

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

When the Streets Speak:  
Investigating Music, Memory, and Identity  
in the Lives of Abidjanese Street Children

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements of the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Ethnomusicology

by

Ty-Juana Tatae Taylor

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Jacqueline C. DjeDje, Chair

Africa currently has tens of millions of street children roaming its city streets, making it one of the leading regions in the world for children who have made the streets their home. Because of the exponential increase in street children over the past decade, the topic of street children has gained uncharted momentum in the world of academia. Until recently, academics have perpetuated the myth of street children as passive helpless beings. However, after fourteen months of observation and research with street children in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, I have found them to be far from passive. They are resilient and active participants in their culture, using their environment to forge an autonomous society of their own. Street children, usually ranging from six to eighteen years of age, traverse urban spaces creating a culture of their own constructed of social hierarchies, a unique language, music and dance, games, and occupations.

In this dissertation, I use music to construct an ethnography that acknowledges and focuses on the streetism (street culture) of children in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. This work focuses on the role of music in the lives of street children in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, which will hopefully alter the presumption of helplessness often assumed for children.

This perspective offers a vantage that articulates the resilience of street children communities and their agency as individuals. Although the situation is undesirable, I believe street children have forged a lifestyle more suitable than what exists in their homes. However, it is only after immersion in their communities, observing them, and asking questions, that we can determine the culturally specific needs of street children. Therefore, through the aforementioned methods, I attempt to answer the following questions using the motifs of resilience, identity, memory, and community: What is the function and role of music in the lives of street children? Without a home and family, as conceived in the Euro-American context, how do street children identify themselves? What might music and performance tell us about the lives of street children? Do street children need to be saved? And, what do street children communities tell us about Ivorian identity and nationalism?

The dissertation of Ty-Juana Tatae Taylor is approved.

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**DEDICATION**

To Eli' Jah A. Taylor

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No good work is done in isolation. Without the aid of my “field family,” the encouraging words of my peers and academic leaders, and the prayers of my family, “I Never Would’ve Made It.” While there are so many people to acknowledge who have offered their talents, knowledge, and time to the making of this work, I must begin with thanking the children of Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire’s streets. “Mes enfants” answered my questions, willingly cooperated with my study, and protected me as I explored a new world blinded by my ignorance. I hope our relationship was always mutual and the words of this dissertation express who you are and your potential.

The field provided me a home away from home. My research assistant, Oumar, braved the streets of Abidjan without reservations—responding to my continuous inquiries about life in the region. Michelle Tanon-Lora, the inspiration for my research topic, housed me when my house was flooded and infested with mold, and fed me on numerous occasions, always offering physical and intellectual sustenance. Wise Boigny, Ebrie and Ariel patiently answered my ongoing questions about Ivorian culture, and eagerly offered support whenever I needed. The dance instructor at L’Institut National Supérieur des Arts et de l’Action Culturelle (INSAAC), Monsieur Sidibi Moussa, taught me traditional Ivorian dance with patience as I struggled through each dance step. Monsieur N’Guessan, generously gave me lessons on the ahoko and answered my questions about Ivorian dance rhythms.

In addition to supporting my research, I had a system of people who loved me as their own. My dear friend Thierry, and his family, deserves many thanks as they welcomed me with open arms, inviting me to family celebrations, weddings, and Sunday dinners. Also, many thanks to my first true female friend, Rosine, who showed me the city, taught me to bargain in the markets and opened her home to me when I was homeless. The Fathers at Paroisse Saint Jean-

Marie Vianney de Vridi Cité who opened their doors to a poor American student with limited French-speaking skills for free for an entire summer at no cost, were the first to expose me to Ivorian hospitality. Staff workers at Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (BICE) offered their time and resources. Foyer Akwaba afforded me the freedom to bond with the children at their facilities. The staff and director helped me understand how a good NGO should function. The thanks you are endless to those who helped me, guided me, and guarded me while in the Field. Many doors were opened, introductions were made, and possibilities realized only because of the kind Ivorian community that nurtured me while there.

While the field had its challenges, my graduate school journey, made possible through the generous funding of the Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship and the Herb Alpert School of Music Fieldwork Scholarship, has been equally challenging. Nonetheless, the encouraging words, constructive criticisms, and aid from faculty, committee members, family, and friends, (Jake, Samuel, and Ayanna) have helped me endure through this laborious and rewarding experience. My friends and loved ones have read drafts and given extensive feedback, and they have heard me complain and seen me on the brink of tears throughout the years. Because of their outpouring of love and support, I know that my reason for being at this University served a purpose greater than this dissertation.

Before I had the gumption to attempt graduate school my family members were there encouraging me. Because of them, I have embarked upon this journey as a first generation college student alone. While no one knew or understood what I was doing, my parents, Nathaniel and Minnie Taylor, were steadfast in their prayers, words of encouragement, and financial offerings, which is why I dedicate this work to the future generation, my nephew, Eli' Jah A. Taylor. He will now know that through Christ all things are possible, and that through the

hardships of others a pathway has been set. In addition, my advisor, Jacqueline Djedje, has been a mentor and coach in my corner since day one. Her “tough love” methods made me sharper and stronger.

Finally, I close with acknowledgement to Abba the Father (Colossians 3:17-“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him”). The work that I have been called to do surpasses these pages and proses.

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## **Introduction**

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.” (Maya Angelou, source and date unknown)

Where are children in the history of ethnomusicological discourse? As a field whose primary agenda has been to investigate music in culture—all cultures, be it those in our backyards, the Amazonian jungles, or the urban sprawls of Lagos, Nigeria—why are children commonly overlooked? And while children have historically been neglected from the literature, street children have been virtually omitted.

Africa currently has tens of millions of street children roaming its city streets, making it one of the leading regions in the world for children who have made the streets their home. Because of the exponential increase in street children over the past decade, the topic of street children has gained uncharted momentum in the world of academia. Until recently, academics have perpetuated the myth of street children as passive helpless beings. However, after fourteen months of observation and research with street children in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, I have found them to be far from passive. They are resilient and active participants in their culture, using their environment to forge an autonomous community of their own. Usually ranging from six to eighteen years of age, street children dwell in urban spaces where they create their own culture that includes a unique language, music and dance, games, and occupations. In this dissertation, I construct an ethnography that acknowledges and focuses on the role of music in the lives of street children in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, which will hopefully alter the presumption of helplessness often assumed for children.

