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Ethnomusicology's "Identity" Problem: The History and Definitions of a Troubled Term in Music Research

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Abstract

This article takes a diachronic look at the use of the word "identity" in ethnomusicology and related disciplines, synthesizing disparate uses and definitions to suggest an all-encompassing yet concise definition. Expanding from a critical piece by Timothy Rice (2007) on the topic, the literature review for the present study included not only articles in major ethnomusicology journals with the word "identity" in the title –as Rice did– but also monographs, anthologies, and academic encyclopedias in the realms of ethnomusicology, musicology, psychology, cultural studies, and anthropology where "identity" was a principal theme. The interdisciplinary and chronological approach shows writing about "identity" to be disjointed in ethnomusicology and in related disciplines, but not entirely devoid of heuristic value. A broad but highly portable definition is suggested before taking stock of the remaining work needed to achieve a uniquely musical take on identity.

Keywords: Identity, ethnomusicology, musicology, terminology

El problema de la "identidad" en la etnomusicología: historia y definiciones de un término problemático en la investigación musical

Resumen

El artículo ensaya una mirada diacrónica del uso de la palabra "identidad" en la etnomusicología y las disciplinas relacionadas, sintetizando diversos usos y definiciones para proponer una definición abarcadora, aunque concisa. A partir de un trabajo crítico sobre el tema escrito por Timothy Rice (2007), la revisión bibliográfica comprende no solo artículos de las publicaciones periódicas más destacadas en los cuales aparece la palabra "identidad" en los títulos –como Rice señala–, sino también en trabajos incluidos en monografías, antologías y enciclopedias de las áreas de la etnomusicología, la musicología, la psicología, los estudios

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culturales y la antropología, donde la "identidad" es tratada como tema central. El acercamiento interdisciplinario y cronológico revela que lo escrito sobre la "identidad" en la etnomusicología y las disciplinas cercanas está desarticulado, aunque no carece de valor heurístico. Se sugiere una definición amplia, aunque versátil, antes de evaluar el trabajo necesario para lograr un estimación final, únicamente musical, de la "identidad".

Palabras clave: identidad, etnomusicología, musicología, terminología

O problema da "identidade" na etnomusicologia: a história e as definições de um termo problemático na pesquisa em música

Resumo

Este artigo aborda, através de um olhar diacrônica, o uso da palavra "identidade" na etnomusicologia e nas disciplinas relacionadas, sintetizando as diferentes definições e usos do termo para sugerir uma definição abrangente mas também concisa. Tomando como ponto de partido um artigo crítico sobre o mesmo assunto pelo etnomusicólogo Timothy Rice (2007), a presente pesquisa contemplou não só os artigos de importantes revistas da etnomusicologia que incluíam a palavra "identidade" no seu título −da mesma forma que Rice fez− mas também monografias, antologias e enciclopédias acadêmicas dos campos da etnomusicologia, musicologia, psicologia, estudos culturais, antropologia e enciclopédias em que a identidade se destacava como tema importante. Esta abordagem interdisciplinar e cronológica revela que a escrita sobre "identidade" é desarticulada na etnomusicologia e nas disciplinas afins, mas não completamente sem valor heurístico. Uma definição aberta e portátil será sugerida antes de avaliar o trabalho que resta para chegar a uma perspectiva singularmente musical sobre a identidade.

Palavras-chave: identidade, etnomusicologia, musicologia, terminologia

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Introduction: Purpose and Scope of the Research

Identity is a complicated matter, not only for individuals and groups, but also for scholars. With the explosion of the term "identity" in academic work –mostly during the 1990s and tapering off to an apparent plateau in the 21st century– it has become a hardworking word with disparate definitions and theorizations (when authors theorize it at all, and often they do not). In ethnomusicology, and seemingly in other disciplines, scholars have taken it up individually but failed to create any real conversation about it by engaging each other's work on the matter (Rice 2007). Similarly, in anthropology identity is a "vexed" and "murky" topic (Lurhmann 2001: 7154). In folklore, it has been called "strangely undertheorized" (Berger and Del Negro 2004: 124). In ethnomusicology, the very definition of identity is "rather confusing" as authors often avoid an explicit definition, leading to different operational definitions that the reader must intuit (Rice 2007: 21).

For all the fractured concern for the topic, however, the concept of identity can provide a useful perspective on human thought, behavior, and expressive culture. But to what extent has the use of the term "identity" been merely a means of circumventing an even more fraught word, "culture"? How can we find some common ground in the varied definitions of "identity"? And, once defined, what is music's relationship to identity?

To answer these questions, this article is a diachronic look at identity as a word and concept since the late 1950's, primarily in ethnomusicology but also in related disciplines. Expanding prior work by Timothy Rice (2007), here I give a more diachronic analysis and focus not only on ethnomusicology articles with "identity" in the title, but on any significant use of the term in article texts. I have also cast a wider net, including not only *Ethnomusicology*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, and *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, but also musicology, anthropology, and folklore journals. I have also given additional coverage to works on Latin American music, in both Spanish and English. Furthermore, my purview includes monographs, anthologies, and academic encyclopedias in the realms of ethnomusicology, musicology, psychology, cultural studies, and anthropology[1].

