national belonging and identity. For the young Palestinians,

8 Ruud (2012, p. 93) employs a *salutogenetic* perspective on health. More than merely the absence of somatic illness, health is perceived as a subjectively experienced phenomenon concerning the experience of meaning and continuity in life.

the price of empowerment and belonging seems to be the acceptance of a particular national narrative that subjects them to specific feelings of national sentiment and modes of belonging. While becoming a member of the program may entail valuable experiences of belonging and agency, it must be questioned to what degree these experiences depend on the participants' identification with a national construct that excludes or downplays alternative categories, dimensions, or perspectives, by means of which participants can constitute themselves as social agents.

It should be noted that although "the national" is an important interpretive frame, it constitutes merely a part of the available resources found within the program by which the participants can construct their identities. As I have discussed elsewhere (Boeskov, 2018), some participants utilize learning music to attach themselves to "imagined communities" based on identifications other than the national, which enables them to construct more complex subjectivities that transcend the national narrative as a frame for self-understanding. Notably, the songs and musical instruments from the "Western world" that have been imported into the music program through the involvement of Norwegian music educators empower some participants to expand what it means to be a Palestinian, as they are enabled to incorporate other cultural elements into their sense of self. As Hassan's interview also suggests, even though musical practices can overtly or covertly impose specific assumptions, ideas and values, these constructs are not necessarily adopted automatically or uncritically by individual participants, who may use their musical engagement for a range of idiosyncratic purposes. That said, for participants to experience the music program as a meaningful social practice, they most probably must be able to subject themselves—at least to some extent—to what I argue must be seen as the dominant values underlying this particular organization. Although Hassan may not identify in full with the idea of national belonging performed through the musical activities, he is certainly aware of what such performances mean to his community, and his potential reservations about subjection to such meanings are not visible in the way he engages in the music activities.

While Hassan is able to comply with the social expectations of how national belonging and identity should ideally be performed, Najad's viewpoints urge consideration of what forms of belonging the music practice might exclude. From a position outside the music program, Najad criticizes the Palestinian NGOs for promoting modes of national belonging based on identification with the past rather than a possible future. This should lead to asking: Is it possible

for the participants to use their musical engagement for forms of resistance to marginalization not based on a national project? Is it possible to perform other modes of solidarity, to establish other lines of commonality that prepare the ground for alternative ways of imagining a sense of belonging? My suggestion is that these possibilities are largely excluded by the institutional values underlying the music program, in order to prevent diluting the central political claims of the Palestinian community. The continuous advancement of these claims substantiates the legitimacy of BAS as an organization fighting for the right of return on behalf of the Palestinian community, and questioning their status would endanger the organization's reputation and authority. While the music program in Rashidieh in this way implies opportunities for positive social change for the participants, such as experiences of belonging, heightened self-esteem, social inclusion and well-being, the musical practice simultaneously reproduces broader social and institutional formations that establish the terms under which such experiences can be obtained.

This discussion connects to central debates surrounding other socio-artistic intervention programs, such as El Sistema and Sistema-inspired programs, which have recently been subjected to critique for one-sidedly emphasizing the positive aspects of social music-making and downplaying issues of power, authority, discipline, and control (see e.g. Baker, 2014; Baker, Bates and Talbot, 2016; Boia and Boal-Palheiros, 2017). The strong belief in music as a means of positive social transformation found within these practices may cause more ambivalent effects to be overlooked—for example, issues of how musical participation can contribute to the imposition and legitimation of particular perceptions of the social world that reproduce social inequalities, rather than obliterating them.

Anna Bull's (2016) study of *In Harmony*, an English Sistema-inspired music program, is a case in point. This program aims to transform the lives of children in deprived communities through classical-music ensemble playing. Evaluations have commended the program for boosting participant confidence, well-being, and social skills. However, when Bull analyzes the program in terms of social class, it is clear how the musical practice contributes to the reinforcement of bourgeois taste and values, thereby furthering the stigmatization of working-class people as lacking certain attitudes and morality. Bull claims that prescribing classical music as an intervention against deprivation and marginalization implies that structural disadvantage can and should be transcended through behavioral change and the adoption of middle-class cultural values

and practices. In this way, Bull's analysis shows that while the music program seemingly enables the participants to transcend some problematic aspects of the social context, on a deeper level, the program reproduces and reaffirms perceptions about the social reality that the music program conceals and naturalizes, rather than subjecting them to critical attention.

Similarly, in a discussion of another Sistema-inspired program, the Costa Rican SINEM, Guillermo Rosabal-Coto (2016) argues that the social ascendancy of the at-risk children and young people who participate in this music program relies on their subjection to Western-art practices and values. While the government-sponsored program is advanced in public discourse as empowering the participants to improve themselves and transform the social reality of their family, community, and country, Rosabal-Coto (2016) argues that the program rather contributes to "sustaining a predominant social order that has been imagined already by political or financial elites outside [the participants'] vernacular world" (pp. 175–176). In this context, musical participation can be said to conceal, rather than change, structures of inequality and constraint.

Like the analyses conducted by Bull and Rosabal-Coto, the present study prompts us to consider the ambivalent functions of musical practice; not merely whether or how music comes to function as a means of social inclusion and well-being, but more fundamentally how such musical communities are constructed, including the "exclusions and contingencies upon which community activity is based" (Yerichuk, 2014, p. 148). As a powerful tool for identification, musical practices promote or conceal specific conceptions of the social and political reality, with consequences for how musical agents can come to understand themselves and their possibilities for action. While music certainly is an effective way of creating community and experiences of belonging, the effects may be more ambiguous than we might like to consider.

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Paper 4

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Music, agency, and social transformation:
Processes of subjectivation
in a Palestinian community music program

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Music, agency, and social transformation

Processes of subjectivation in a Palestinian community music program

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Abstract

In this article, a community music program in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon is explored by means of ethnographic methods of participant observation and semistructured interviews. Judith Butler's notion of subjectivation is employed in an analysis of how the participants are constituted as national subjects in and through the musical practice. By analyzing the specific instances of agency that this constitution entails, it is argued that even as the musical practice works to consolidate established norms of national belonging and identity, it also enables participants to resignify Palestinian identity in ways that counter experiences of marginalization, exceed certain social norms, and expand the categories through which their existence becomes meaningful. Conceiving a community music practice as a subjectivating practice may prove useful for scholars seeking to analyze musical-social work in terms of its capacity for social transformation, while retaining a critical perspective on the formative and socially reproductive character of such practices.

Introduction

Since 2003, children and youth from the Palestinian refugee camp Rashidieh in Lebanon have had the chance to participate in a community music program. The Palestinian NGO *Beit Atfal Assumoud* (BAS) directs the program in cooperation with Norwegian music educators and provides 40–80 children and young people with instrument tuition, orchestra playing, and dance training, two days a week. Five local teachers lead the activities, and the Norwegian partners visit the project three to four times per year to support the staff and administration. The repertoire consists of Palestinian and Arabic music as well as Norwegian folk and pop songs, and a couple of Beatles tunes that the Norwegians introduced. The dance group performs the traditional Arabic-Palestinian folk dance *dabke*, a communal dance that also has been adapted into a presentational form. Such dances and Palestinian music are performed in the BAS social center on various occasions, most importantly at commemorative events the institution hosts in order to mark important dates in recent Palestinian history. In this way, the music program serves a range of social and cultural purposes. It provides a safe environment in which to engage in cultural activities, facilitates intercultural encounters between Norwegians and Palestinians, and functions as an important site for national identification for the exiled community.

As with other musical-social work,¹ the community music program in Rashidieh is based on a belief in musical participation as a means of empowering disadvantaged individuals and groups, enhancing their personal well-being, and creating some kind of sustainable betterment. This belief has been substantiated by research evaluating the program. Considering the program as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), Vegar Storsve, Inger Anne Westbye, and Even Ruud (2012) state that the music program offers the participants “a repertoire of roles which will partly challenge the limits they usually meet and which will open new possibilities and thus a hope about how to shape their own future” (p. 79). In a study concerning the potential health benefits of the program, Ruud writes that the adolescents engaged in the program “have experienced a markedly positive effect upon their sense of vitality, agency and belonging, as well as their felt meaning and hope for the future—in other words, they have experienced positive health effects” (Ruud, 2012, p. 91; see also Ruud,

1 Following Gary Ansdell (2014, p. 193), I use the term “musical-social work” to refer to musical practices that respond to social problems. Such practices are often connected to the field of community music, community music therapy, or inspired by the Venezuelan music program El Sistema.

