Hybrid Identities And The Role Of Music In Their Formation

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Abstract: Columbia hosts a wide variety of vibrant musical traditions, whose differences have been fostered by the diverse topography, complex political history, and social and cultural traditions. In an increasingly interconnected world, these traditions have come to compete and blend together with influences and inspirations from international musical scenes, that reflect the different levels of global interconnectedness among the different regions of Colombia. This piece explores the results from an ethnographic study, in which observations and interviews were conducted throughout the months of November and December 2014, in various music venues located throughout Melbourne to determine what occurred when Colombian music migrated to Melbourne. This evolved into a study of two expatriate Colombian musicians who are based in Melbourne. The musicians showed that when producing music they utilised their Colombian heritage as well as drawing on Australian culture; creating a hybridised form of music culture. These findings provide an example of the hybridisation of culture and how individuals utilise their past and present environment to inform their cultural identity.

Keywords: imagined community, Colombia, Australia, hybridity, music, migration

Introduction

In an increasingly globalised world where travel and migration have become common, the Colombian community is slowly growing within urban centres around Australia, especially within Melbourne. A transformation of culture has been occurring with more traditional forms of Colombian music being fused with elements from modern Australian culture. This paper analyses how two individuals fuse Colombian and Australian culture creating a reciprocal relationship between identity and music.

Colombia has a diverse culture attributed to its unique history and topography. Food, dress, weaponry, sculpture, art and music are unique to its regions. Music provides a useful demonstration of Colombian culture. Each region utilises different instruments and rhythms, creating a diverse range of genres. Traditional music on the western coast includes curruloa, the contrandanza and the bamboleo. Whilst in the northern cost, *La Costa*, traditional music encompasses Cumbia, Porro,

Vallenato, Bullerengue. The Bambuco, the pasillo and the guabina are from the Andean region whilst the Joropo and the Galerón are from the *Los Llanos* (the plains) (Williams & Guerrieri, 1999). Each genre draws on elements from the region's history, incorporating aspects of culture from local indigenous tribes, African slaves and/or the Spanish (Olivella 1967; Wade 2006). Over the last few decades, artists began to mix traditional Colombian music with modern instruments and music. Porro, is one example, of a folkloric music genre which was been modernised and fused with Jazz (Wade 2006). Fusing different forms of culture together appears to be a trend within Colombian cultural history.

Within the Australian context, 'Colombian inspired bands' incorporate different languages, elements, genres and degrees of Colombian and Latin American music. Due to this, each band has created a unique sound, informing the Australian music scene as one of many international influences. Music, as a cultural platform and expression, has the ability to aid in the creation of an individuals identity (Laiho 2009).

Literature Review
An individual, over their lifespan, creates their own habits, behaviours and thoughts, forming their own identity. A person is influenced by external factors: socio economic status, family, religion, location, culture etc. impacting a persons behaviour and identity (Ortner 2006). People often express themselves through their culture: theatre, dance art, music, food and sport; which forms their own cultural identity.

Stuart Hall (1990: 225) defines culture "as belonging to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories". Our cultural identity draws on our individual experiences as well deeply rooted shared cultural history in which an individual grows up in (Hall 1990). A shared cultural identity affects an individual's identity, embedding social and cultural norms in to the family unit and the individual. Thus cultural identity is forever evolving and changing.

One form of cultural identity is music, which can have a profound influence on individuals, communities, and countries. Music is an art form, with increasing accessibility, which has the ability to connect to people, influence an individual's mood, satisfy emotional needs and express oneself (Hargreaves & North, 1999; Laiho, 2009; Merriam, 1964, p 219; North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000). Music also has the ability to aid in the formation of an individuals identity (Laiho 2009; Hargreaves & North 1999; Larson 1995). Individuals often use the identification of a specific genre of music as a badge and symbol of values in certain social groups, which allows for a person to identify with a community or culture (Hargreaves & North 1999). Therefore, music has a profound effect on an individual's formation of their cultural identity.