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[1] Readers may be curious to know more about the search methods and parameters used here. Because I take a diachronic approach focused on comparing the shifting uses of the term identity in different decades, the study was naturally limited to the last half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st. I began with a similar approach to that of Rice (2007), using journal databases to find articles with "identity" in the title, but expanding the search to consider music-related journals beyond ethnomusicology, and articles that focused on identity but did not include the word in the title. Such an approach immediately required qualitative decisions to exclude sources that used the term in passing but did not engage with it directly as part of the thesis. Further qualitative exclusions were applied when moving beyond the realm of music into cognate disciplines so as not to grow the bibliography exponentially. In the case of anthropology, for example, the literature review focused on discipline-wide overviews (e.g., Luhrmann 2001), influential works that were cited in music research, and works by other well-known scholars. Similarly, I also considered music-related books –both monographs and anthologies– that took identity as a central or primary theme, using common indices to search titles and keywords. Though I gave some attention to Latin American music scholarship for personal reasons and for the sake of this journal's audience, I do not claim that the included Spanish-language works represent the entirety of the identity theme in all Latin American scholarship. The reason is that the search for the word *identidad* in the titles of music-related works was restricted primarily to

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I begin by looking at some of the definitions of identity, its increased use, and its problematics (or lack thereof). The brunt of the article then covers historical trends in the use of the term over the decades since it first appeared in ethnomusicology in 1958. After looking at the term's historical use and its theoretical adaptations to the study of music, I propose a synthesized definition of the term "identity" followed by some concluding thoughts regarding identity's connection to musical sound itself.

Definitions of identity

As Timothy Rice put it, the literature on identity is "rather confusing" as to how exactly the word "identity" is defined (2007: 21). Even some anthologies on the topic do not attempt a specific definition (e.g., Stokes 1994). Many scholars seem to be content with a colloquial definition that would take identity to be simply the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is. For example, Keith Negus defined "identity" as "characteristic qualities attributed and maintained by individuals and groups of people" (1996: 99). Though this definition adds the concept of group identity, it is somewhat like colloquial definitions of identity and even culture[2].

Authors are more likely now to speak of identity as something imagined rather than given, changing rather than static. Stuart Hall defined it as a process of production, never complete, and "constituted within, not outside representation" (2004: 318). One of the lengthiest definitions is found in *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, identities are:

> […] the imaginings of self in worlds of action, as social products…lived in and through activity" but also defined as "psychohistorical formations that develop over a person's lifetime, populating intimate terrain and motivating social life […] [Identities] are a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them […] [They are] important bases from which people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being (Dorothy Holland et al. 1998: 5).

"Identity" has clearly become a hardworking but amorphous term. There is also some play regarding whether identity is more about interpretation or representation[3]. Harris Berger and Giovanna Del Negro portray identity as "an *interpretive framework* and a set of interpretive
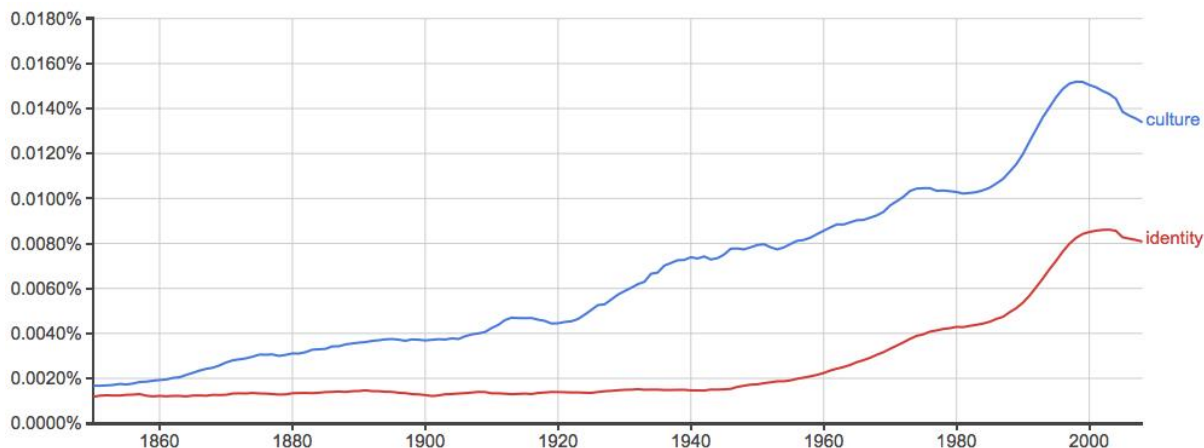
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sources reasonably accessible from my location in the United States. Therefore, journals not represented in resources such as JSTOR, EBSCO, and Project MUSE, and books not easily found in U.S. research libraries were for the most part, unfortunately, excluded. Overall, though I believe the search methods here were necessary to keep the project manageable and cogent, they nonetheless have an unavoidable degree of geographic and linguistic bias. Though comparison of "identity", "*identidad*", and "*identidade*" as taken up in their respective languages was not the purpose of this article, it would likely be an insightful next step to understand the respective biases, preoccupations, and purposes of music scholarship in its many nodes throughout the Americas.

[2] It is curious to note that the *New Oxford American Dictionary* and *Webster's* define culture in one way as "behavior" and "attitude," portraying it as malleable, while identity is portrayed as an essential "fact of being". In some ways it seems academia has reversed the colloquial understandings.