2011). Likewise, in my own study of the program's cultural-exchange activities where Palestinian and Norwegian music students perform together, I argue that this intercultural collaboration allows for experiences of recognition and mutuality that challenge the Palestinians' prevailing feelings of neglect and marginalization (Boeskov, 2013).

According to these studies, a primary outcome of the music program is the transformational agency the participants gain as they intentionally use music for transcending limitations and changing aspects of their psychological state or social environment. These studies therefore place themselves within the paradigm that dominates not only social analyses of musical-social work but also the related fields of music education, music psychology, and music sociology. Sidsel Karlsen's (2011) review of the notion of musical agency within these fields shows how agency in musical practice is frequently connected to empowering processes of self-regulation and identity formation, through which individuals and groups explore, navigate, and transform their social worlds. Without diminishing the usefulness of this perspective and the insight it may provide into the potential for music to effect positive change, I argue that emphasizing how musical agents intentionally use music as a resource for "world building" (DeNora, 2003, p. 46) entails a danger of disregarding how musical participation that seemingly enables people to transform their social worlds may, at the same time, depend on, and therefore reinforce, wider social and institutional formations that reproduce social constraints and inequalities (Boeskov, 2018). In order to account more fully for music's social impact, it is important to consider not only how music contributes to positive change but also how particular musical practices, due to their social and institutional embeddedness, construct the terms under which such changes can be pursued.

In connection to the music activities in Rashidieh, I have recently argued that the social effects of this program cannot be reduced to the positive changes reported in the earlier studies of the program mentioned above (Boeskov, accepted). Pursuing such positive changes through musical participation subjects the participants to specific socially and institutionally sanctioned versions of Palestinian identity and forms of belonging that may not fully resemble the lived experiences of the third- and fourth-generation refugees growing up in Lebanon. In this way, the valuable experiences of belonging and agency offered through the music program can be said to rely on the participants' identification with a particular national narrative that downplays or excludes alternative

categories and dimensions by the means of which the young Palestinians can construct meaningful self-perceptions.

The present text expands upon this assertion in two ways. First, I apply Judith Butler's notion of subjectivation (1997b) in an analysis of the music program in Rashidieh, to explain how participants not only gain agency through the musical practice but also are constituted as subjects in and through their musical actions. By conceptualizing the musical practice as a subjectivating practice, the way that agency is tied to the social norms that underlie the musical practice becomes clearer. Second, I expand Butler's framework with the perspectives offered by Saba Mahmood (2005), who conceptualizes agency not only as the ability to subvert social norms but also by thinking how specific practices allow for ways of inhabiting norms. What interests me, then, is whether and how musicking offers the young Palestinians specific modes of inhabiting, performing, and (potentially) subverting the social norms to which they are subjected.

As an alternative to the dominant conception of musical agency, which emphasizes music as a resource for social transformation, conceiving the musical practice as a subjectivating practice implies that subjectivities and socialities are constituted in discursive practice and, therefore, enabled and constrained by social and institutional norms. While the dominant conception stresses musical agents' abilities to intentionally transform aspects of their social worlds (i.e. transcend social norms), considering such processes as subjectivating practices draws attention to how agents' intentions, desires, and emotions themselves are socially constituted. Recent music educational scholarship has used this conceptual framework for exploring how notions of gender and musicianship are discursively constituted in music educational practices (see e.g. Ellefsen, 2014; Onsrud, 2013). By analyzing a community music program as a subjectivating practice, I attempt to render this analytical perspective useful for considering the social effects of musical-social work. I argue that this move offers a productive path for music educators seeking to develop nuanced understandings of such work, because it allows the analyst to explore how agents intentionally put music to use in pursuing their own interests, while retaining a critical view of the socially reproductive and formative character of the musical practice. Without disavowing the potential for individuals and groups to utilize music as a means of social transformation, this analytical approach implies a sense of "constrained agency" (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 40), helpful for avoiding the temptation to idealize music's transformative powers.

Subjectivation and agency

By processes of subjectivation (sometimes translated as “subjection”), Butler refers to the process in which a subject is subordinated by power and simultaneously becomes a self-knowing and capable subject in and through this constituting power. In this sense, Butler follows Michel Foucault, who posits that the human subject is produced in discourse, through and within relations of power. Foucault (1982) distinguishes between three forms of power (and the struggles against them): forms of domination, forms of exploitation, and forms of subjection. Of the last, Foucault writes:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him [*sic*] by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word “subject”: subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault, 1982, p. 781)

It is to this subjectivating power that the later Foucault and Butler give attention, a form of power that should be seen not only as an oppressive force, but one that in significant ways also forms and activates the subject.² As Butler writes, “[s]ubjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency” (Butler, 1997b, p. 2).

Butler’s view of subjectivation and agency is connected to her notion of gender performativity. In her books, *Gender Trouble* (1999) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993/2011), Butler develops a notion of gender as performative, a position that construes gender not as “a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (Butler, 1999, p. 179). These repetitive and ritualized acts are the materialization of gender norms that force themselves upon the individual as a compulsory practice that regulates the subject, “who is compelled to ‘cite’ the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject” (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 177). This does not mean that the subject is determined by the discourse, nor does it preclude any sense of agency. However, as Butler explains, agency must be understood as

2 Foucault’s ideas of subjectivation (*assujétissement*) is primarily developed in *The History of Sexuality Volumes 1 and 2, Discipline and Punish*, and the essays *Two Lectures* and *The Subject and Power* published in *Power/Knowledge*. See Butler (1997b, p. 16).

exercised from within rather than from a position outside discourse. Drawing on Foucault's notion of subjectivation, she writes:

In this sense, the agency denoted by the performativity of "sex" will be directly counter to any notion of a voluntarist subject who exists quite apart from the regulatory norms which she/he opposes. The paradox of subjectivation (*assujétissement*) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power. (Butler, 1993/2011, p. xxiii)

Butler adopts the notion of "reiteration" from Jacques Derrida's (1988) critique of J. L. Austin's (1962) speech-act theory. Rather than relying on social convention, Derrida locates the force of the speech act in the break with its prior context that a performative utterance entails. For Butler, this idea becomes significant for explaining the transformational potential of performative action. As the regulatory norms must constantly be reenacted in order to sustain their legitimacy and social power, this reiterative structure becomes vulnerable to false or wrong invocations of social rituals. Thus, norms can be resisted, because they are always vulnerable to being repeated in subversive ways that reveal their constructed and arbitrary nature. The point to emphasize here, however, is not just the possibility of agency and resistance, but the location of this possibility within the regulatory norms, insofar as these norms enable the subject to come into social existence in the first place. As Butler writes, "[t]he task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself" (Butler, 1999, p. 189). In this way, the reiterative structure consolidates social norms, but also allows for their "undoing." The political promise of the performative is the possibility of unsettling and destabilizing norms in ways that, over time, may break their hegemony (Butler, 1997a).

As Butler's writing is situated within the feminist political project, her notion of agency is primarily located in the potential for resignifying and subverting (heterosexual) norms. However, as Mahmood (2005) points out, the consequence of this conceptualization is to ground a social analysis of power and agency in a dualistic framework, in which norms are either reiterated or resignified. Expanding this model, Mahmood (2005) contends that "[n]orms are not only consolidated and/or subverted, . . . but performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways" (p. 22). Analyzing a women's mosque movement in Egypt, Mahmood (2005) considers how the subordination to religious authority that

secular feminists might read as acts of subordination to male domination, instead could be read as a form of agency “that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment” (p. 15). As Mahmood explains, by realizing piety, these women countered several structures of authority, including instituted standards of Islam and male domination. However, Mahmood (2005) argues that “the *rationale* behind these conflicts was not predicated upon, and therefore cannot be understood only by reference to, arguments for gender equality or resistance to male authority” (p. 15). Therefore, in order to capture this sense of agency, Mahmood (2005) turns away from a dualistic framework of reiteration/subversion and analyzes “the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated,” which, as she explains, “requires that we explore the relationship between the immanent form a normative act takes, the model of subjectivity it presupposes (specific articulations of volition, emotion, reason, and bodily expression), and the kinds of authority upon which such an act relies” (p. 23).