Music, as a cultural expression, transforms like other aspects of culture and is forever evolving and changing to due the inherent nature of culture and influence. Hall (1990), argues that over the course of time and migration, culture will change and adapt to its circumstances, constantly producing different variations of the same culture, a hybrid culture. Hall theorised about postcolonial societies, specifically the Caribbean, and how their cultures are hybrid forms of cultural identity, due to colonization (Hall 1990). This theory is also applicable to Colombia, which has a history of colonization and slave trade. Furthermore, Anderson (2006) argues that the idea of nationhood is 'imagined' due to the sense of 'horizontal comradeship' between people who have never met. People attribute common history, traits, beliefs and attitudes to the nation, creating an imagined community. Wade (2000) argues that within Colombian history, there have been instances where music has aided in the formation of a Colombian national identity, by drawing on the idea of an imagined community. Colombian nationhood is a mixture of

indigenous, Africans and European cultures (Wade 2000). Although the culture has transformed, Colombian culture is still an authentic form of cultural expression.

To understand the hybridisation of culture within a global context, Kraidy (2005, p.5) provides a useful definition which this article will utilise, "hybridity involves the fusion of two hitherto relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities, cross-cultural contact, which often occurs across national borders as well as across cultural boundaries, is a requisite for hybridity." This definition allows hybridity to be understood when analyzing cultural migration and the fusion of cultures to create new forms of artistic expression.

To explore how the combining of musical forms can influence the hybridisation of cultural identity, this paper focuses on two individuals, Oscar Jiminez and Henry Pena and their bands, Watussi and Madre Monte, respectively. These individuals provide for an interesting study to investigate how Colombian music has been fused and hybridised within an Australian setting, demonstrating the implications for individual identity.

This paper analyses how these individuals utilise culture and music to form their identity and the importance that music has for individuals in expressing culture. This article argues that in their migration to Australia, their culture and identity has transformed and hybridised, creating a Colombian/ Australian cultural identity, which is represented within their music production providing an avenue for cultural expression. These individuals are both excellent examples of how migration impacts on identity and creates new forms of hybrid cultural identities.

Methodology
This project uses an ethnographic approach to discover how Colombian music has hybridised within an Australian setting. Observations were conducted at various music venues throughout Melbourne, which host Latin American and Colombian inspired bands, throughout November and December in 2014 (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007; Fetterman 2010). Observations were also conducted at the Johnston Street Festival in November (Lüders 2004). Field notes were taken throughout the period capturing researcher impressions of public environments (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p.141). A series of 4 semi-structured interviews were conducted with musicians in the Latin American / Colombian music scene throughout this period (Hopf 2004; Holstein & Gubrium 1999). The researcher transcribed the interviews (Britten 2006). Patterns and themes that were present throughout the observation and interview data was coded into categories (Fetterman 2010, p.97). The main themes of identity, music and culture are the basis for this study, which is analysing how music has migrated from Colombia to Australia.

Music and Identity
Music has the ability to influence an individual's formation of identity. Within Oscar and Henrys position as musicians, music has aided their formation of identity in an Australian setting.

Oscar was born in Venezuala to Colombian parents. When Oscar was two years old, his family moved to Barranquilla, Colombia. Oscars childhood was "influenced by a lot of dancing music". When he was 15 years old and living in Bogota he began to learn various musical instruments. With an interest in rock music he started playing in a Latin Ska band.

Oscar was studying sound engineering at University and was exposed to a variety of Latin music: Latin Jazz, Percussive rhythms, classical, string based and more traditional forms of music. Oscar states: "I think my education in Bogota and music education in Bogota really helped do what I do right now."

After two and a half years studying in Bogota, Oscar moved to Sydney, Australia where he continued studying sound engineering. He later completed a degree in multi media production. Although he did not plan too, Oscar has now lived in Australia for 14 years. During his time in

Australia, Oscar began his solo music career drawing on traditional Colombian musical elements. People were receptive to his music and "there was a fascination as people had not heard that type of Latin music." After a period of predominately playing solo Oscar established a Latin / Australian fusion band, Watussi, based in Sydney.