### **Research Questions**

Identifying the topic for my doctoral dissertation was coincidental. I entered the field with the intentions of working with Ivorian children in schools and afterschool programs without

considering that my initial fieldwork experiences would be limited to the summers—when school was out. As I searched for a possible research topic and group of participants, through happenstance I was introduced to the street children of Abidjan.

Despite the change in subjects, my initial research question remained the same: what is the role/function of music in the lives of street children? However, this new participant group led me to ask the question: what can music and performance tell us about the lives of street children? In addition to these two musically centered questions, through further observation and research in the field, I began to question the reality of the prevalent narrative of street children being abandoned. As I collected stories from my informants, sharing why they left their homes and families, which contradicted the dominant depictions of street children, I was led to ask--do street children need/want to be saved? In light of the many narratives and stories collected, I had to reconsider the notion of salvation and its connection, in this context, to Western mores.

Similar to the concept of “salvation,” the notion of family varies by context. For instance, in the United States and Europe, family generally consists of the nuclear family (i.e., immediate family members). This differs from kinship (extended familial relations) that exists throughout much of Africa. Therefore, in this non-traditional, urban context, I questioned how street children conceptualize family or community.

And, lastly, in a nation that has undergone much political strife over religious and ethnic divisions, I ponder what these communities of street children, if they exist, tell us about greater Ivorian society, if anything. These questions, though delving into ethnomusciological studies, social welfare, and policy, all touch on several themes--music, identity, resilience, community, memory, and nationalism—that I will weave into the discussion throughout my dissertation.

## Population

Because my subjects varied between six to eighteen years of age, the quantity and depth of data I was able to gather depended upon a number of factors: age, time, location, and the questions posed. Prior to entering the field, I was not versed in the necessary methods to engage with and solicit information from children. So I depended primarily on methods, the building of a rapport and observation, used with adults to seek information.

The process of finding children to work with was not methodological. Therefore, with the help of my research assistant, a University of Cocody English student, I searched the streets for subjects. Coincidentally, a street teen introduced us to the various neighborhoods where street children might be found. As most street teens spend their days in a haze from heavy drug usage, we happened to stumble upon a teenage boy who had been severely cut and beaten and was unable to “work” or search the streets for funds as his peers. He (François), despite his injuries, saw the potential reward<sup>1</sup> in our alliance and agreed to escort my research assistant and me around the neighborhood, giving us a tour of the streetism (street culture) and its hierarchy that was visible (to those who are attentive) at every major intersection in the city. François became the pseudo guardian of the children and my liaison while introducing me to the children who would serve as the foundation for my study. My participants (mes enfants)—as everyone in the neighborhood eventually labeled them--would later call me aunty (tanti) as they would familiarize me to their daily life.

As a short, young female in the field, I quickly realized that I would feel more comfortable and safer working with younger street children. This possibly skews my data as the bulk of my participants were young men between seven and fourteen years of age, forcing me to only use a segment of the full range of the population that was five to eighteen years old. While

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<sup>1</sup> He asked me to finance his business plans, which I did.

being selective with my age group, I did not have any other requirements in selecting my subjects. The ethnic and religious affiliations of my fifty-two participants varied, demonstrating the diversity of the nation.

In order to gain a better understanding of the everyday lives of Abidjanese street children, I interned with two organizations that aided street children. In addition, I spent my weekends searching the party districts of Abidjan (Rue Princess, Mille Maquis, and Alloco Drome) looking for street children dancers and musicians. Most of my connections and affiliations were either created through happenstance or word of mouth—the children were the best guides and means for networking.

### **Methods/Theory**

As street children are very mobile, I did not have an opportunity to document the day-to-day activities, structural hierarchy, and society of **all** my participants. I was only able to collect such in-depth data from the group I will label as Sococé, which is the name of the shopping center [Hypermarché Sococé] where they often chose to loiter. Because my objective is to create an ethnography on the music culture of street children in Abidjan, the primary methods used in collecting data included: interviews (semi-structured individual interviews in groups, and individual interviews), observation, audio and video recordings, and photography. More quantitative methods would have drawn richer data, but given that my population was highly mobile, and most were semi-literate, in addition to the fact that I had little to no formal training in working with children prior to this study, I opted for a purely qualitative study that is focused on the words, thoughts, and actions of children. My objective is to use the words of street children in Abidjan to comment on their culture, daily activities, ambitions, dreams, and philosophies. Prior to entering the field in 2010, there were few ethnographies about street

children, and even now in 2016, the number is limited with only a handful focusing on the lives of street children in Africa (Heinonen 2011 and Amantana 2012). Because of the minimal literature on African children, and African street children specifically, this is another reason my work is based primarily on qualitative methods.

To gain an understanding of the national imagination of street children in Côte d'Ivoire, I conducted archival research on the subject by reading material found at the Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour la Paix (Center of Research and Action for Peace, CERAP). This research institute and school houses a significant body of literature, including theses and dissertations, on child labor, child abuse, street children, deviant/delinquent behavior, education, and health in Côte d'Ivoire and other parts of the world. While providing an arsenal of data, the works are written from the perspective of those with backgrounds in social work, health, or human rights law. And the information was generally collected by researchers interning at one of the major centers for street children in Abidjan or other parts of Côte d'Ivoire--Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (International Catholic Office for Children, BICE); Foyer Akwaba; Don Bosco; Marie Dominique; SOS Children's Village<sup>2</sup>--not from interacting with children on the streets. However, the material from CERAP, coupled with my interviewing social workers, center employees, and interns, allowed me to gain substantial information about my research population from a national perspective.

As street children often attested to the television being one of their major entertainment past-times (a tool for gaining information about current events, and a device for learning music and dance), I also used the TV and its content as a source. By keeping abreast of audio recordings, music videos, TV programs, and material included in newspapers and magazines that focused on popular culture figures (primarily musicians) and current events in Abidjan, I became

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<sup>2</sup> The name SOS Children's Village is possibly derived from the Morse code distress signal meaning "save our souls."

informed about the events and people that the children referenced in my interviews and casual conversation, and how such events might potentially impact their lives (Warshel 2007, Lemish and Gotz 2007).