[3] Brubaker and Cooper (2000) have made the distinction between identity as a "category of practice" and a "category of analysis". I mean something slightly different here because I am using "interpretation" not just to mean a scholarly or academic take compared to a "lay" categorization, but to mean an interpretation by any person outside the group in question.

practices, a particular way of making sense of social conduct and expressive culture" (2004: 125, emphasis added). In contrast, Thomas Turino defines it as "the *representation* of selected habits foregrounded in given contexts to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others" (Turino and Lea 2004: 8, emphasis added) or in the case of groups as "the recognition, selection, and sometimes conscious creation of common habits among varying numbers of individuals" (Turino and Lea 2004: 8). Definitions like Turino's seem more common as they focus on a "subject-centered sense of personal agency," even in groups (Lurhmann 2001: 7156). In any case, with so much confusion about just one word –"identity"– the simultaneous use of many adjuncts makes things increasingly scattered and seemingly unrelated: self-identity, group identity, social identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, national identity, regional identity, local identity, musical identity, religious identity, occupational identity, class identity, gender identity, and so on. It is often ambiguous as to whether these adjuncts refer to groups or individuals, though they are commonly used in either manner.

There was one particular adjunct to identity that took prominence during the late 1980s through the 1990s. The frequency of "cultural identity" paralleled an increasing discontent with the term "culture" and the overall "discursive explosion" of identity (Hall and du Gay 1996). The "ngrams" below graph the prevalence of the two words as found in all the English- and Spanish-language texts that constitute Google's massive book digitization project (see figures 1 [English] and 2 [Spanish]). Over the course of the twentieth century, the use of the word "culture" increases steadily, perhaps corresponding to the growth and popularity of academic anthropology. "Identity", though, becomes more prevalent after the work of psychologist Erik Erikson in the late 1950s. The simultaneous explosion of the two words in the last decade of the twentieth century is remarkable. Though this system cannot distinguish academic work from any other printed works, one might wonder about the possibility that the increasing use of the word "culture" in popular media (e.g., "multi-culturalism" or "culture wars") convinced some scholars to abandon it in favor of "identity". Put simply, academics may have curtailed their use of the increasingly fraught term "culture" during that time, jumping from the blue line to the red line during the 1990s.

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Figure 1. Prevalence of the words "culture" and "identity" in English-language books (1850–2008)
(https://books.google.com/ngrams, accessed 2016–01–12).
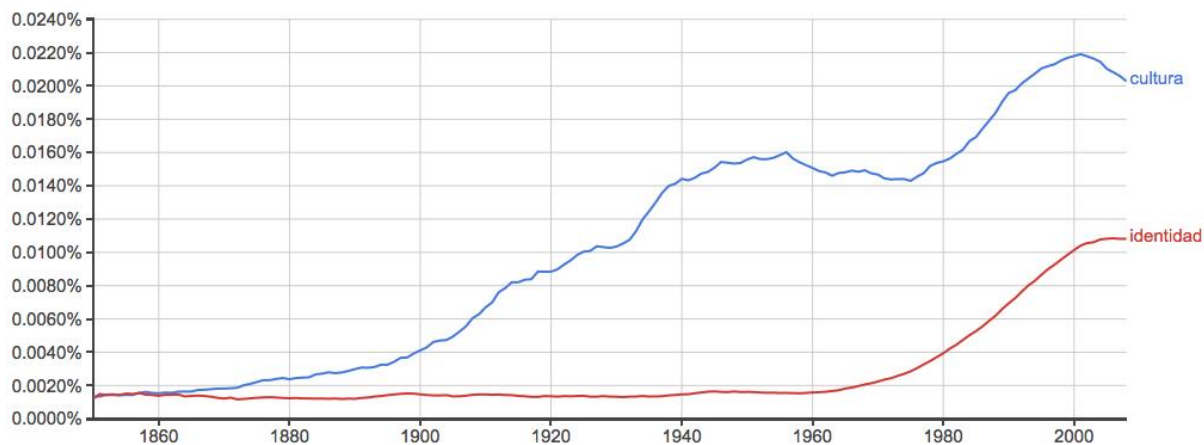
Figure 2. Prevalence of the words *cultura* and *identidad* in Spanish-language books (1850–2008)
(https://books.google.com/ngrams, accessed 2016–01–12).

It may be impossible to draw satisfactory conclusions about that, but a diachronic study of "identity" does reveal a certain interrelationship of the two terms. Because "identity" may have been used as a remedy to the "predicament" of "culture", the concept of identity is sometimes written from a rather carefree or uncritical stance. Such a stance assumes that identity implies greater agency, liberating the subject from the structures and strictures of the term "culture". It may have also provided authors a certain freedom from explicitly theorizing their material to the extent that the very embrace of the term "identity" implies a certain perspective, e.g. a move away from the term "culture" and its theoretical assumptions –a theory through the negation of other theories, perhaps. Since identity may have been the response to a problem, it does not have a clear set of problematics associated with it. However, a number of ambiguities and points of alarming silence do appear.