Thinking of the musical practice as a subjectivating practice allows for consideration of how musical performance contributes to constituting subjects within relations of power in the social field. Further, the implied vulnerability due to the reiterative structure of the performative constitution points to a subversive potential, the possibility of resignifying and undoing norms through musical actions. Mahmood’s extension of this model opens consideration of how musical practices may not only be mapped on a binary axis of doing/undoing norms. Instead, musical practices can be explored in terms of how they offer specific ways of inhabiting social norms, and how participants intentionally negotiate their subjectivities by drawing on various sources of legitimacy and authority within the social field. In the following text, I apply this framework in an analysis of the Palestinian music program in order to explain how the participants are constituted through their musical actions, with particular attention to the musical practice as a site for national identification. Further, I explore how this constitution implies specific forms of agency, in that musical performances become socially significant ways of resisting marginalization and resignifying Palestinian identity. Finally, I discuss some examples of how the participants intentionally draw upon various sources of authority and legitimacy in the music program for negotiating their subjectivities and expanding their possibilities for action.

Methodology

In 2012, I worked as a music teacher in the music program for eight months, which gave me intimate knowledge of the program, its participants, and the social context in which they live. In 2016 and 2018, I returned to the refugee camp for shorter periods of time (four visits of one to two weeks each) to do an ethnographic study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) of the program. This study included participant observation (Spradley, 1980) of week-to-week activities and performances, and semistructured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) with participants, teachers, social workers, and administrators from the music program, as well as formal and informal interviews with young Palestinians from that camp and neighboring camps. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the significance of the music program in the local context, what it means to participate, how the music activities relate to broader social, cultural, and political issues for the Palestinian refugees, and how the music program might contribute to positive change. All names used in this article are pseudonyms. In order to ensure my informants' anonymity, potentially revealing personal information has been omitted or changed. All informants were selected by me and gave informed consent. The Norwegian Centre for Research Data reviewed and approved the research design.

The empirical data was analyzed in three stages. To get well acquainted with the data, the first stage of analysis consisted of close reading and preliminary coding of interview transcripts and field notes. During this stage, themes related to Palestinian identity and belonging appeared as the most promising starting points for understanding the social significance of the music program, especially since I encountered some expressions of ambiguity toward issues of national identity that called for closer scrutiny. Interviews were then re-read and a couple of new interviews were conducted in light of the preliminary findings and relevant anthropological literature concerning the Palestinian community that focuses specifically on issues of national identification and belonging (Allan, 2014, 2018; Hammer, 2005; Khalili, 2004, 2007; McDonald, 2013; Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 1979, 1994; Schulz, 1999, 2003). The focus of this reading was to understand the cultural information my interlocutors draw upon when talking about their participation in the music program. The reading resulted in a discussion of how the music program is connected to a specific national narrative and the potential ambivalent experiences this might produce (Boeskov, accepted). In the third stage of analysis, I engage in a more theoretically informed reading of the data, in which I conceive the music program as a subjectivating practice

that constitutes the participants as (national) subjects. Here, I pay attention to the discourses concerning national representation that circulate within the music program, how these discourses presuppose specific subjectivities, and how participants negotiate, inhabit, or perform these subject positions. Further, I look at how the participants gain agency through their constitution as national subjects and how they intentionally utilize this constitution to expand or challenge the terms of their subjectivation.

This approach demands that I take seriously how my own participation in the social field becomes a part of the subjectivating processes I study. As an outsider, a representative of the Norwegian partner institutions, and a member of the Global North, I cannot claim to inhabit a neutral or objective position in the social field. Rather, in and through my involvement as a teacher and researcher in the program, I constitute my interlocutors in specific ways. Both the research practice and the musical practice are subjectivating practices, and although they are radically different ways of becoming a subject, I argue that in this case, these processes could very well be seen as continuous. The interviews as well as the musical activities can be regarded as performative spaces through which the participants are constituted as national subjects. When the interviewees talk to me about their experiences in the program, they appear not only as individuals but also as representatives of the Palestinian refugees. However, relying on Butler's notion of discursive agency (Butler, 1997a, p. 127ff), I maintain that although they contribute to the regulation of discourse, processes of subjectivation do not determine the subjects. As I will make explicit in the following analysis, the musical practice (as well as the research practice) entails various possibilities of inhabiting, performing, and subverting the subjectivities that become available to my interlocutors.³

Further, I am aware that the national discourse, which I see as fundamental for understanding how subjects come to be in and through the musical activities, is not the only discourse to which the participants are subjected. Rather, they are subjected to multiple discourses, and, as Foucault (1982) reminds us, these discourses "are superimposed, they cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another" (p. 793). I do not pretend to do an exhaustive analysis of the discourses that constitute the music program participants (neither would that be possible). The analysis conducted here can never be more than a partial and provisional account of

³ See Boeskov (accepted) for an example of how some of my informants challenged their constitution as national subjects by using irony during an interview.

the music program and its participants, limited by the researcher's position in the field and interpretive repertoire. Yet, I maintain that these interpretations are recognizable, and that they do offer a glimpse of what is at stake in this particular musical practice and how we might understand its effects.

The music program as a subjectivating practice

*Rāji' yā filastīn (Palestine, I am returning)*⁴

*Palestine, I am returning
To my house/home⁵ of clay and stone
We will plant jasmine flowers
and water them with the tears from our eyes
Palestine, I am returning*

*I am returning
I have had enough of separation
The distance is hard to bear
I am missing my home
I am returning, full of love
Palestine, I am returning*

The song is playing from a mobile phone while Omar and his teacher Abu Ali listen attentively as they try to work out something for Omar to play on his violin. Omar is one of the oldest students in the program. With eight years of experience, he is also one of the more skilled participants, with responsibility for teaching some of the younger violinists. This afternoon, the youngest students are sent home, and while the *dabke* group is training in the music hall, a few of the teachers and a group of experienced students have gathered in a small room to work on a new piece. The song is called *Rāji' yā filastīn* (Palestine, I am returning), and the group plans to perform it at a big event held in commemoration of *al Nakba*, where Palestinians from all over Lebanon will gather to commemorate the expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians from their ancestral homeland in May 1948. It has become a custom within the BAS institution in Rashidieh to have students from the music program perform national songs and dances at these events. Thanks to these performances, BAS

4 The song *Rāji' yā filastīn* (Palestine, I am returning) is written by the Palestinian artist Hassan Sultan. Lyrics are translated by Sofie Lausten Mortensen.

5 The Arabic word *bayt* carries the double meaning of *house* and *home*.

has become famous in the camp for hosting the most spectacular and entertaining commemorations.

Commemorative events are important in Palestinian social life. As public manifestations of a Palestinian collective identity with legitimate claims to the homeland, commemorations function as sites of national education, they embody the resilience and perseverance of the Palestinian people and convey a sense of agency of the otherwise silenced community (Allan, 2014; Khalili, 2007). As one of the teachers explains, performing joyful music and dance is a symbol of such resilience and agency:

So, when we dance at the occasions [commemorating the massacres of] Sabra and Shatila, Tel al-Za'tar and Palestinian Land Day or the Nakba, that means that the Palestinians are not dead after that massacre. They are still here. And the spirit is still here. And they were living peacefully everywhere, and they will stay in a peaceful way. And they still strive for what they want, I mean the rights [to go] back to Palestine. This is why we use dabke and music in all of these occasions.

The songs and dances presented in such events emphasize the Palestinians' primordial attachment to the land of Palestine, which underlines the legitimacy of the Palestinians' claim to the right of return. The lyrics that open this section are characteristic of the imagery used in commemorative performances. The "I" is longing for the homeland, which is depicted in primordial terms as a house of stone and clay. The jasmine flower, a symbol of the Palestinian land, will be planted and watered by tears, a symbol of both joy and sorrow. This picture underscores the symbiosis between the people and the land that springs to life and feeds on this deep emotional connection. Another significant characteristic is the assertion that "I am returning," giving the impression of an action already underway, an inevitable journey—although in the present realities, this inevitability seems more implausible than ever before.

Omar is a regular performer at these occasions, and in an interview he talks about his feelings of performing in them: "Sure, we are proud," he tells me, "also to show our parents that we do not come [to the music program] to be entertained, we come to learn. We stay with our goals: to remember Palestine." For Omar, musical performance is not just a display of his musical skills, but, more importantly, performing national songs is a display of loyalty toward a central social imperative in the Palestinian community: to remember Palestine. In this way, in the context of commemorative events, performing music is also a performance of a continued attachment to the Palestinian nation (see also Boeskov, accepted).