### **Study Design**

My study spans over a period of four years (2010-2014); however, the length of fieldwork was actually fourteen months in total. In that time, I worked with several groups of children (see description for each group in case studies below), and will be using their stories through vignettes (italicized throughout the dissertation), direct quotes, and restatements to create a narrative of the experience of the Abidjanese street child from various stages, experiences, and perceptions of life on the streets. All participants in the following three case studies were selected randomly. The time spent with each group of children, described below, varied depending upon their schedule, willingness, and the restrictions of the head masters and mistresses where I interned. The following descriptions will be discussed in more depth throughout the body of the dissertation.

### **Case Study I**

I met with my primary participants, those who loitered at the Hypermarché Sococé (Sococé), twice a week. Depending upon their schedule, I would meet them anytime between 8am and 12pm. We would talk over lunch, and I would then follow them until they dispersed between 5pm and 7pm. Often, from a distance I would observe their daily activities to see if their happenings differed from when I was present.

## **Case Study II**

One day a week was dedicated to the non-government organization, Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (BICE), where I observed children perform various activities and chores, and occasionally play. The schedule, when followed, was varied. Some days I would be called to teach English, or math, or some days to simply observe. In addition to interning at BICE, I spent two days a week, between 6am and 8pm each day, at Foyer Akwaba, another facility for street children. At this center, I observed the scheduled events, which entailed the kids doing their laundry, school lessons, playing games, and participating in group meetings. However, within this schedule, the educators allowed me the space and time to gather small groups of children for interviews, lead my own music class, and freely interview the children during their game and free time—privileges not permitted at BICE.

## **Case Study III**

Finally, I spent either Friday or Saturday nights with my research assistant searching party districts (Rue Princess, Mille Maquis, Alloco Drome, and major concert venues). We searched many seedy alleyways that exposed me to elements of the city life that I had never seen, such as mass prostitution and drug use. This too is at the core of the environment that street children live, permitting me to observe the various communities and people with whom children share the streets.

Altogether, I worked with children in five of the city's ten communes and interacted with children from over a dozen different ethnicities and/or surrounding nationalities. Although the locales (le Plateau, Cocody, Abobo, Marcory, and Yopougon) where I conducted research stretched throughout Abidjan, and the children I encountered were in different stages of their

experiences on the streets, their narratives formed many likenesses and similar tropes, which will be discussed further in the body of the dissertation.

### **Significance**

From working with various categories of street children in several spaces and places in Abidjan (i.e., recently rescued street children [living at a center]; street children with nominal use of music, and street children using music as a primary means of gaining income), I have broadened my understanding of the lives of street children in the city.

While street children have been a part of the urban phenomena of global culture, there is usually a unique narrative for their exponential growth in each region or country. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, researchers speculate that the nation's rise in urban poverty, rural-urban migration, and increase in child homelessness is due to the 1980s economic crisis and the political turbulence that began in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The political unrest over the past fifteen years may explain how a once prosperous nation now is comprised of a massive, uneducated, and untrained urban population.

Through investigating the nation's history, as well as the various contestations over Ivorian identity, an explanation for the nation's current political situation is revealed. In fact, these cultural and historical intersections are what make Côte d'Ivoire both a cultural hub for West Africa, and a hotbed for violence that houses a complex web of identities (socio-economic, religious, and ethnic). In the context of Ivorian history, hundreds of thousands of people have been transplanted for economic prosperity, economic devastation, or political warfare further illuminating the context that street children have evolved and now dwell.

From the data gathered, I will construct a narrative that will inform others about the culture of street children in Abidjan, which also questions our efforts and/or assumptions

regarding the position of children in other parts of the world. Instead of appropriating the views of the West, we should work more closely with children in various countries to gain their perspective about the national discourse on ethnicity, nationality, national peace, and how children are represented. Because of the financial aid and prevalence of international groups such as United Nation [Emergency] Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), researchers often use a Eurocentric lens to analyze the childhood, child behavior, and child development of street children. However, if we accept and try to understand them on their own terms, this population could possibly offer much on matters of policy making at the national and global levels.

Within this five-chapter ethnography, I examine street children in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, with special attention given to the role of music in constructing their cultural identity (Turino 2000). In discussing the culture of street children in Abidjan, I will focus on the themes of music and community, and music and memory, while constantly returning to the meta-theme of identity and resilience that interconnects these topics. The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the literature on street children, while chapter two includes an introduction to the field with my participants--offering through their own words, information about their experiences and resilience--as well as a discussion of Ivorian history. Other parts of the dissertation focus on music and community (chapter three), music and memory (chapter four), and music and reconciliation (chapter five). Due to the political turmoil that exists in the country, chapter five also explores the ongoing dialogue regarding peace in the nation. In this chapter, I discuss how the culture of street children parallels the national peace agenda that many government entities in Cote d'Ivoire are incentivizing through the arts. I conclude (conclusion)

my work by proposing that more interest be given to street children as creators and agents of change, which counters the Eurocentric ideology of children.

## Chapter 1

### What is a Street Child?

*I found eight to ten street children dancing at the gate of the maquis Le Pitch. They were restricted from entering the seated area that was limited to paying customers. That night there was a live DJ performing (most coupé décalé artists use the title DJ although they rap, sing, and dance as a solo act). With legs slightly bent and arms moving in punctuation with the rhythm of the music, the children danced amongst themselves. After the headlining DJ left and the crowd began to dissipate, the children were able to enter the seated area. Once past the gate, they continued dancing and drinking the remaining beer, soda, and food left by former patrons. Now, slightly intoxicated, some of the children's dance moves lacked the precision from earlier in the evening. For some, their legs began to give out on them as they stumbled between the empty chairs and tables. Nevertheless, each child continued moving their bodies to the beat of the coupé décalé tracks now being amplified from the speakers, while performing their own version of the coupé décalé dance.<sup>3</sup>*

Everyday while in the field I questioned my purpose, the integrity of my discipline, and the ethics of fieldwork, recalling my first interaction with street children and every meeting there after, as seen in the above vignette and the following field notes:

The street children caused me to think back on that day when I had to question my purpose in this field and in the Field. What is my true objective? I quickly got over it. The children weren't bothered by my questions and asked if I was a journalist, as if this was nothing new to them. (Taylor 2014)

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<sup>3</sup> Since the inception of coupé décalé in 2002, numerous sub-styles have developed under its umbrella, (e.g., Guantanamo, sauté-mouton, prudencia, fouka-fouka and décalé chinois). With only subtle musical differences, if any, it is predominately the dance movements that distinguish most of these sub-styles. The basic movement performed to all coupé décalé songs is a pelvic rotation in a slightly squatted position. The bent arms and legs then move in ways specified in the song or by the singer. For example, prudencia requires small cautious movements, while décalé chinois mimics the movements of martial arts. Both men and women perform the very sexualized dance movements, although male coupé décalé singers and dancers far outnumber females (Taylor nd(b)).