One crucial aspect of identity-speak that is rarely made explicit is whether terms like

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"ethnic identity" refer to something within the individual –an individual's interpretation of their own identity as it relates to ethnicity– or something agreed upon by a group as a whole. Put as a simpler question, is "social identity" an individual's perception and notions about the way in which s/he plays a role in constituting a group, or is social identity a shared set of values, essences, and so on, shared by a group? This issue is usually only implicit in the study of identity (with the possible exceptions of the disciplines of psychology and sociology). It is barely submerged under the surface, ready to pop up along the edges when critical weight is applied to any description or theorizing of identity. The proclivity to avoid this issue may be because it connects directly back to studies of the relationship between personality and culture, or the individual and society –well tread ground indeed.

Another silent problematic for identity is the nature of its construction; is it described from an insider perspective about a self or group, ascribed by an outsider noting characteristics and central group themes, or achieved by an individual in relation to a preexisting identity of some sort? The positionality of the subject becomes troubled, as do representational strategies, especially of ethnographers. Indeed, the entire identity project usually fails to acknowledge the centrality of the ethnographer in identity construction, at least as it is recounted to outsiders drastically removed from the context being reported. These problems in the work on identity will be considered from an historical perspective, beginning with a somewhat surprising author.

1950s–70s

The early appearances of the word "identity" in music scholarship were characterized by two parallel uses. The first, maybe the most prevalent until the 1970s, was the concern for self-identity (though the modifier "self-" was generally not needed or employed). The other was the increasing use of the term as a move away from other less politically correct terms such as *race* or *tribe*. This was partly due to the rise of identity politics and, later, postmodern thought (Luhrmann 2001). Though the 1950s and 60s were focused primarily on individual identity as a result of the work by Erik Erikson, it is interesting to note one very early and unexpected use of the term "identity" in reference to a group.

At least as early as 1958, ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood clearly used the term "identity" to refer to a group, specifically of a society in general, in a paper delivered at the Society for Ethnomusicology meeting in Berkeley, CA. Parts were later quoted by Alan Merriam (1963).

> These cultural expressions, representing the heart and soul of a people, can serve as a kind of camera obscura reducing the vast and complex panorama of their multifarious activities to a sharp image in miniature. Through language and literature, through music, dance and theater, through the graphic and plastic arts can be revealed in natural color and living images all of those essential attributes which go to make up the very identity of a people (Hood 1958: 19, quoted in Merriam 1963: 210).

In this way, Hood framed identity as something made up of "cultural expressions" seen as the "heart and soul" of a group (though he did not specify whether this is defined by members of the group or by outsiders). It is unlikely that Hood's use of "identity" was influenced by Erikson

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who published his most influential work on the topic a year later.

Two years later, Hood used "identity" in a similar way in an article in *Ethnomusicology* (1960). In reference to bi-musicality, he stated that the proper approach to musical improvisation can only be fully grasped with

> […] an understanding of and an insight into not only music and the related arts but also language, religion, customs, history –in other words, the whole *identity* of the society of which music is only one, but one very important, part (Hood 1960: 58, emphasis added).

These two statements by Hood may not constitute an ethnomusicological approach to identity, but they do at least reveal the implications of using the term, if even in a non-technical way. In both cases, he is referencing purposeful "expressions" and realms of most readily and easily discussed or perceived. In short, the term is used like a synonym for uniqueness, an approach still present today.

These two uses of "identity" by Hood are unusual for the era (1950s–70s). It was much more common to see the influence of Erikson or identity politics of the civil rights era. In works such as *Urban Blues*, Charles Keil (1966) devoted an entire appendix to identity, juxtaposing musical individuality and personal growth of bluesmen with Erikson's theories of "psychosocial crises". Keil felt that "no discussion of identity problems" could do without referencing Erikson (Keil 1966: 198). Most music scholars did precisely that in the following decades.

An interesting take on the interaction of individual identity and group identity was presented by Barry Ulanov in 1979. Taking the jazz big band as his subject, he points out the importance of soloists and the ability for jazz aficionados to identify a soloist after only a few notes. The big band then, often created to feature certain soloists, gained its identity essentially as the sum of individuals. He contrasts this to the symphony orchestra that was, to his mind, more about anonymity on the part of the musicians. One might consider, then, the potential power of "American individualism" not only in American music, but also as a possible influence on the scholarly interest in identity itself.

In the 1970s, the focus on identity began to shift away from the individual towards groups, especially "ethnic identity". Regula Qureshi (1972), writing about migrant and minority groups in Canada, and Gilles Potvin (1972), writing about Canada's drive for media autonomy in the face of U.S. broadcasting, both write about "ethnic identity" and "cultural identity" interchangeably. They seem to focus mostly on groups, but a certain degree of ambiguity exists in these years. For example, John Blacking (1969) wrote of "social identity" but was clearly speaking of class associations and the musical limits on agency that these associations entail for individuals. Social identity, for Blacking, and ethnic identity for Qureshi and Potvin are ambiguous terms that simultaneously reference an individual's position within a group and the group's characteristic features as seen from both the inside and outside.

Although some of these authors seem to be embracing what would later be called an essentialist notion of identity, Martha Ellen Davis (1972) clearly spoke of identity as something multiple and layered. In her article on a musical festival in San Juan, Puerto Rico, she uses multiple qualifiers for identity including "national", "regional", "local", and "socio-cultural".