By performing national songs, the music program participants are constituted as national subjects, a performance that not only marks them as Palestinians, but also conveys to them what it means to be Palestinian. Within a Butlerian framework, such performances cannot be understood as an expression of pre-existing national identity, although this is the standard interpretation I have encountered among the Palestinians. As Butler (1999) suggests (with respect to gender but the point applies to nationality as well), “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 33). The musical acts are iterations of a particular form of national belonging that performatively constitutes the participants as “ideal” Palestinians, i.e. as national subjects that in spite of being born in a foreign country, carry with them a natural longing toward their real home. As I have argued elsewhere, even though most participants seem to identify with the form of national belonging mediated by the music activities, this notion of unceasing attachment to the lost homeland may not fully resemble the lived experiences of third- and fourth-generation refugees growing up in Lebanon (Boeskov, accepted). The musical practice constructs and imposes a particular model of Palestinian subjectivity, which affords specific kinds of actions, articulations, and frames of belonging, and discourages others. Thereby, musical performances contribute to regulating the “social domain of speakable discourse,” (Butler, 1997a, p. 133), i.e., the desires, ambitions, and emotions that can be recognized as valid expressions of “the national” or of “resistance.”

For the Palestinian refugees, asserting their national identity through performances of Palestinian music and dance is a way of struggling against the dominating forces to which they are subjected, e.g., the State of Israel and the Lebanese government, which keep them in a marginal position, barred from entry into the land they consider their homeland and deprived of fundamental civil rights in Lebanon. The processes of subjectivation described above are tied to the Palestinians’ subjection to these external forces of domination; however, they cannot be said to be a direct consequence of them. Foucault (1982) states that “mechanisms of subjection cannot be studied outside their relation to the mechanisms of exploitation and domination.” But, he continues, “they [processes of subjection] do not merely constitute the ‘terminal’ of more fundamental mechanisms. They entertain complex and circular relations with other forms” (p. 782). Therefore, subjectivation in the musical practice cannot be seen to derive directly from the structures of domination within which the Palestinians live. While they certainly are a response to this domination, these

relations do not determine the articulations of cultural identity and resistance. Rather, the practice forms and makes possible specific kinds of actions as valid reactions to the experiences of marginalization and dispossession that again produce specific kinds of subjectivities.

The musical practice provides the participants with a model of Palestinian subjectivity that is freely taken up and appropriated.⁶ It is an ideal whose consummation, as Omar also points out in the quote above, is socially recognized by parents and the wider community as a desirable attainment precisely because it provides the means for resistance toward broader structures of domination. Accepting their constitution as national subjects, the participants become what Mahmood (2001) refers to as *docile agents*. In Mahmood's usage, docility does not point to subordination or an abandonment of agency, but rather an ability to be taught, which "implies the malleability required of someone to be instructed in a particular skill or knowledge" (p. 210). Mahmood uses the example of a pianist who actively subjects herself to the hierarchy of apprenticeship and standards of performance in order to obtain the necessary skills to play the instrument with mastery. By accepting the terms by which they are constituted, the participants acquire valuable tools through which they can engage in socially legitimate ways of resisting marginalization. However, as I will explore below, this agency can be extended to idiosyncratic purposes as well.

As noted above, while Butler (1997b) discusses the possibilities of a subject that "turns away from the law, resisting its lure of identity" (p. 130) and resignifies the terms through which the subject comes into existence, Mahmood (2005) seeks to expand Butler's project by rejecting its dualistic frame of the doing/undoing of norms, and replacing it with considerations of "the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated" (p. 23). Following Mahmood, I suggest that musical performance is not just a performance of norms, but a specific way of *inhabiting* these norms. Not just the participants in the music program are subjected to norms of national sentiment. These ideals affect all Palestinians in Lebanon to various degrees. What interests me is how the music activities imply a way of inhabiting and experiencing this norm and the particular modes of agency these activities entail. In the following, therefore, I turn to an exploration of how participants draw on various sources of legitimacy and authority within the norms, in order

⁶ As Foucault reminds us, subjection necessitates a free subject: "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790).

to exercise agency and intentionally negotiate or expand the discourses within which they are constituted.

Resignifying Palestinian identity

Musical performances constitute the participants as Palestinians, and while I argue that this process implies imposing a specific model of national belonging, the participants also receive socially significant positions as representatives of the Palestinians. Taking up this position involves agency over how the category of the Palestinian is represented and thereby how 'the Palestinian' can be perceived, both by the participants themselves and by significant others. One of the teachers explained to me how musical performances challenge the typical representation of Palestinians in the media:

Yeah, I mean here, because the media, the media they always give a bad picture of the Palestinians, of the kids. Of the Palestinian kids. And always they tell: the Palestinians are like terrorists. But we are not like that, so we like to show: this is the real Palestinian picture.

Disproving the negative image of the Palestinians is significant in terms of global politics, but also in the local context in which the Palestinians have a turbulent and strained relationship with the Lebanese community. A BAS senior official explains:

You know, we had before a bad experience with the Lebanese, we had war. Now, what I will say, music and dancing is the second face [an alternative image] of the Palestinian, which we show to the Lebanese communities. We attend the different Lebanese festivals to show that the Palestinians are human beings like you, you know. Not all Palestinians are criminals or just using guns. No, we are human beings like others. And I think in this way we have succeeded. Because we show the face of the real Palestinian.

Several participants also pointed to the way musical performance allows them to represent the Palestinian refugees in ways that contradict how they are normally portrayed. One example is fifteen-year-old Batoul, who has been part of cultural-exchange activities in Norway and regularly performs at commemorations in the BAS center. She emphasizes how musical performance depicts the Palestinians as capable and talented people: "It is really nice to make a performance to present Palestine and show that we, the Palestinian people, have talents. [...] [W]e have something to show even though we are from the [refugee] camps."

The statements above point to musical performance as a representation of the Palestinian people, but also its capacity for resignifying Palestinian identity. By connecting Palestinian resistance to culture and music, rather than guns and violence, the music program participants enter a struggle for how Palestinian identity is perceived. In the three quotations above, the Palestinian is connected to the terms “terrorist,” “criminal,” and “refugee.” However, representing the Palestinian identity through music counters these notions and shows “the face of the real Palestinian” as a capable human being. Notably, these possibilities for self-constitution are connected to performances in which the Palestinians represent themselves in front of constitutive Others, whether at Lebanese festivals or in the context of cultural-exchange activities with Norwegian peers. At such occasions, musical performance is accepted as a legitimate expression of Palestinian identity, and this subjectivating practice allows for a resignification of Palestinian identity. In these processes, the Palestinians rely on discourses in which musical ability and cultural expression are connected to “human-ness,” and thereby oppose the more common connections made between the Palestinians and denigrating terms that legitimate the continued marginalization of the Palestinians.

While the statements above show how musical performance resignifies Palestinian identity, they also point to the way the national identity is placed as the primary category through which the musical performers come into being. By performing the “face of the real Palestinian,” the participants subject themselves to these terms as the foundation for their social existence. Thereby, they also implicitly accept the norms of Palestinian subjectivity, entailing an unceasing attachment to and longing for the land of Palestine. As already noted, young Palestinians born and raised in the camps in Lebanon may experience the imperative of “remembering Palestine” ambivalently. Part of this ambivalence is caused by the stories of persecution, marginalization, and violence that the Palestinians living inside Palestine are currently experiencing. While all Palestinians daily face hardship in the camps in Lebanon, in the minds of many young Palestinians, the land of Palestine may not present a better alternative. Hanin, a singer in her late teens and an experienced member of the program, talks about this issue, and how the music program helps the younger children remember and represent Palestine in a positive way to themselves as well as to others:

Hanin: If the parents start talking about the bad things [happening to] children in Palestine, they [the children in Rashidieh] will be afraid: Oh, there are many bad things happening there. But if we help the children to sing and

play traditional songs, especially the songs that have a scenario involving a boy and a girl and a love story between them, [...] it will help them to remember these things in a nice way. That our country is very nice, not that it contains always bombs and killing and fighting. No, there are some nice places in Palestine.

Interviewer: So, it is also a way of remembering or being Palestinian in a positive way?

Hanin: Yeah, in a positive way, not always in a negative way. [...] Especially if you are talking to a child. You cannot talk with them about blood and your enemy, make them afraid. No, start to help them to remember something nice.