As addressed in the aforementioned, I found myself asking: am I perpetuating the problem of neo-colonialism, being the voice to offer the *other* a voice—the gatekeeper? How can I stop this continuing cyclical pattern? Is it possible?

The topic of representation has always been highly contested and sticky. However, it seems that the issue is not who is telling whose narrative, but acknowledging that we are all multidimensional beings with a multitude of identities and roles to others and ourselves. This discussion further thickens when the topic is children. Can they tell their own story? Have they ever been permitted the space to tell their own perspective? What are their thoughts on how they are represented? Has anyone asked? Does anyone care?

This chapter examines the representation and identity of street children in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. By pulling together excerpts from interviews and informal conversations with my participants, I will discuss and investigate the various perspectives on identity and street children, using their own words to peel back each layer of self-identity. My objective is to investigate how Abidjanese street children perceive themselves despite the prevailing, and sometimes contradictory representations that surround them.

**Moise (December 10<sup>th</sup> 2013):** I would like to tell you a little bit about me. My father's name is Sina, my mother's name is Marie, my elder sister's name is Grace, and my elder brother's name is Eze. I would like to greet all of you here because I'm very happy today. I got a little problem so I want you to forgive me of my wrongdoings. And I want all of you to know my true calling, which is to become a dancer so to financially help my family. May God bless us all, God is able to do everything, bye. (Translation by Wise Boigny)

Identity is complex, as exhibited in the above quote. While some view identity as inherent or “essential characteristics . . . that . . . are found *expressed* in particular cultural

practices,” others, including myself, view identity as being “actively created through particular communication processes, social practices, and ‘articulations’ within specific circumstances” (Negus 1996:100). Meaning that identity is not essentialized, it is developed, constructed, altered, and influenced by the surroundings of an individual.

In the above, Moise identifies himself as a son, a younger brother, a repentant person, an aspiring dancer, a future benefactor to his family, and a religious person. In this quote you see him formulating an image of himself in the future (“my true calling which is to become a dancer to help my family financially”) while also recognizing his past and present (“I want you to forgive me of my wrongdoings”).

Moise’s statement is contrary to the common notion that street children are “deprived of the joys of a normal childhood and adolescence, [. . . dying] early in a state of extreme poverty, [. . . roaming] the streets, [. . . wasting] away in despair . . . and have lost their sense of individual identity (Youth 1995:11-13). In fact, he has stated a hope for the future, not only for him, but his family. And, his story is not unique. Youth in some parts of the world financially aid their families, a burden that many youth in Western nations are unfamiliar with. This short statement from Moise offers much about the common characteristics of Abidjanese street children, namely that they often know their families, and have aspirations and dreams. Their familial expectations differ greatly from children born and raised in Europe and the United States. Through an investigation of the literature, a better understanding of the global discussion on street children will be made. In addition, I will offer a review of the literature on children and their use of music.

## Literature Review

Before delving into the literature on street children, I will first discuss briefly some trends in the literature on children and their culture (childhood). Prior to the latter half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was primarily folklorists who documented, collected, and analyzed the music and songs of children. Ethnomusicologists were and primarily still are focused on the music culture of adults. The primary exception is *Venda Children's Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis* (1967) by John Blacking. Although Blacking is one of the first ethnomusicologists to publish a monograph that sheds light on the musical world of children, there were unpublished works such as the dissertation, "Japanese Children's Songs," by Elizabeth May (1958) that preceded Blacking's publications (1964, 1967). Blacking's work, though seminal, essentially compares the music culture of children to that of adults in Venda society—once again neglecting the independence of children.

Following Blacking's book, only a few works on the topic of children (e.g., Sandra Smith McCosker 1973, Jane Hubbard 1982, John Hopkins 1984, Carol Merrill-Mirsky 1988, Abu Abarry 1989) were published over the next fifty years. Scholars such as Amanda Minks (1999, 2002), Patricia Shehan Campbell and Trevor Wiggins (2013), and Kyra Gaunt (2006) began to investigate the music activities of children, using the culture of the child as the focal point rather than comparing their products to adult culture.

In addition to the aforementioned scholars, recent studies such as *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures* (Campbell and Wiggins 2013), which is a collection of thirty-five works by various scholars on children's music, have been published. However, several questions remain: Why has the discourse on children in ethnomusicology been scarce until now? Are children not a part of every society? And, most importantly, why have we historically, as a

discipline, seen children as non-significant members of society so much so that we neglect them from our studies and discourse, as if they are not in the field alongside adults?

Ironically, the absence of children in academic discourse is not just within the field of ethnomusicology, but other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Educators suggest that it is *our* (Western European society) ideology of children that subconsciously influences our view of children. Musicologist and music educator Patricia Shehan Campbell believes that our cultural view of children (through a Western European lens) has biased our research interests and foci. She writes:

From the Middle Ages, when children were depicted as miniature adults (with heads and bodies out of their child like proportions), the emphasis has been on whom children would become rather than who they really are (Ariès 1962). They were described as less developed, compared to adults, and defined more by what was missing than by the essence of this rich period of their early years. Even now children are defined by age but not fully recognized for their agency and are assigned roles rather than allowed to experience and discover what is meaningful for themselves. (Campbell 2013:5)

Campbell's statement describes the dilemma in most literature on children in ethnomusicology. Essentially, from our biases of seeing children as undeveloped beings, children have been subconsciously deemed unworthy of study because they are presumed to be small adults--merely mimickers or appropriators of adult society; or immature beings lacking the ability and agency to create and perform apart from adult supervision. Subsequently, based upon previous literature and the statement by Campbell, the conclusion is that adults prescribe the culture of children to children, causing researchers to ignore the creative and imaginative ability of children to forge their own traditions.

Yet, with the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more scholars began examining children as independent, active beings, creating, inventing, replicating, performing their own traditions, and contributing to adult culture. One such work is Kyra Gaunt's *The Games Black Girls Play*:

*Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip Hop*, which focuses on the elusive boundary that exists between adult and children's music repertoire within the urban African American community. Gaunt uses the Cornel West (1989) concept "kinetic orality" to argue that young black girls embody elements of black culture through the retention, transmission, and creative reiteration of their children's songs (Gaunt 2006).<sup>4</sup> She suggests that through performance the children are expressing gestures of blackness (their racial/cultural identity), making them agents in acting out, participating in, and recreating their culture, which is an idea that counters the representation of children as passive members and mimickers in society.