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Again, identity is about visible or discursive uniqueness embraced or proffered by a people. However, she also problematically talks about the music itself as having an identity and at times equates identity with community, revealing the tendency towards a loose and non-technical use of the term. For her, though, the music festival in question reinforces identity through its function (e.g., in-group solidarity) rather than its symbolism (to outsiders, perhaps) (Davis 1972: 55). It is not entirely clear whether this use of "identity" would be different from "community", since she uses the terms interchangeably. Thus, "identity" in ethnomusicology moved into the era of all things post- (e.g., postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial, etc.) having been dissociated from its original academic uses and revealing a large degree of unintentional ambiguity.

1980s

During the 1980s, ethnomusicology saw the growth of less haphazard uses of the term "identity". Finally, scholars began to analyze the term itself to some degree and make efforts to describe how exactly music could be seen as part of it. Simultaneously, there was an increase in problematic uses of the term that were quite similar to the most reified uses of the word "culture". There was also further a transition from studies focused on the individual towards that of groups, the most common of which was the rather wobbly "cultural identity" (although, again, it was sometimes not clear whether that conjoined term was intended to refer to a group's cultural identity or an individual's).

One major shift during the 1980s can be seen with bookends tidiness in the work of Christopher Waterman (1982, 1990). Written in the first years of the decade and the very last, his articles both have "identity" in their titles but reveal the shift from the individual-centered concept of identity to that of groups. Waterman's 1982 article is concerned with the "social identity" of a *juju* music bandleader, pointing out the precariousness of his "dual identity" as both a lowly musician but also a wealthy person as the result of his musical entrepreneurship. A similar focus on the individual was used in an early ethnomusicological monograph on identity, a dissertation at Indiana University by Dorothy Sarah Lee (1984)[4]. By the end of the decade, though, identity had become a concern for studies of groups, as seen in Waterman's 1990 article on pan-Yoruba "cultural identity". In that case, music not only constructed a sense of group Yoruba-ness, it also was the catalyst for other social necessities (such as naming ceremonies).

The individuals-to-groups shift in the talk of identity was not unique to ethnomusicology. The shift was clearly linked to a larger concern for the problematic term "culture" itself, especially in ethnographic disciplines. Consider, for example, an article by Margaret Kartomi in which she stated that "under certain circumstances, a culture may largely reject the musical influences of an impinging culture" (1981: 235). Here, culture has become exceptionally reified to the extent that it *is* the actor, rather than the abstract ideation of action(s). Conversely, "identity" is never written as an actor but as the result of action(s). Kartomi, in the same article, speaks of a "musical identity" formed through the development of distinct repertoire. Thus, she

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[4] This seems to be the first ethnomusicology dissertation in the U.S. to focus explicitly on identity.

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portrayed identity as something inherently linked to culture but more liberating (if only rhetorically).

Kartomi is just one example of many, though. Even the "stars" of anthropology struggled with the terminology and an out-of-control reification of "culture". The work of James Clifford serves as both evidence and a guide in this matter. Clifford, who clearly influenced ethnomusicologists such as Waterman, may have been one of the most important figures for increasing the use of the term "identity" during later decades, though he never really embraced it entirely himself. Nevertheless, the extent to which he framed "culture" as a "predicament" certainly made "identity" a more appealing term, if not an entirely distinct one. In 1986, Clifford wrote that culture is "not an object to be described, neither is it a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted. Culture is contested, temporal, and emergent" (Clifford 1986: 19). Only two years later, he wrote that "identity, considered ethnographically, must always be mixed, relational, and inventive", strikingly similar to his earlier definition of culture (Clifford 1988: 10). By then culture had become a "serious fiction", one that needed "a concept that can preserve [its] differentiating functions while conceiving of collective identity as a hybrid, often discontinuous inventive process […] [culture is] a deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without" (1988: 10). Thus, Clifford clung to "culture" but slyly and simultaneously embraced talk of "collective identity", a move that would be echoed prolifically in later decades.

The 1980s also saw a proliferation of studies focusing on two aspects of music's importance for identity: repertoire and place. Repertoire in particular was drawn out as central to the creation of identity in a number of studies (Kartomi 1981, Trimillos 1986, Witzleben 1987). Lawrence Witzleben, for example, revealed the importance of repertoire selection in Chinese *jiangnan sizhu* to establish the identity of "musical groups and individuals". A music club's identity is developed by its choice of "additional" repertoire beyond the standard "eight great pieces". It is unclear, however, whether this is an entirely "emic" concept or one of analysis and interpretation, an ambiguity that plagued the study of identity as much as the use of the term "culture".

The emphasis on music's relationship to place is also extremely important for its relationship to identity. The connection is most apparent for groups that have undergone a migratory experience (Turino 1984, Kopytko 1986, Trimillos 1986, Hirshberg 1989). The main reason for the connection is straightforward: music's indexical nature conjures memories of hearing the same song in another land and time. Beyond nostalgia and indexicality, though, music's relationship to place can sometimes be very literal. Steven Feld (1988), in his work with the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, stresses the importance of musical ecology, where song links to the sounds of local birds and water running at various intensities. These studies show a move beyond a purely essentialist notion of identity, pointing out that identity must be maintained and is often in jeopardy. Thus, music becomes a vital part of the strategizing done by groups concerned about their identity (see especially Trimillos 1986).