Interviewer: And this is also something that the music program does, creates a positive identity for the Palestinians? And maybe also towards the Norwegians or to people outside the camps, that Palestinians...

Hanin: Of course. When I go there [to Norway] and I start translating to them the words or the lyrics, they say: Oh, the Palestinians are very nice, the communication [way of talking], the relation there is very nice. I say: Yes, not everything is as you saw in the media.

In this way, musical performance enables the participants to present to themselves and to others a positive image of Palestinian identity. Being granted a scene for self-representation by a constitutive Other enables the Palestinians to constitute themselves in more desirable ways. I maintain that these processes should be considered as ambivalent in that they subject the participants to a specific version of Palestinian identity that entails a particular frame of belonging. Nevertheless, the music activities seem to allow the young Palestinians to experience the social norms of remembering Palestine as a source for their agency, enabling them to represent Palestine in a positive way. While the music activities do not enable the participants to engage in a radical form of self-creation that subverts such norms, they do allow for ways of inhabiting established norms of Palestinian subjectivity that are experienced as meaningful and empowering.

Performing gender

The understanding of music and agency in the context of the Palestinian music program can be extended by considering how the music program mediates gender relations and norms. The BAS organization operates according to a liberal and secular agenda that stresses gender equality and the inclusion of girls and women in the public and cultural life of the Palestinian community. In all activities in the music program, boys and girls are performing and dancing together. However, the Rashidieh camp is considered one of the more

conservative Palestinian communities in Lebanon, maintaining traditional gender relations and customs and separating girls from boys in educational and cultural activities, especially when they become teenagers. While the music program in many ways has successfully established and maintained access for both girls and boys, girls, with a few notable exceptions, are likely to drop out of the program at the age of sixteen or seventeen. Girls at this age are expected to prepare themselves for marriage and therefore to exhibit behavior associated with respectable femininity in order to appear as proper subjects of marriage. The traditionalists in the camp associate music and dance with frivolity and immodesty, which means that some of the young women are discouraged or prohibited from participating in the program.

Hanin is one of the few examples of female participants who continue playing music throughout their adolescence. In my interview with her, this topic was brought up:

Interviewer: There are a lot of girls participating in the music project, but I also know that some people in the camp are a little bit sceptical about girls playing music. Especially, maybe, when they are as old as you, many girls do not come to the music project any more.

Hanin: Because of their parents.

Interviewer: Yeah, can you tell me something about this, and what is your own experience?

Hanin: Actually, yes, you are right. There are many parents here, when the girl is twenty or eighteen, maybe, they say stop singing or stop playing music. It depends, because everyone has his own thinking. But for my family, I think, until now, it is okay for them. Every week I say that I am going, [and they say:] okay, go. And my mother, every event here, she comes and listens to me. She told me yesterday: "You know, I feel proud when you were on the stage." Because I am not singing something bad, I am not wearing something bad, I am wearing my scarf okay, I sing just for my family.⁷ The music, the type of music we play, it is very, eh, kind music, you can say. It is not something bad, or we are making words [that are] not good for the people to hear, no. So I hope my family will not mind, but I don't think so because they trust Beit Atfal Assumoud.

Hanin's ability to challenge the traditional gender norms by which girls at her age would normally be unable to engage in music activities depends on her family's acceptance, which again relies on her appropriation of a decent femininity (e.g., not singing something bad, not wearing something bad, wearing my scarf okay, I sing just for my family). While in this way the music activities

7 Throughout the interview, Hanin referred to the people in BAS as her "second family." Singing just for her family implies that she only sings within this institution.

challenge some gender norms, such as separating girls and boys at a certain age, such challenges rest on the reiteration of other, more fundamental gender norms, such as feminine decency. Also noteworthy in Hanin's account is that her ability to perform outside of the established norms depends on her family trusting BAS, the NGO running the program. Thus, her personal agency is tied to this organization and its social legitimacy.

Another example of a female participant performing outside of established gender norms is found in Brit Ågot Brøske's (2017) study of the music program. In an interview with Daleen, a young woman participating in the program, Brøske discusses how the safe space the institution provides enables girls to exceed social norms:

Interviewer: Did you encounter any difficulties when working with music as a Muslim?

Daleen: Of course. The people talk about that I sing because music in Islam is haram [forbidden]. It is not a good thing to do, especially for women. And I have hijab [Muslim headscarf].

I: What do you mean—"especially for women?"

D: I have hijab.

I: Yes. How does that affect your ability to be involved in music?

D: A woman who has hijab; it means she has to follow the rules of the religion. When she is a musician—a singer—it is haram. But, from my heart, I want to be a singer, and I want it, and I don't care about what people say. And I sing in this centre, and not outside. And of course, I sing good things about Palestine and songs with good purpose. I sing good songs, traditional songs and folksongs. And music is the same—nothing bad, everything good. (Brøske, 2017, p. 78–79)

From this account, it seems clear that norms of appropriate conduct for a young Muslim woman are side-stepped by Daleen. Brøske goes on to explain that it is possible for Daleen to participate in the music activities because of the protection that the BAS center provides. However, what I would like to add is that what makes participation legitimate—and in a broader view, what ensures the trustworthiness of the BAS institution in this context—is that the music is used for a "good purpose" ("I sing good things about Palestine"), in this context, the national cause and the liberation of Palestine. It is the subjection to this cause and the implied subjectivity in performing nationalist music that allow Daleen to exceed the social expectations for her conduct as a Muslim woman. The agency of these young women must therefore be placed within social structures of authority and legitimacy, and by drawing on various sources

of authority within this framework, Hanin and Daleen are enabled to pursue their interest in music (and the opportunities for self-expression, travelling, and intercultural encounters that come with involvement in the music program). Subjecting themselves to and invoking the authority of Palestinian nationalism enable Hanin and Daleen to negotiate, bend, and exceed the social and religious norms to which they are normally subjected.

Expanding the discourse

The final ethnographic example also illuminates how participants perform in specific ways to live up to social norms, at the same time that they are enabled to exceed those norms and expand the discursive field within which their actions become meaningful. An important resource for such expansions is the connection to Norwegian music educators and the meanings that enter the social contexts through the intercultural collaboration. In a previous analysis of the music program (Boeskov, 2018), I refer briefly to Ali, a saxophonist in the music program, who uses music and instruments from the West to establish a relation to an “imagined community” outside of the refugee camp and to feel like “a Western guy.” Here, I explore Ali’s case a bit further to discuss how the cultural-exchange activities can be seen as a subjectivating practice, and the forms of agency these processes entail.

Like Omar, Hanin, and Daleen, Ali is a veteran in the music project. He holds leading parts in the music program’s performances at commemorative events, and he has been part of several trips to Norway, representing the program and the Palestinian community. These trips have made a special impact on Ali. When I ask him about his most memorable experiences in the music program, he says:

The most special thing in relation to the music project is that you can travel and discover new cultures, such as Norwegian culture. [...] I have been in Norway three times, so I feel like Norway has become my second homeland.

As I have explored elsewhere (Boeskov, 2013), the cultural-exchange activities are important for the participants not only because they allow for rare opportunities for leaving Lebanon and the refugee camp, but also because the intercultural encounters are seen as concrete enactments of mutuality and recognition for which the Palestinian community strives. By engaging with the Palestinians in cultural-exchange activities, the Norwegians show acceptance and recognition of Palestinian culture and identity as legitimate and equal, and

this subjectivation allows for positive self-constitution. Musical performance holds a central position in mediating these experiences. When Palestinians and Norwegians perform for and with each other, these practices can be seen as embodiments of mutual friendship and recognition.

While the cultural-exchange activities thus establish a connection across boundaries, at the same time, they implicitly assert these boundaries. The discursive frame established by cultural exchange activities implies a pointing out of what is “Norwegian” and what is “Palestinian” culture. In this way, they inscribe these categories with a cultural essence expressed through musical performance. As discussed above, performing music allows the participants to resignify and attach positive meanings to Palestinian identity. However, at the same time, this identity is reified and placed as the primary category through which the participants gain a form of social existence. Yet, the logic of the cultural-exchange activities presupposes that the different cultural expressions could and should be exchanged, mixed and performed for and with each other, as a sign of mutual respect and recognition. Thus, the cultural-exchange activities are significant because they perform two vital assertions in connection to the Palestinian experience. First, as a site for the performance of Palestinian identity and culture, these activities work to reify the threatened category of “the Palestinian” and communicate how also the young generation embodies an unceasing attachment to the homeland. Second, by placing these expressions alongside Norwegian articulations of identity, the Palestinian cultural identity is framed as equal and legitimate. This performance of cultural authenticity and legitimacy implies membership in a global order of cultures and nations, which in turn authorizes the refugees’ claim of their right to return to Palestine.