However, while the representation of children has changed through time, the locations and spaces where data are collected have not altered. While Gaunt's work includes urban children's games songs performed at double dutch competitions and playgrounds, other ethnomusicologists have collected their data in schools, afterschool programs, playgrounds, and other institutionalized spaces created for children (Downing 2013, Pitzer 2013, Minks 1999). Once again this reinforces the fact that the repertoire for many children (e.g., game songs at parks, cheers at athletic events, educational songs at school, and unison songs at afterschool programs) has been prescribed by adults. However, the newly published *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures* includes scholars (e.g., Lisa Huisman Koops 2013, Hope Munro Smith 2013, Natalie Sarrazin 2013, Magali Kleber and Jusamara Souza 2013, Elizabeth Mackinlay 2013, and Marvelene C. Moore 2013) who have begun focusing on the music culture of children in nonconventional "children spaces" (or institutionalized spaces) and their agency as consumers of music.

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<sup>4</sup> Cornel West describes kinetic orality as the "dynamic repetitive and energetic rhetorical styles that form communities (e.g., antiphonal styles and linguistic innovations that accent fluid, improvisational identities and that promote survival at almost any cost)" (West 1989:93).

Not only has this change helped to diversify the literature, it has also altered the image often portrayed of children, making them more active in their musical consumption. For instance, Elizabeth Mackinlay's work offers a discussion on how "aboriginal children in Australia negotiate the tensions and flow in, across, and between their indigenous identities in mainstream Australia" (2013:317). Likewise, Marvelene C. Moore looks at how "children on the playground of . . . an urban elementary school in Applesville, Tennessee, take ownership of their musical games in vivid ways that emphasize their personal, mutual, and communal interests and identities" (2013:351). From the above works, one can see that children have complex individual self-identities that are consistently under negotiation and transformation, a representation fairly new in literature on children and their music culture.

The following literature review explores common perceptions and representations about street children, with special attention given to the few works that include a more detailed analysis of how street children view and articulate their own identity.

### **Street Children Literature**

The literature on street children in other disciplines is more substantial than in ethnomusicology. In addition, scholars in other disciplines have cited the use of music among street children, but without much analysis. For instance, historian John E. Zuuchi (1992) uses archival data from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to discuss street children musicians who migrated as artisans across the Atlantic. Similarly, the geographer Harriot Beazley (2003) identifies material items (clothing, instruments) that sometimes are used to gain social capital for street children. She suggests that the possession of musical instruments increases the children's popularity amongst peers, however further analysis is not offered. In both cases, the literature demonstrates

that music plays a active role in the lives of street children; not solely as entertainment, but as a form of capital that has both social and monetary value.

Of the few sources I found mentioning street children and music, only ethnomusicologist Rita de Cácia Oenning Da Silva's work, entitled "Reversing the Rite: Music, Dance, and Rites of Passage among Street Children and Youth in Recife, Brazil" (2006), includes discussion of the role and function of music among street children. However, there is some ambiguity regarding the population of street children with whom she is working. Since she never discusses the living situation of her research subjects, it is unclear if they are street children who are independent and live and work on the streets (*children of the streets*); street children who live with their families and work on the streets for income (*children in the streets*); or low income children who have formed "gangs" and spend most of their time on the streets (with street gangs). Regardless of their living situation, Da Silva notes how the children use music, especially Brazilian hip-hop, to self identify as non-delinquents, raise awareness about the public of the life of street children, and create new inventive performance styles among the youth in Brazil (2006:95). Da Silva further explains that through "artistic rituals [Brazilian children] are able to create a social space in which they can criticize state and social indifference to the plight of marginalized communities, [utilizing] music and dance [as] the principal 'weapons' in a struggle to transform society" (Da Silva 2006:83). Similar to the bboy and bgirl tradition in American hip-hop culture, Da Silva's work reveals how youth use their bodies, in lieu of weapons, to counter the violent realities of the streets and vocalize opposition to discrimination, injustice, and the state. Since street children draw upon the music surrounding them, as demonstrated in the work by Da Silva, I will review the literature on Ivorian music.

## Ivorian Music Literature

Côte d'Ivoire has a rich musical past that demonstrates influence from numerous regions of West Africa, causing the varied music cultures in the country to be extremely diverse. The few scholars who have researched traditional Ivorian music—Francis Bebey, Roberta King, Daniel Reed, and Hugo Zemp – have worked with ethnic groups (i.e., Dan and Senufo) in the northern region of Côte d'Ivoire, thereby demonstrating the significant lack of information on not only contemporary traditional music, but also the traditional music in the southern region of the country.<sup>5</sup> Ethnomusicologist Hugo Zemp (1971, 2002, 2006, 2009) has produced the majority of publications on traditional music in Côte d'Ivoire. Over a nearly 50-year period (from 1960-2006), he published a variety of works (books, articles, film, and recordings) that have focused on the Dan, Senufo, Guéré, and Baoulé people, with special attention given to traditional dance, mask, balafon playing, and vocal forms.<sup>6</sup>

Daniel Reed (2001, 2003, 2005) has published several works on the Ge mask tradition among the Dan people in Northwestern Côte d'Ivoire. Reed's ethnography, *Dan Ge Performance: Masks and Music in Contemporary Côte d'Ivoire*, which is based on fieldwork conducted in 1994 and 1997, attempts to articulate the complex role of the Ge among the Dan by combining his own experience in the field with the data collected.<sup>7</sup> Although his focus is traditional forms, Reed notes the importance of scholars studying the exchange between rural and urban traditions (Reed 2003).

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<sup>5</sup> Except for Francis Bebey, all are ethnomusicologists.

<sup>6</sup> There are various spellings of Baoulé (e.g., Baoulé, Baule, Bawule). When referencing other works, I adhere to the author's spelling.

<sup>7</sup> The Ge is believed to be the spiritual base for those who practice the indigenous religion among the Dan people in northwestern Côte d'Ivoire (Reed 2005:348).