The same decade also saw the first book on music with "identity" in the title: Dick Hebdige's *Cut 'n' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music* (1987). Though his use of the

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term is mostly colloquial and not addressed directly, there are moments in which he broaches new realms of investigation. One revealing quote:

> Rap did for poor blacks in America in the 1980s what reggae had done for the "sufferers" in Jamaica a decade earlier. It got them noticed again and it helped to forge a sense of identity and pride within the local community. Like reggae, the music later found an international audience. And then the sense of identity and pride that went along with rap became available to other people who listened to the music (Hebdige 1987: 136–137).

Importantly, the music itself forges the identity but, curiously, Hebdige points to the possibility that once created, an identity (or a version of it) can be strategically adopted outside of the originating group to varying degrees or extents. His approach suggests an increasingly reified, object-like conceptualization of identity. Though perhaps not reified in quite the same way as culture, the implication is that identity can become a virtual commodity of sorts, an aspect of identity that is still deeply under scrutinized.

1990s

Many anthropologists and scholars in related disciplines may have abandoned the word "culture" during the 1990s partly as a response to its expanding colloquial usage and the commandeering of the word by literary scholars under the new title Cultural Studies. The educational interest in "multi-culturalism" and talk of the "culture wars" in U.S. politics likely contributed to an increased reliance on "identity" for academic pursuits. In the charts presented earlier, the use of both "culture" and "identity" can be seen to ramp up during the 1990s, reaching their zeniths at the end of the decade. It is not hard to imagine that the word "culture", as it became increasingly popular outside the academy, contributed to the increased use of "identity" within the academy.

As "identity" silently became a common replacement for the word "culture", some scholars began theorizing it directly, though it was not always clear how exactly it differed from certain understandings of culture. Indeed, some takes started to sound rather familiar, reminiscent of Durkeimian "collective conscience" or the "collective representations" of Mauss (Langness 2005). At times, the term was projected backwards to speak about what would have otherwise been called "culture" or "folklore". Even as early as 1988, Philip Bohlman tried to tease out historical approaches to "traditional music" and "cultural identity" in ethnomusicology. His historical projection of these two "persistent paradigms" is useful in some ways, but problematic for a number of reasons, including the issue of whether the two concepts can even be separated at all. In such uses, "cultural identity" seems to be a convenient move away from "culture", but without clear definition. Nevertheless, the gloss "cultural identity" seems to suggest the agential embrace of certain cultural expressions over others. On the other hand, identity may be beyond the control of the individual to a great degree. Peter Manuel (1989) had already pointed out the extent to which flamenco could define people of Andalusia or Spain in general even if they held the genre in contempt. Thus, identity was not clearly different from the more rigid conceptualizations of culture.

The 1990s, however, did see clearer attempts to define, analyze, and theorize identity (e.g.,

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recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (5). However, boundaries might not just be created through music, they may also be trespassed to the extent that people can associate themselves with others more easily through music (compared to other elements of identity like language or religion). This was pointed out by Daniel Ferguson (1993) in the case of politics-laden Cantonese opera, and by Peter Manuel (1994) in the case of Puerto Ricans who have appropriated Cuban music as a part of their own national identity.

It is interesting that during the 1990s, much was made about the difference between the "essentialist" and "constructivist" conceptualizations of identity, where the constructivist mode of thinking was seen as the new, appropriate approach. But to what extent does this serve to dismantle the very identity discourses of various ethnic groups, especially during a time when many policies (e.g., affirmative action) that came out of the ethnic identity movements of the 1960s and 70s are now under renewed scrutiny? In short, the West remains rather culturally singular (where Euro-American "whiteness" is seen as historically and currently linked) while other diasporas (Jewish, African) and migrations (Arabic, Indigenous) are portrayed as contingent, divided. This may serve the purpose of undermining, for example, discourses on the African diaspora that would see Afro-Cubans and black Nigerians as forming a similar, if not singular cultural group in the way Americans and the British might be seen as culturally singular (e.g., "Anglo" or Western). The political implications of this shifting academic theme have not been fully investigated.

2000s

Over the past decade and a half, scholars have clearly become more self-conscious about the use of the word "identity". It was at the beginning of the twenty-first century when the term began to appear in dictionaries and encyclopedias of the social sciences and philosophy, and many disciplines began to take stock of its use. Meanwhile, others continued to embrace what might be seen as a commercial or non-technical use of the term, at the same time it was taken up in colloquial realms.

Near the turn of the millennium, Veit Erlmann (2001) gave a snapshot of the use of "identity" in (ethno)musicology in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Suggesting that the waning appeal of static conceptualizations of music and culture have led to the interest in identity, he claims that "music scholars" have probably focused most of their time and energy on identity as related to nation-states and nationalist discourses.[5] Race and ethnicity come second in frequency, he says, probably because the connection between music and identity seems particularly salient for those concepts. Class identity, however, is becoming less important because of the lack of evidence (he claims) supporting a Marxist conceptualization of economic base forming a cultural superstructure. However, some concepts influenced by the Marxian lineage, he points out, have been influential for identity scholarship, namely Gramsci's "hegemony" and Bourdieu's "habitus".

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[5] While this may be true in pure numbers when including Europe-focused music historians, it does not seem to be the case in ethnomusicology.