In the frame of cultural exchange, the Norwegian music educators have introduced a wide range of music, both traditional Norwegian songs, but also Norwegian and international pop and rock music. While this music is embraced in its capacity for signifying the friendship between the two communities, Western pop music in general holds an ambiguous status in the camp. Music and other cultural products from the West are often treated with suspicion by older generations, who see such expressions as a threat to local values. As was also implied in the quotes from Hanin and Daleen above, it is possible to “sing something bad” or to perform “songs with a bad purpose.” Pop music from the West is a likely example of music associated with morally improper behavior.⁸

8 In Ruud’s (2011, p. 70) study of the music program in Rashidieh, he expresses surprise that only very few of the participants he interviewed had any relationship at all to Western or Arabic

However, Ali has developed an affinity for what he calls Western or English music that is at odds with local expectations:

Ali: A lot of people told me that, you are an Arab guy, you should just play Eastern music or Arabic music. I told them, no, I also like the Western culture. I like English music.

Interviewer: But some people say to you, you shouldn't play this song, you shouldn't play ...

Ali: Yeah, you should focus more on Arabic music, but I found, no, it is my hobby, I play Western music.

Ali's interest in Western music seemingly poses a challenge to existing social norms. While those in his surroundings expect him to play the kind of music that is considered a proper expression of self ("you should just play Eastern music or Arabic music"), Ali insists on playing Western music, because, as he tells me:

Ali: I found it interesting because it is new to me. I know my Arab songs very well, so I can play it, and I know that it is, like, almost similar to me, but I discovered a new kind of music, the Western music, so I became more interested [in this].

Interviewer: So, it is also for your development or for your ... , you find it interesting because you can learn more from this music, you feel?

Ali: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think that it somehow affects your identity or your person to play this music, or is it just for being a better musician? How do you see this?

Ali: Yes, of course, yeah. When you play Western music you find yourself going to the Western world. You feel that you are a Western guy. And if you play Arabic music you find yourself as an Arab guy.

Ali perceives the music he plays as an expression of his identity. As he says: "I know my Arab songs very well [...] it is, like, almost similar to me." Likewise, playing Western music allows Ali to feel like "a Western guy." In this way, performing music allows Ali to momentarily detach himself from established conventions and expressions of identity. Through my connection to Ali on social-media platforms, I have seen how he actively uses music to create and express such a hybrid subjectivity. By posting videos of himself performing international pop hits, Ali attaches himself to an international youth culture, and thereby asserts a more complex subjectivity than the one expressed by the prevailing nationalist discourse. I suggest that for Ali, performing Western music is an articulation of an alternative form of belonging, connected to a global

popular music. Instead, they all preferred the traditional Palestinian music or traditional music from other countries, including Norway.

youth culture that bear traces of encounters with young people from other places in the world. His performances can in this way be seen as his intentional attempt to expand what it means to be a Palestinian and what aesthetic forms can be combined with this identity.

Such performances are not necessarily subversive, in the sense that they question underlying assumptions of identity. Rather, as Ali's statements suggest, they presuppose an Arab/Western binary set and thereby consolidate such categories as inevitable in coming to terms with one's existence in the world. As indicated at the beginning of this section, Ali readily performs his Palestinian identity at commemorative events and seems in no way to question the frame of national belonging established by the music program. However, as I learned through interviewing him, his taste for Western music and identification as "a Western guy" enable him to expand the discourse through which he is constituted as a (national) subject, even if this expansion is slightly at odds with established norms.

Through the cultural-exchange program, Western music has gained some legitimacy as an acceptable—even valuable—form of cultural expression, at least in the specific social and institutional context of the music program. Drawing on this legitimacy, Ali uses the musical practice to connect himself to different cultural entities and incorporate disparate elements into his sense of self, thereby expanding the discursive field through which his social existence becomes meaningful. When performed inside the institutional frame of cultural exchange, Western music unambiguously points to socially accepted notions of intercultural friendship and recognition. However, by reiterating these cultural expressions in slightly different contexts (e.g., on social-media platforms), Ali works the borders of cultural intelligibility.⁹ While his musical performances can be recognized in one way as "proper" expressions of Palestinian resistance, because they draw upon the legitimacy of the cultural-exchange program (and the implied meaning of recognition and equality of these activities), at the same time, they embody an element that renders them outside authorized forms of Palestinian resistance. This element, I suggest, is connected to the new generations' need to articulate resistance and identity in a form that acknowledges the experiences of young refugees growing up in Lebanon, who do not simply inherit a natural longing for Palestine, but are bound to construct their own ideas of belonging. Rather than detaching himself from established notions

9 That Ali is met in his surroundings with a normative demand that he should just play Arabic or Eastern music tells us that these acts do not pass unnoticed.

of resistance and national identity, Ali's musical performances can be seen as attempts to fuse an unceasing attachment to primordial Palestine with a developing cosmopolitanism among the young generations of Palestinian refugees, thereby expressing a longing for a livable future rather than a dignified, yet already lived, past. Thus, for participants like Ali, musical performance might be a context in which the social imperative of remembering Palestine can be combined meaningfully with forms of belonging that transcend the national as the sole locus of hope and aspiration.

Concluding discussion

As an important site for national identification, the music program subjects its participants to a specific form of belonging. However, this subjection produces a range of opportunities for agency for the participants to take up and use. Some of these are aligned with the dominant ideas of resistance in the social field. The music program offers important possibilities for resignifying Palestinian identity through musical performance and rendering it in terms of "humanness," as opposed to often-found linkages between Palestinians and terrorism, criminality, and other degrading terms. In this way, Palestinian identity becomes livable; in musical performance, "Palestinianness" can be inhabited and experienced as empowering and pointing toward a future life of dignity and freedom. Musical performance may also cross social discourses in ways that seemingly involve more tension. Performing music may be at odds with social norms concerning respectable femininity. However, by drawing on the legitimacy of the nationalist narrative and authorizing institutional frameworks, young women find ways of engaging in music while remaining within socially accepted conduct. Finally, music performance may also contribute to an expansion of discourse. When participants use their musical abilities to employ a foreign set of cultural expressions and perform a more personal or generation-specific sense of belonging, they subtly challenge the boundaries of discourse, extending the limits of how resistance and belonging can be expressed and experienced.

Common for these various instances of agency is that they are connected to, and even enabled by, the fundamental discourses concerning national belonging and resistance that underlie the musical practice. Musical performance entails a form of docile agency (Mahmood 2001); by picking up and appropriating

the discursive elements linked to Palestinian nationalism and identity for various purposes, the participants simultaneously constitute themselves as proper national subjects. Participating in the music program does not entail a possibility for radical self-creation beyond these social norms. However, it allows participants to inhabit the norms in ways that do not just reinscribe them—although I maintain that this is also a central part of the music program’s social effects. Participants also can experience their subjectivities differently, exceed certain social expectations, and expand the categories through which existence becomes meaningful.

In a recent text (Boeskov, 2018), I argue that this transformative potential is connected to music as a form of cultural expression that mediates the social on multiple levels.¹⁰ While the musical performances in Rashidieh are vital for articulating a sense of national belonging and appropriated for specific social and institutional aims, their meaning cannot be contained within these frames. Rather, the performances mediate a range of other subjectivities and socialities, including social-identity formations of gender and generation, as well as belonging to imagined communities and affiliations with people and places outside the immediate context. The musical performance opens up a space for experiencing and moving through these simultaneous forms of sociality. In this process, participants draw upon the legitimacy and authority of one way of being, in order to make possible other forms as well. In musical performances at commemorative events, Lebanese festivals, or as part of Palestinian/Norwegian cultural-exchange activities, participants invoke the authority of these contexts to constitute themselves as capable human beings with a legitimate cultural identity. In these musical performances, Hanin and Daleen momentarily perform their gender on the borders of the established norms of decency, and thereby embody a potential for a different set of norms pertaining to young Palestinian women. Performing Western music on his saxophone, Ali articulates a sense of belonging that incorporates the vision of a different future for the new generation of refugees into the established norms of attachment to the homeland.