Henry was born in Cali, Colombia, a city in the south west of Colombia. When Henry was a teenager he "was really into heavy metal, really really. I was sort of closed minded about it, it had to be heavy metal." Referring to traditional forms of Colombian music Henry says, "You listen to it on the radio and stuff, with your parents, but with your friends it was always heavy metal… I used to hate reggae."

In 2003, 18-year-old Henry completed high school and chose to study music production in Australia. Henry studied in both Sydney and Byron Bay before moving to Melbourne where he discovered a vibrant music scene. Whilst studying music production, Henry was, like Oscar, exposed to an eclectic range of music, opening his mind to new sonic avenues, especially reggae. A year or so after moving to Melbourne, Henry met Mauricio Gomez a fellow Colombian, who was also studying music production. Inspired by their Colombian roots, Henry and Maurcio, formed Madre Monte, a Colombian inspired 9-piece band.

Oscar, as a teenager in Colombia, was 'swamped' with Cumbia, Vallenato and various other Afro Colombian beats and so he was drawn to rock as an outlet, which as stated previously, sparked his interest in music. It was only after living abroad that he began to reconnect with his Colombian roots to satisfy his cultural needs. "I feel that it really helped to live here for such a long time, you know, without going to my country because a lot of things I miss from Colombia I access here." This sentiment becomes even more important and relevant when Oscars expresses his feelings about the relationship between identity, music and culture. "When I identify myself, when I am presenting a project that its me, its going to have that in it, its almost impossible, just because that's how I feel you know."

To Henry, "Music in general is like everything." He views this as the most important part of his day, from the moment he wakes up to the moment he goes to sleep. Which directly links into his passion and love for his band, Madre Monte, playing an integral role in many big decisions in his life.

Madre Monte is Henry's place to express himself, and when speaking about the band, he finds it very difficult to put into words how much Madre Monte actually means to him. "Colombian music helps me feel connected to Colombia, to home... I feel like every year since I have been and making music, I am becoming more connected to Colombia even though I am living in Australia and at the same time I am becoming more Australian in many ways."

Each artist expressed their disinterest in more traditional forms of Colombian music until they migrated to their culture. For both Oscar and Henry, their production of music is a way for them to connect to their Colombian roots and to the Colombian and Latin American community in Australia. Music is a way for them of coping with the stressors of living away from their home for so many years. Colombian culture is deeply rooted within each individual and each individual has been influenced by the shared Colombian cultural identity that has been transforming over the centuries. This manifests itself for these individuals in their relationship with music, as active musicians and consumers.

Each artist has drawn upon their Colombian roots to aid in their formation of identity within an Australian context. Their production of music allows them to express their shared cultural history whilst drawing on their current environment; utilizing music to express their Colombian identity. Therefore, music mutually reinforces cultural identity and cultural expression.

Hybridity, Culture & Identity

In Oscar and Henrys migration to Australia and in their positions as musicians, they created a hybridised form of music by fusing various forms of Colombian and Australian cultural elements.

Watussi, is Oscar's Sydney based band with the vision "to create a Latin American sound, that sounded Australian." They were influenced by Australian rock, funk and reggae, to create something that Australians could relate to, while utilising a South American sound in their music. "Watussi has also been influenced by the fact that we have been touring, playing festivals and performing to Australian audiences." Oscar goes on to state that as an artist and band, you cannot ignore the audience you are playing to and their interests. The local audience must be able to relate to the music and so Watussi tailors their music to appeal to wider audiences.

Watussi, adhere to their original idea to create both an Australian and a Latin American sound, consistently drawing inspiration from Latin American music. Specifically they draw on Brazilian musical elements, due to the Brazilian community following in Sydney as well as Peruvian musical elements as a result of their tour in Peru, in 2010. The majority of the songs are sung in Spanish. Watussi, produces a sound which can be considered both Latin American and Australian, drawing on both styles equally, creating a hybrid musical identity.