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In the same encyclopedia, T.M. Lurhmann gives the anthropological overview, concluding that the topic had become "vexed" and even "murky" (2001: 7154). He posits that Erikson's work was influential early on but has now mostly been left behind as a result of the "postmodern turn" in biographical ethnographies, "identity politics" of postcolonial studies, and recent foci on power and agency. Luhrmann claims that many anthropologists working on this and related topics (e.g., self, agency, person) have read the psychology literature. In this way, ethnomusicology might be twice removed from the origins of the discussion.

Ethnomusicology's aloofness in this matter has been called out in what amounts to an impugnment of the discipline by Timothy Rice (2007). After a review of articles in the journal *Ethnomusicology* with "identity" in their titles, Rice concluded that he was:

> […] left to infer that these authors understand implicitly that music and identity is a theme around which ethnomusicologists organize their work, but how previous work might impact their work or how their work might build toward useful generalizations or more insightful treatments of the subject doesn't interest them (Rice 2007: 20).

Although many ethnomusicologists may have forgotten (or simply neglected) the origins of identity's academic study in psychology, music psychologists are not fairing much better. An anthology on the topic, *Musical Identities* (MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell 2002), is refreshing in some ways, but for the most part neglects the vast quantities of publications on the topic in other fields. Though some essays in the anthology do touch base with major ethnomusicological works, the editors seem to be unaware of much of the (ethno)musicological and cultural studies writing on identity, leading to odd statements at times and the rehashing of already tired pronouncements[6].

One of the most impressive takes on identity was a coauthored book with ethnomusicologist and folklorist Harris Berger, *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in the Study of Folklore, Music, and Popular Culture* (Berger and Del Negro 2004). Though the authors go much further than most to understand "identity's" range of valences, they too are troubled that "for all the popularity and importance of this concept, it remains strangely undertheorized" (124). They define identity as "an interpretive framework and a set of interpretive practices, a particular way of making sense of social conduct and expressive culture" (125). Oddly, their definition sounds a lot like Geertz who, after pointing out the "ill-repute" of the word "culture", defined it as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols" and went on to advocate for an "interpretive" approach (Geertz 1973: 89). The only difference, perhaps, is the subject-centered rhetoric of identity, of actors rather than reified "patterns". The authors also question whether identity is valid for cross-cultural comparison, marshaling various contrary views on identity or selfhood in non-Western cultures, leading one to wonder whether Euro-American individualism might be partly responsible for the burgeoning interest in identity.

Another thought-provoking gem from Berger and Del Negro is their "Typology of Identity Interpretations in Folklore Studies," an axis-based diagram to explain and position statements

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[6] See Spears (2005) for how different the terminology has been in socio-psychology.

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about identity as much as researchers' approaches to identity and social theory (though it is not, as they say, only relevant to folklore studies). Overall, their work may be one of the clearest and most important contributions to the study of identity. However, they cautioned against "over-reading" identity, "making grandiose social claims about random or contingent social acts" or "ascribing intention when none is there" (142). Their point should be heeded since it seems like at some point *everything* becomes part of identity.

Despite the work done to clarify ideas about identity since the beginning of the 21st century, a large number of works displayed what might be described as a commercial use of the term. The appearance of the word "identity" in some titles was like that of a buzz word to stoke interest or book sales, but not actually to theorize identity or explain precisely how it might relate to musical sound or performance (e.g., Flores 2000, Romero 2001, Akrofi, Smit, and Thorsén 2007, Mendoza 2008, Raussert and Miller 2008, and many more). The word also took a colloquial use in some publications (e.g., Friedman and Stetson 2008) where identity was described in a manner indistinguishable from dated uses of the word "culture" and was considered a stable font from which music was produced. Finally, a large number of publications began to link "identity" and "hybridity", though they usually focused more on the latter for any theoretical work (Allen 2003, Muñoz Güemes 2007, Butler 2010, Pacini Hernandez 2010).

The hullabaloo surrounding "identity" as a useful term from which to theorize about human thought and behavior already seems to be waning. That might be a positive trend since overuse would likely lead to ossification, leaving "identity" just as problematic as "culture" (if it is not already). Whether it constitutes a theory in and of itself or is simply employed within preexisting theoretical schemas remains to be seen. Enough of the latter has occurred, though, that a synchronic look at its integration with other theories can now be examined.

How is identity theorized for studies of music?

Music and identity have been approached from a number of theoretical perspectives common in ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicologists have *not*, however, made much use of identity theories from psychology or sociology, possibly because psychology of music is seen as a separate field or discipline. Instead, most work is situated in relation to three major areas of theory: practice theory, linguistic theory, and Marxian theory. Foucault's discourse theory also appears, but to a lesser extent (e.g., Pontara 2007).

Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory has been a recurring theoretical approach in the ethnomusicology of identity (e.g., Holland 1998, Seeman 2002, Spinetti 2005). This interest is probably not particular to identity itself, but simply parallels a growing interest in practice theory among music scholars during the 1990s and 2000s. It does seem appropriate however, given the way in which Bourdieu's theorizing permits an approach to identity as something generally outside the doxic realm, as both a mental and physical practice. Indeed because it is something ponderable, it can be centrally important to understanding connectedness of economic capital with other forms of capital (symbolic, cultural, social).