Another scholar who researches northern musical traditions in Côte d'Ivoire is Roberta King. Her book, *Pathways in Christian Music Communication: The Case of the Senufo of Côte d'Ivoire* (2009), is “a model for investigating the dynamics and processes at work in Christian music communication” (King 2009:6). From nearly thirty years of working with Christian congregations in different parts of both West and East Africa, King delivers her perspective on the role of Christian music as communication among the Senufo people in Northern Côte d'Ivoire through a multi-sectioned ethnography. Another important figure is Francis Bebey (1969, 1980), a Cameroonian musician and academic who published “Traditional Music from the Ivory Coast” (1980). This difficult to find three page article, though short, is another rare document that provides information on traditional Ivorian music.

Since the 1980s, scholarly information about Ivorian popular music has been published in theses, dissertations, scholarly articles, and books by the following scholars: ethnomusicologist Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje (1985); ethnomusicologist Daniel Reed (2001, 2003, 2005); educator Simon Akindes (2002); philosopher Yacouba Konate (2002); political scientist Bente Aster (2004); linguists Roland Kiessling and Maarten Mous (2004); philosopher Raoul Germain Blé (2006); political scientist Herman Deparice Okomba (2009); social scientist Anne Schumann (1999, 2009, 2010, 2012); historian Mike McGovern (2011); and journalist Siddhartha Mitter (2011).

In “The Role of the Mass Media in Development of Urban African Popular Music: A Case Study in Abidjan, Ivory Coast,” DjeDje speaks of the role of mediated forms “in the development of popular music in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire” (1985:151), which is essential for understanding the growth of Ivorian music forms locally and abroad. In addition to noting the lack of publications on Ivorian popular music (at the time), she also questions why popular music

in Côte d'Ivoire developed much later than genres in other West Africa countries (i.e., Ghana and Nigeria). Although two early pioneers in Ivorian popular music--Amédée Pierre and Ernesto DjeDje (no relation)--gained much fame locally, neither artist's careers had longevity or prominence outside the country. This limited exposure could be due to the homogenous nature of early popular Ivorian musicians who performed in their own indigenous language and "organized solely on the basis of ethnicity. . . form[ing] bands because of their similar interests and their ability to play a certain type of music" (1985:156). However, since the publication of her 1985 article, numerous Ivorian popular genres have been created and mediated throughout Côte d'Ivoire and the Ivorian diaspora. In addition, several Ivorian musicians, such as reggae artists (Tiken Jah Fakoly and Alpha Blondy), zouglou artists (Magic System), and coupé décalé founder (Douk Saga), gained popularity in Europe and different parts of West Africa during the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In addition to academic works, a substantial number of magazine and newspaper articles include information on Ivorian popular music: *Afro Pop Worldview*, *Arbor*, *Djembe Magazine*, *Ivoir Soir*, *Jeune Afrique*, *Le Jour*, *Le Monde*, *Liberation*, and *RFI (Radio France International)*. These works offer numerous details about the history and development of a variety of Ivorian popular genres: gbégbé (1950s); dopé (1960s); zigliblithy (1970s); zouglou (late 1980s); zablazo (1990s); rap dogba (1998); and coupé décalé (2002).<sup>8</sup> Such works also provide interviews with popular artists such as Magic System, Meivay, and Les Salopards, while offering insight into the soci-political situation of the nation (Labess 2011; Denis 2003; Mitter 2011; Ouattara 2005; Sanogo 2012; Theophile 2001; Gouegnon 2012; Kambou 2011, 2012; Meivay 2007; Olivier 2012; RFI 2012a, 2012b).

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<sup>8</sup> The date listed after each of the genres indicates when the musical style first came into existence. Also for more information about each genre see DjeDje 1985; Bensignor and Wentz 2000; Meivay 2007; Mitter 2011; and Taylor nda, ndb.

Currently, zouglou and coupé décalé are the two most popular genres in Abidjan. Although both are rooted in indigenous musical forms, few scholarly studies have been produced to confirm this.<sup>9</sup> Because Konate's article, "Generation Zouglou" (2002), is one of the first works to examine zouglou, what he discusses is noteworthy. In addition to addressing some of the issues posed by DjéDje (1985), regarding the lack of musical innovation in the country during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the introduction of Konate's "Ceux-là Houphouët ne Pourra pas les Commander!" describes the music scene in the country during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his opinion, Côte d'Ivoire was a nation that appropriated the sound of others without producing anything themselves. He believes that it is more than a genre of music; the innovative nature of the lyrics and language has caused a shift in ideology for Ivorian youth. Konate's work presents zouglou as a tool for social commentary on the political events that occurred in the nation during that time. After the economic recession of the 1980s, the masses, more than ever, needed a forum to express their opinions and frustrations; thus, zouglou became the artistic medium to do this.

Since the cry for democracy and political justice were the impetus for zouglou's lyrical content, most scholars use the topic as a catalyst to discuss national politics and identity. For instance, communications professor Raoul Germain Blé (2006), political scientist Herman Deparice Okomba (2009), and social scientist Anne Schumann (2010) all deal with zouglou's lyrical commentary on national and socio-political events.

Educator Simon Akindes (2002) and anthropologist Bente E. Aster (2004) are among the few scholars who delve into a discourse on the music and musicians. Akindes' article ((2002:94-98) is significant because it examines the role of individual artists and bands (e.g., Tiken Jah

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<sup>9</sup> Zouglou (zoo-gloo) is a popular urban music and dance genre that fuses highly syncopated traditional dance rhythms and vocals with modern electronic instrumentation. Many Ivorian scholars consider the genre to be the premier music genre of Côte d'Ivoire because of its national popularity and pan-ethnic appeal, contrary to the ethnically specific genres that were popularized prior (Taylor nd(b)).

Fakoly, Alpha Blondy, and Les Salopards) in musically articulating their discontent with Ivorian politics. Aster's primary objective is to "link pragmatic everyday Ivorian lives to musical genres and to show that a certain social environment with a definite social organization and differentiation leads to specific aesthetics and music preferences" (2004:6). From her fieldwork conducted in 2001, Aster connotes a Marxist perspective of musicking among musicians in Abidjan, particularly Treichville, which I believe does not demonstrate the agency of musicians in performance (Aster 2004).<sup>10</sup>

Based upon the role of music in Ivorian society and the few authors including music in their discussion of street children, the function of music as a tool for capital gain, protest, and political engagement is made clear. This suggests that music is undeniably a tool used by Ivorian youth and street children to manipulate their representation to others and inform their self-identity, further emphasizing ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes' statement that music manifests "a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social facts" (Stokes 1994:24).