While these modes of agency are not necessarily subversive, in that they displace social norms, they do have effects that, over time, may accumulate to produce social change. Discourses are neither uniform nor stable. Rather, as Foucault (1978) writes, the world of discourse consists of “a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies,” even for opposing and

¹⁰ Here I draw upon the conception of “Music and the Social” developed by Georgina Born (2012).

contrasting objectives (p. 100). This insight also underpins Butler's vision of a performative politics (Butler, 1997a). While the individual depends on the world of discourse to become intelligible as a subject, the discursive field is not decided once and for all. The agency expressed by the young participants from the music program in Rashidieh suggests that musical performance may offer opportunities for experimentation and innovation within a social field overdetermined by powerful relations of domination and equally cemented notions of resistance. Within these constraints, participants make use of their musical abilities to perform allegiance to established cultural truths, but also to formulate alternative visions of possible futures.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: Declaration of confidentiality – language assistant

Declaration of confidentiality

Regarding the research project: The musical practice as cultural performance. Relations of meaning, agency and social transformation in community music.

I hereby declare that I will treat all the information I receive through my work related to this research project with complete confidentiality. I will not share any information about informants or what is said during the interviews with anyone other than Kim Boeskov. Sound clips from the interviews in my custody will be deleted as soon as I am told by Kim Boeskov. The sound clips will not be shared with anyone under no circumstances.

The translator:

Researcher:

Date:

Date:

Name:

Name:

Signature:

Signature:

Appendix 2: Interview guide for participants

Interviewguide – participants

Background/general experiences

How many years have you been in the music project?

Is there some experience related to the music project that you remember as special?

Can you describe your relationship to music?

The music program

What do you do in the music program? Can you tell me about your experiences with these activities? What is your role in these activities?

- instrument tuition
- orchestra playing
- dancing lessons
- concerts, performances, commemorations
- cultural exchange activities

Relations in the music program

Can you tell me about your relationships to the other students?

How are your relationship with the teachers?

Sometimes Norwegians visit to make music activities with you. What do you think about that?

Music, songs, dancing

Tell me about the music you play in the project. Which songs are your favorites? Why?

Are you part of the dabke-team? What do you like about dancing?

Social significance and the future

What is the most important thing for you about the music project?

How does the music program affect the children who participate? And the people in Rashidieh in general?

What are your goals for the future?

Closing remarks

Is there anything you would like to add, or something you would like people to know about the music program that we haven't talked about?

Appendix 3: Interview guide for teachers, administrators

Interviewguide – teachers, administrators

Background/general experiences

How many years have you been in the music program?

Is there some experience related to the music project that you remember as special?

Can you describe your relationship to music?

The music program

You play a lot of different music in the program. English, Norwegian and Palestinian songs. Can you tell me about the music you play?

The children learn to dance *dabke* here. What is the significance of this dance?

The music program is established in collaboration with Norwegians. Can you tell me about this relationship?

Social significance

How does the music program affect the children who participate?

How does the music program affect the Palestinian community and the camp in general?

(follow up questions could concern remembering Palestine, cultural/national identity, resistance, recognition, empowerment)

Groups from the music program often perform at concerts and commemorations. Can you tell me about the significance of these events?

What significance does the music program have for maintaining Palestinian culture?

Groups from the music program have been in Norway to perform. What is the most important about these trips as you see it? What is the most important experiences for the participants at these trips?

Closing remarks

Is there anything you would like to add, or something you would like people to know about the music program that we haven't talked about?

Appendix 4: Letter of approval - NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Kim Boeskov
Senter for musikk og helse Norges musikkhøgskole
Slemdalsveien 11
0369 OSLO

Vår dato: 23.11.2015

Vår ref: 45343 / 3 / KH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 26.10.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

45343 *The musical practice as cultural performance: Relations of meaning, musical agency and social transformation in community music*
Behandlingsansvarlig Norges musikkhøgskole, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig Kim Boeskov

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 01.09.2018, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Haugstvedt tlf: 55 58 29 53

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no

TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrr.svarva@svt.ntnu.no

TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@svt.uib.no

Personvernombudet for forskning



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 45343

Utvalget består av 6-10 palestinske barn og unge som deltar i et norsk-finansiert musikkprosjekt i en flyktningleir i Libanon. Personvernombudet legger til grunn at utvalget rekrutteres i samarbeid med ledelsen av musikkprosjektet i Libanon, og at nødvendige tillatelser for gjennomføring av datainnsamlingen i leiren foreligger.

Utvalget vil motta skriftlig og muntlig informasjon om prosjektet. Personvernombudet legger til grunn at barna mottar muntlig og tilpasset informasjon om hva deltakelse innebærer. Vi forutsetter at det innhentes samtykke fra foreldrene for barn og unge under 16 år. Unge som er over 16 kan samtykke til egen deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet om prosjektet er tilfredsstillende utformet, men dersom data innhentes på andre måter enn ved intervju, f.eks. observasjon, bilder, bildeopptak, må dette fremgå av skrevet. Vi ber da om å få revidert skriv tilsendt på følgende adresse: personvernombudet@nsd.no

Det innhentes sensitive opplysninger i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 2 punkt 8 c).

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Norges musikkhøgskole sine retningslinjer for datasikkerhet i alle faser av prosjektet.

Det legges videre til grunn at det inngås en avtale med tolken, og at taushetserklæring signeres.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 01.09.2018. Innsamlede opplysninger anonymiseres.

Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted, alder og kjønn)
- slette eventuelle lyd-/bilde- og videoopptak

Enkeltpersoner vil ikke kunne identifiseres i avhandling/publikasjoner.

Kim Boeskov

Fra: Kjersti Haugstvedt <kjersti.haugstvedt@nsd.no>
Sendt: 14. februar 2016 14:04
Til: Kim Boeskov
Emne: Prosjektnr: 45343. The musical practice as cultural performance: Relations of meaning, musical agency and social transformation in community music

BEKREFTELSE

Vi viser til henvendelse den 19.01.16, hvor det fremgår at 40-50 barn som deltar i musikkaktiviteter vil bli observert. Det er utformet et eget informasjonsskriv (generell deltakelse) for denne delen av studien. Vi finner skrevet tilfredsstillende utformet, med unntak at at samtykker (muntlig) må innhentes fra dem som skal delta, ikke fra dem som ikke skal delta. Reservasjon er altså ikke tilstrekkelig.

Vi finner skrevet til spesifikk deltakelse tilfredsstillende utformet.

Vi viser ellers til vår vurdering av prosjektet datert 24.11.15.

--

Kjersti Haugstvedt
Spesialrådgiver/Special Adviser
Tel: +47 55 58 29 53
nsd.no | twitter.com/NSDdata

Kim Boeskov

Fra: Audun G. Løvlie <audun.lovlie@nsd.no>
Sendt: 30. mai 2016 16:34
Til: Kim Boeskov
Emne: Prosjektnr: 45343. The musical practice as cultural performance: Relations of meaning, musical agency and social transformation in community music

BEKREFTELSE PÅ ENDRING

Viser til endringsmelding registrert 03.05.2016.

Personvernombudet har registrert at utvalgets størrelse utvides til 10 barn under 16 år og opp til 10 unge og voksne over 16 år.

Ombudet forutsetter at det brukes tilpassede og tilsvarende informasjonsskriv og samtykkeprosedyre som tidligere kommentert av personvernombudet.

Personvernombudet forutsetter at prosjektopplegget forøvrig gjennomføres i tråd med det som tidligere er innmeldt, og personvernombudets tilbakemeldinger. Vi vil ta ny kontakt ved prosjektslutt.

Ta gjerne kontakt dersom du har spørsmål.

--

Audun G. Løvlie
Rådgiver/Adviser
Tel: +47 55 58 23 07
nsd.no | twitter.com/NSDdata

Appendix 5: Information sheet for general participation in the study – English

Information about research project

Title: The musical practice as cultural performance: Relations of meaning, musical agency and social transformation in community music

Background and aim: The research is part of a ph.d. project at the Norwegian Academy of Music. The aim is to understand how participation in a musical practice potentially can lead to processes of social transformation:

What does participation entail? Between March, 2016 and June, 2017 the researcher (Kim Boeskov) will participate in the music activities and record some of these activities with a video camera. These recordings will only be used by the researcher and not publicly shared.