Oscars solo career presents a very different cultural story to that of Watussi. His solo career has been heavily influenced by Afro Colombian rhythms, such as cumbia, curuolloa and afro beat mix as well as Brazilian rhythms. Similar to his experience with writing music with Watussi, Oscar draws on the many different influences that he has come. Speaking about his solo work Oscar states that, "working as a solo artist (and in that frame, as musician) I was very Colombian." Another major influence in Oscar's music is his want to "extend (Colombian) traditions to other people, a bridge for Colombians to the rest of the world in the music… So I feel that our music is a very good tool to change people's mind about what Colombian is about." This is important to Oscar due to the negative perception that Colombians receive based on its recent history and the media's portrayal.

Henry, four years after leaving Colombia, found himself homesick, which saw him listening to all an array of musical genres. Amongst them traditional Colombian music; especially cumbia, ska and reggae and "one day it sorted of click(ed) that they fit together really well, just musically they fit together really well." With that focus in mind he began to write music for Madre Monte, mixing eclectic forms of music, reflecting his new musical tastes; Colombian traditional music, reggae, ska and rock alongside musical influences from his Melbournian surroundings.,

As the years passed, and Madre Monte began producing album after album, they found the cumbia to become inherent in many songs. Looking for new musical forms to draw upon, Henry asked his salsa-loving mum, still living in Cali, about the music scene in his home city. He discovered that due to the migration of people from the Pacific Coast, there was now a vibrant Pacific Coast musical community in Cali, "the pacific music is really really strong in Cali, like massive." The Afro Colombian community heavily influences Pacific Coast music utilising instruments such as the marimiba, bombo, cununus and guasás (Olivella 1967). Having discovered this new form of vibrant beats and instruments, they began writing new music utilising aspects of the Curruloa and the Pacific Coast music culture. Henry went on to state, "We didn't want to make traditional cumbia, or traditional curruloa, or just pure reggae, we wanted to try and make something different." Madre Monte, in creating their new album "are trying to make a concept album and to use myths from Australia as well," drawing on a different element of Australian culture.

In their migration to Australia, each artist has utilised their Colombian heritage in their production of music whilst also drawing on their Australian environment. Both artists have made

a conscious decision in the production of music to incorporate their Colombian culture. Oscar started Watussi with the vision to create a hybrid form of Latin American and Australian music whilst his solo career adheres more strictly to his Colombian roots. Henry and Madre Monte created a hybrid form of cumbia, ska and reggae; drawing mainly on Colombian culture. Each has created a distinct hybridised form of music based on their lived experiences. While these individuals produce very different styles of music, they draw on similar traditional elements of Colombian culture. Although they both utilise music heavily to identify themselves, they, and their bands have created a unique hybrid form of cultural expression and identity.

Conclusion

There are a variety of similarities and differences between Henry and Oscar's approach and production of music. One of the most significant similarities in their music, is the reason that they draw upon traditional forms of Colombian music: their connection to their Colombian culture and identity. Although neither individual listened to traditional forms of Colombian music when in Colombia, they were both drawn to the music after they migrated to Australia. In this instance, music is used in the formation of their identity in an Australian context. Music has allowed each artist to connect to their home country and culture, drawing on this to aid in identity formation and to express their cultural heritage, allowing for a reciprocal relation to occur between music and identity.

In the production of music, artists draw on a variety of cultural influences. Madre Monte, Watussi and Oscar's Solo career, are all very different styles of Colombian / Australian cultural expression. These contrastive cases show that there is no single form of cultural expression / identity but that there can be multiple variations. In the production of hybridised cultural identity, these two individuals take divergent paths producing different sounds. Each artist utilises different aspects of traditional forms of Colombian music as well as different Australian styles of music drawing on their own experiences, interests and tastes in music.

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