### **History of Street Children**

In much of the literature on street children, three models can be deduced from scholars' descriptions: fear model, protection model, and objective model. Prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and even today, street children are notoriously depicted as starving, malnourished, abandoned children living only in third world nations. In the essay collection, *African Women and Children: Crisis and Response* (2001), social work scholar Arnon Bar-On contests this iconic narrative in

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<sup>10</sup> Musicking as defined by scholar Christopher Small is the bringing to existence the relationship between music (humanly organized sound) and between persons within the performance space. This is significant because music outside of the Euro/American classical space is an action that is shared among participants, performers, and audience. Small, further expands this notion believed the composer, performer, and listener triad. He discusses those who prepare the space, the space itself, the tech people, the costumes, including the objects, persons, music, interactions, relationships, and shared experiences that go into making and preparing for the event of making/performing (Small 1995:1-2).

his article, “Street Children: A New Liberation Movement.” Bar-On states that contrary to the emotionally driven, mediated image often depicted, the ethnographic data of other scholars (e.g., Taçon 1991, 1992, Van Ham, Blavo, and Opoku 1994) who worked with street children in Africa, actually found that they are “predominately healthy” and accrue sufficient income for “decent and nutritious meals” (Bar-On 2001:189).<sup>11</sup> Similar to Bar-On, anthropologist Paula Heinonen (2011) states that after working with street children for over two years in her native country of Ethiopia, the children “ha[ve] taken over adult’s role in the public as well as the domestic sphere. . . [and are] active entrepreneurs themselves teaching their parents, siblings, and even adult workers the trick of trading in the informal sector as well as parenting their parents and siblings” (Heinonen 2011:3).

Bar-On acknowledges that the prescribed narratives about street children dominate the media because as stated in the foregoing, “most writers assess street children [using] criteria that are inappropriate to their particular circumstances, namely criteria that derive from Northern, middle-class mores rather than by criteria that reflect the real world the street children inhabit” (Bar-On 2001:187). In other words, most researchers view street children of the world through the biased lenses and social constructs of Europe and the United States. However, after acknowledging these biases, oftentimes perceptions change. In fact, Bar-On suggests, and I have discovered from my own research, that street life conditions are more bearable than what children might experience with their families. As will be discussed later, street children, in their resilience, often learn to navigate the ins and outs of the streets for their survival prior to living on the streets.

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<sup>11</sup> Bar-On’s eighteen-page article is the only one in the thirteen-chapter work to address street children; the remaining chapters are concerned with women.

For instance, the term “street child,” contrary to the popular imagination, is fairly broad, encompassing numerous groups and populations that spend substantial time on the streets. Because some street children reside on the streets with their family, the term street families is occasionally used. However, children who spend their days working on the streets, doing various trades and jobs, but return nightly, usually to a family, are regarded as “children *in* the street” (Bar-On 2001:187). But, lastly, there is a small population of children who actually live on the streets and have no or limited interaction with family members or guardians—the population that my fieldwork focuses on—and these are called “children *of* the street.” In spite of the various categories, the common definition for a street child is: one who “regularly engages in gainful economic activity in geographical areas designated for the use of the public, such as parks, shopping malls, and street intersections” (186). This then suggests that no matter the category or label, street children are very familiar with the streets of their area.

Although United Nations [Emergency] Children’s Fund (UNICEF) states that the global population for street children ranges over one-hundred fifty million, Bar-On’s 2001 article indicates that the actual population of children *of* the street only numbers between 2% to 7% (3 million to 10 million) of the global population (150 million) of street children (UNICEF 2013). This suggests that popular images of malnourished children are an exaggeration of the actual number of homeless children on the streets.

“Child streetism” (the act of being a street child) is an urban phenomenon that has gained popularity in the media within the past thirty years. Street children have existed for centuries, being most prominent in Europe and the United States toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century due to World War I and World War II. Somehow, due to the media and the increased visibility of street children in developing nations, the term is most fixated on nations in

Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia. Similarly, the bulk of literature on street children is currently oriented toward regions of the world that have most recently experienced significant street children population growth due to urbanization, conflict, the exponential spread of HIV/AIDS, and the financial hardship of the global economy.

Despite numerous reasons for the existence of street children and the vast array of publications (over 3,122 sources), there remains, as mentioned, two prevailing perspectives or models for street children—protection model (Image 1.1) and fear model (Image 1.2) (Bar-On 2001:192). The protection model, an “ideology that emphasizes the weakness and vulnerability of children and so stress the dangers that threaten them,” is essentially the call to rescue children from the harsh conditions of life on the streets (192). Whereas the fear model, “grounded in the judgment that regard street children as a threat to society or to themselves” (192), supports the notion that children are bound to corrupt society if not guided correctly in their life journey. Both models thrive upon a concept of right or proper “rearing” of agentless children, which is a Western construct that has been dispersed and appropriated by researchers in different parts of the world.

From my analysis of the limited, ethnographic literature on street children, I have opted to situate my work in a third category—the objective model, which does not fit in either model proposed by Bar-On.<sup>12</sup> Scholars such as Heinonen (2011), Bar-On (2001), Aptekar (1991), and myself have decided not to use culturally constructed biases of street children but simply present ethnographic data on them.

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<sup>12</sup> This concept is my own invention.



**Image 1.1 Protection Model (Save the Children 2013)**

### **History of the Protection Model**

With the aftermath of World War I and World War II, organizations such as UNICEF (1946),<sup>13</sup> Save the Children (1932),<sup>14</sup> and SOS Children's Village<sup>15</sup> were established to aid (European and American) children in need, since the global economy was in dismal conditions. In my opinion, these organizations are the impetus for much global awareness of children abroad; yet they are also the primary source of misinformed depictions of impoverished and malnourished street children internationally.

In their mission statements, both UNICEF and Save the Children indicate that their global ambitions are to nurture and care for children's physical well being, serve as an advocate for their rights, promote gender equality in education, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, and improve the lives of children internationally. Prior to UNICEF launching its global campaign in the

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations [Emergency] Children's Fund (UNICEF) was established by the United Nations to provide food, clothing, and health care to children throughout Europe. The organization then began its global campaign in 1953 and now supports work in over 190 countries (UNICEF 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Save the Children was founded in England by educator Eglantyn Jebb in 1919. In 1932, the organization was established in the United States. Today Save the Children provides aid for children in over fifty countries (Save The Children 2013b).