What happens to the participants' personal information? All personal information will be treated with full confidentiality. All descriptions of the musical practice based on observations and video recordings will be fully anonymized, no characteristics that will make it possible to identify specific persons will appear, and nothing will be able to link the participants to specific things said or done in the music project. The project is scheduled to terminate September, 1st, 2018. After the termination of the project, all data material will be fully anonymized and all video recordings will be deleted.

Participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any time without a reason. If you wish to withdraw, all recordings with you on them will be deleted at once. Withdrawal will not have any consequences for your further participation in the music activities in any way.

If you do not want to participate, or if you have any questions to the research, please contact the leaders of Beit Atfal Assumoud or the researcher Kim Boeskov +47 96 90 71 77 or kim.boeskov@nmh.no.

The study has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Appendix 6: Information sheet for general participation in the study – Arabic

حضرة الاهل الكرام،

الرجاء قراءة النص ادناه والتأكد من فهمه وان كان لديكم اي اسئلة واستفسارات يرجى التواصل مع مؤسسة بيت اطفال الصمود في مركز الرشيدية .

تحيطكم مؤسسة بيت اطفال الصمود - مركز الرشيدية بان منتطوع من النروج ويدعى كيم بوسكوف سيقوم باجراء مقابلات وتسجيل فيديو للاطفال المشاركين ببرنامج الموسيقى والدبكة في مركز الرشيدية خلال الفترة الممتدة من شهر اذار 2016 ولغاية حزيران 2017 وذلك من اجل اعداد بحث جامعي اكاديمي حول مدى تأثير الموسيقى على الاطفال والشباب المشاركين ببرنامج الموسيقى وكيف يمكن ان يؤدي الى تغيير في عمليات التحول الاجتماعي (البحث هو مشروع شهادة دكتوراه للمسيد كيم يقدمه للاكاديمية الموسيقية في النروج وتم الموافقة عليه من قبل المركز النروجي للبيانات البحثية). سوف تستعمل هذه التسجيلات فقط من الباحث نفسه ولن تعرض على احد غيره وسوف يتم التعامل مع كافة المعلومات بخصوصية وسرية تامة . وتسجيلات الفيديو ستكون مجهولة المصدر بالكامل ولن يتم معرفة هوية الاشخاص الذين يظهرون بالفيديو .

بعد انتهاء المشروع ستمحى كافة التسجيلات وكل المعلومات والمعطيات ستكون ذات خصوصية تامة .

المشاركة هو تطوعية بالكامل ويمكن الانسحاب باي وقت ودون اي سبب .

بحال موافقة الاهل على ما ورد اعلاه نأمل منكم التوقيع على هذه الورقة واعادتها مع ابنتكم / ابنتكم الى مركز مؤسسة بيت اطفال الصمود في الرشيدية.

انا الموقع ادناه : اوافق على مشاركة ابني/ ابنتي على ما ورد اعلاه.

توقيع الوالد/ الوالدة او ولي الامر : التاريخ:

Appendix 7: Information sheet for specific participation (interviews) in the study – English

Information about research project – for interview participants

Title: The musical practice as cultural performance: Relations of meaning, musical agency and social transformation in community music

Background and aim: The research is part of a ph.d. project at the Norwegian Academy of Music. The aim is to understand how participation in a musical practice potentially can lead to processes of social transformation.

To help me understand this I would like to talk to you about your experiences as a participant in the music project. I have chosen you because I believe your experiences will be of great value to my research.

Before you decide whether you want to participate, it is important for you to understand what your participation will involve. Please read the following information carefully. If anything is unclear or you would like more information, please do not hesitate to ask me.

What does participation entail? The interview will last for approximately one hour. Participants will be interviewed either alone or in a small group. A translator will be present at the interview. The translator has signed an agreement of confidentiality and will not share any information about the interview with anyone else. The interview will focus on your experiences as a participant in the music project. (If your child is participating, you will have the opportunity to get a copy of the interview guide.)

What happens to the participants' personal information? All personal information will be treated with full confidentiality. The researcher will make a sound recording of the interview which will only be heard by the researcher and the translator. The transcribed interview will not include your name or any other information about you. The published material will be fully anonymized and not include any names or any personal characteristics that will make it possible to identify you or connect you to the things you say in the interview. The project is scheduled to terminate September, 1st, 2018. After the termination of the project, all data material will be fully anonymized and all sound recordings will be deleted.

Participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any time without a reason. If you wish to withdraw, all of the material related to your participation in the research project will be deleted at once. Withdrawal will not have any consequences for your further participation in the music activities in any way.

If you have any questions please contact the leaders of Beit Atfal Assumoud or the researcher Kim Boeskov +47 96 90 71 77 or kim.boeskov@nmh.no.

The study has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Appendix 8: Information sheet for specific participation (interviews) in the study – Arabic

معلومات عن المشروع

العنوان : النشاط الموسيقي، كإداء ثقافي

الهدف من المشروع : البحث هو جزء من مشروع شهادة دكتوراه في الأكاديمية النرويجية للموسيقى . الهدف هو لفهم كيف ان الاشتراك بالنشاط الموسيقي يمكن ان يؤدي الى تغيير في عملية التحول الاجتماعي .

على المشارك ان يعلم ان الباحث يود التحدث معه عن تجاربه كمشارك في مشروع الموسيقى وهو اختاره لانه يؤمن بان تجربته سوف تكون ذات تأثير كبير على بحثه.

قيل ان تقرر اذا تريد المشاركة ، عليك ان تفهم ماذا سوف تشمل مشاركتك وعليك ان تقرأ المعلومات بانتباه وإذا كان هناك اي شيء غير واضح او تود الاستفسار عن المعلومات، رجاء لا تردد بان تسأل الباحث.

ماذا تتطلب المشاركة ؟

سوف تكون المقابلة تقريبا ساعة واحدة وسيتم مقابلة المشارك اما لوحده او ضمن مجموعة صغيرة وفي المقابلة سوف يكون متواجد مترجم وهذا المترجم وقع على اتفاقية الخصوصية (السرية) التامة ولن يشارك اي معلومة عن المقابلة مع اي شخص آخر .

المقابلة سوف تركز على تجاربك كمشارك في المشروع الموسيقي .

ماذا تحصل لمعلوماتك الشخصية ؟

كل المعلومات الشخصية سوف تعامل بسرية تامة . الباحث سوف يسجل المقابلة مسجلا صوتيا وسوف يطلع على التسجيل فقط الباحث والمترجم . المقابلة المسجلة لن تشمل اسماءكم او اي معلومات اخرى عنكم . المواد المنشورة لن تضم اسماء او اي خصائص شخصية وإذا سيكون من المستحيل التعرف على هويتكم او الاتصال بكم حول الاشياء التي تذكروها في المقابلة .

* تكون نهاية المشروع في الاول من ايلول 2018 . وبعد نهاية المشروع ستبقى كل التسجيلات الصوتية وكافة البيانات.

* المشاركة تطوعية بالكامل ويمكنك سحب موافقتك باي وقت وبدون اي سبب . اذا تحب الانسحاب كل المعلومات المتعلقة بمشاركتك في البحث سوف تحمي . الانسحاب لن يكون له تأثير على مشاركتك في الانشطة الموسيقية القائمة .

* اذا كان لديكم اي اسئلة ، الرجاء التواصل مع مؤسسة بيت اطفال الصمود او الباحث كيم

* لقد تمت الموافقة على الدراسة من قبل مركز بحث البيانات النرويجي.

How does active music-making become a means of social transformation? This has been a driving question for Kim Boeskov in this study of a community music program in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon.

Through an ethnographic exploration of the Palestinian music program and critical investigations of the dominating conceptions of music and social transformation in the field of music education, Boeskov rethinks music as a means of social change. Boeskov shows how musical participation allows the Palestinian children and youth to experience feelings of belonging, commonality and agency, but also how such experiences are intimately tied to the constitution of specific cultural and social truths that in crucial ways constrain how the young Palestinians are enabled to make sense of their social world.

Contemplating the paradoxes of this particular musical practice and drawing on insights from cultural anthropology, feminist philosophy and critical musicology, Boeskov advances the notion of *ambiguous musical practice*. As an analytical lens highlighting the ambivalent processes that occur when music is employed as a means of social intervention, this notion extends the ways in which the fields of community music and music education can imagine and conceptualize music's social significance.

Kim Boeskov (b. 1985) has master's degrees in music education from the Rhythmic Music Conservatory (Copenhagen, Denmark) and Aarhus University. He has more than ten years' experience as a music teacher and community music facilitator in a range of contexts.

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