Linguistics has always been influential in ethnomusicology, thus it is no surprise that linguistic theories have been connected to studies of identity. The first of these was Jeffrey

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Summit's studies of identity in Jewish music (1993, 2000) employing the concept of codes, code-switching, and, especially in the case of music, code-layering. Thomas Turino has also taken up a linguistic approach, particularly Peircian semiotics. This is rather helpful for providing a way of thinking about the "indexicality" of music, its ability to be connected to other events, times, places, people, and so on. Few others, though, have made it a point to further these linguistic approaches (one exception is Fernández Palomo 2007).

The Marxian tradition seems influential in a number of studies, though sometimes implicitly. In the case of Diamond and Witmer (1994), a Gramscian concern for hegemony's relationship to identity is explicit. This is particularly poignant since they are speaking mostly of U.S. media hegemony in Canada and the concomitant responses framed in terms of national and ethnic identities. Similarly, Aharonián (1994) sees U.S. hegemony as one of the main factors that established and continues to maintain a concept of Latin American identity, despite the vast differences within that identity. The Marxian approach would seem particularly fit for the way in which identity is increasingly commodified and achieved (or constructed) through consumption. Implicit cases can be found regarding the music of African Americans (Kopytko 1986, Hebdige 1987) and within the "world music" and "Latin music" markets (Bithell 1996, Manuel 1994).

Identity defined (redux)

Though many authors who talk about identity do not define what they mean by the term, there are a number of general notions or even maxims about the topic that become clear. The notions about identity listed below are inferred from the readings outlined above. These conceptualizations are not entirely mutually exclusive and seem to apply to both groups and individuals. It is clear that…

> … *identity can be (and maybe must be) layered and plural*
>> It can have telescopic subcategories or be assembled horizontally.
> … *identity is based on notions of inclusion and exclusion*
>> It is associative or indexical but also differential or dissociative.
> … *identity must be articulated and maintained (or changed)*
>> To do so, people must have some awareness of its elements.
> … *identity is often contingent*
>> e.g., "Afro-Cuban" requires notions of "African" and "Cuban".
> … *identity has many components*
>> It includes elements such as arts, language, food, dress, religion, etc.
> … *identity is historically situated and emergent*
>> It is portrayed as more malleable than culture, a result of agency.
> … *identity is often linked to a desire for autonomy*
>> It can include social distinction or sovereignty.

Considering the variety and breadth of these implied identity maxims, an overly precise definition of the term is about as useful as squeezing tightly to hold a greased football. Instead, an intentionally broad (or perhaps loose) approach allows for a better grasp. With this in mind, I

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define identity as: "concepts about groups and individuals and one's relationship to them". This definition fits the maxims above and is intentionally broad to include multiple subject positions and configurations. It is plural, multi-layered, historically situated, and implies the potential for change. It is also more about the "ponderables" of life rather than mundane things not considered to be essential to a group's existence or uniqueness. Thus, this definition does not necessarily replace the word "culture" nor does it deny the existence of less-lauded cultural practices, those which do not form part of representational strategies. I also use the word "concept" rather than "notion" for a dual reason. It implies something created –conceived– but is a word sometimes used for the idea behind a commodity intended to stimulate sales. Though this is not intended to be a purely Marxian definition of identity, it is, I think, important to recognize what might be a deeply embedded capitalistic influence in the very interest about identity.

Conclusion: music's importance for identity

Music's role in identity was summarized by Timothy Rice (2007) who stated that music:

1) "gives symbolic shape to a pre-existing or emergent identity"
2) provides opportunities for groups to see themselves as groups
3) "may contribute to identity its 'feel' or affective quality"
4) gives to identity, especially subaltern identity, a positive valence

The first three aspects are clear given the ethnomusicological work on identity, but the fourth aspect sounds a bit like the Western "music is good" platitude. Though music can certainly be used as a tool in that manner (maybe especially in education at the undergraduate university level), it is usually only possible if one is predisposed to view the other as positive. Conversely, punk rock could be seen as doing the exact opposite, projecting an identity intended to be viewed negatively. The claim also might not carry cross-culturally where music is viewed with suspicion (as in the Islamic *sama* debate) or used in conflict. For example, Sydney Hutchinson (2007) provided an example where an unusual embrace of Mexican *banda* by Chicano gang members in Watts, California played a role in turf battles.

While Rice's four points in regards to music seem reasonable, it is not clear to what extent they are actually unique to music when compared to other aspects of identity. The first statement, for example, could also be accomplished with clothes or language; number two applies equally to sports or religion; number three works well for food; and number four could hold true for any of the arts.

Figuring out "how" or "whether" music is unique for identity is a question that may not yet be answerable, maybe partly due to the disjointed discourse around the topic in ethnomusicology. If anything, music's uniqueness might have something to do with its indexical and highly-mobile nature. Repeatedly, music is central to identity in diaspora communities, especially after forced migrations. When particular foods are unavailable in a new land and religious practices possibly frowned upon in a new context, music enables groups to act as groups. In some ways, music can remain relatively constant in spite of drastic changes occurring around it, even if its meanings morph as a result. The reverse is also true, however. Music

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changes the world around us or provides potential for change, negatively or positively. It can be used as war propaganda or as a conflict resolution tool. Identity's musical aspects, often based heavily on repertoire, can be changed slowly with the addition or subtraction of new repertoire, created from within a group or added from external sources. In the end, it is too soon to say what exactly is unique about music's role in identity, if anything. The endeavor to reveal an answer, though, may depend on our cohesion as a discipline.

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