<sup>15</sup> SOS Children's Village (possibly derived from the Morse code distress signal meaning ("save our souls")) was created by Hermann Gmeiner in Austria in 1949, following the Second World War. Originally intended to aid in the reconstruction of Western European families, and finding healthy homes for orphans after the war, in the 1960s the organization became international, establishing organizations throughout the globe (SOS Children's Village 2016).

1980s, publications on street children remained minimal and focused mostly on street children in North America and Europe. Therefore, because of the push on child awareness by UNICEF, street children gained attention globally.

In 1979, for instance, UNICEF launched an international campaign for the “Year of the Child,” whereby organizations unified globally to “reaffirm their commitment to children’s rights.” In 1982, UNICEF also launched a “Child Survival and Development Revolution” in which the organization’s goal was to “save the lives of millions of children each year” using “four-simple, low-cost techniques: growth monitoring, oral rehydration therapy, breastfeeding, and immunization” (UNICEF 2013). Interest in street children as a global social phenomenon experienced exponential growth over the years, and continued to develop as UNICEF focused its attention on a growing youthful globe. UNICEF’s 1990 World Summit for Children was “an unprecedented summit of Heads of State and Government at the United Nations in New York City [as] 10-year goals for children’s health, nutrition and education [were set]” (UNICEF 2013).

Similar to the timing of the global push for child advocacy by UNICEF in the 1980s, greater attention started to be given to children in non-Western European nations and the United States. The change may have been a guise to identify developing nations and their children as “children in need,” to continue the biased dichotomy between the developed vs. non-developed and first world nation vs. third world that continues to be used in the literature and global discourse.



**Image 1.2. Fear Model (Fight Slavery Now 2013)**

### **History of the Fear Model**

Interestingly, as the global economy began to wane during the 1980s and the economic stability of many newly independent nations deteriorated, causing an increase in rural-urban migration, many countries created national reports on the status of street children during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>16</sup> While funded primarily by UNICEF and/or the national government, these reports portrayed a sense of urgency in dealing with the street children population for fear of complete denigration of the normal social structure (Atapattu 1990).

For instance, a work by Pius Adesanmi, “Youth Street Culture and Urban Violence in Africa: Report of the International Symposium held in Abidjan, May 5-7, 1997,” was presented at a symposium organized by the non-profit research institute, Institute Français de Recherche en Afrique (IFRA), to discuss, pinpoint, and develop solutions to the population growth of urban youth in eight African urban cities: Abidjan, Dakar, Johannesburg, Kano, Kinshasa, Lagos,

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<sup>16</sup> Several countries created national reports: Botswana (Solani 2002); Brazil (Sanders 1987), Ecuador (Instituto Nacional del Niño y la Familia 1987); Ethiopia (Ethiopia, UNICEF and Workshop on Street Children and Children in Difficult Circumstances 1991); Gambia (Killen, Mulholland, and Humasi 1995); Ghana (Assimeng 1987, Apt, Blavo, and Opoku 1991); India (Workshop on Street Children and Slum Children: Legal Protection and Social Security, and Manabendra Nath Mandal 1990, Pandey 1991, D’Lima and Gosalia 1992); Ivory Coast (Adesanmi 1997, Roland and Mous 2004); Kenya (Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa, and National Council of Churches of Kenya 1991, Regional Workshop on Problems of Street Children in Eastern and Southern Africa 1991, Gichuru 1993); Namibia (Taçon 1991); South Africa (Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues 1986, Richter 1988, South African National Council for Child and Family Welfare, and Sanlam 1993, Donald and Swart-Kruger 1994), and Zambia (Taçon and Lungwangwa 1992).

Nairobi, and Umat. While the symposium was organized under the guise of aiding youth, in actuality, the themes of the conference (e.g., trap of methodology,<sup>17</sup> hostile cities, inhospitable streets, ramifications of the street culture and violence, tradition and modernity, and the Manichean allegory) clearly suggested an embrace of a Western ideology regarding street children (Manichean allegory),<sup>18</sup> and a fear of this “unwieldy” population’s influence on future national identity.

Similarly, many nations with a substantial number of street children decided to use force and violence to deal with this growing population. Several scholars in Brazil (Sales, Gurgel, Gonçalves, Cunha, Barreto, Netto, and D’Avila 2010; McCreery 2001; Oliveira, Baizerman, and Pellet 1992; Dewees and Klees 1995) have discussed the globally mediated footage of the 1993 massacre of street children in Rio de Janeiro (Mathur 2009:320). Because of the international coverage, Brazil’s government has since made efforts to publically create comprehensive and progressive policies and laws protecting children and their rights.

The international spotlight in many ways served as an impetus for the study of street children throughout the globe. But despite the virtually global appropriation of Eurocentric ideas, a few researchers have attempted to battle these cultural biases and report a factual, non-romanticized image of street children. And, as previously stated, I have opted to label the research of said scholars as the objective model.

### **History of the Objective Model**

Some researchers have managed to depict a more self-motivated image of street children- noting that street children have agency in the construction of their own social environment,

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<sup>17</sup> The contributors were concerned with the often biased and predetermined judgments of some methodology, stressing the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to avoid such issues.

<sup>18</sup> A Western concept that means everything is binary and in opposition to one another (i.e. good vs. bad).

structures and identity that counters the often biased and prescribed thoughts of street children as delinquents, impoverished, and destitute. Following the push for international awareness of children, especially street children through UNICEF, in 1991, psychologist Lewis Aptekar published one of the first ethnographies on street children.

Aptekar's work, "Are Colombian Street Children Neglected? The Contribution of Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Approaches to the Study of Children" (1991), unearths much about the cultural perception and history of street children in Colombia. Aptekar reveals, through ethnographic data, that contrary to popular belief, Colombian street children are not defeated, lost, or abandoned. In fact, Aptekar's research supports the argument that children from an urban lower-class family structure become independent at a younger age, and are able to create a social network and world in which they and their community can live and thrive.

Similarly, geographer Harriot Beazley (2010), in "Voices from the Margins: Street Children's Subcultures in Indonesia," speaks of the agency of street children in Indonesia and how they develop "a repertoire of strategies in order to survive" (2010:181). The work includes a discussion of the cultural symbols (dress, language, and appearance) that street youth utilize to make themselves more unique as individuals in their community; thereby revealing their ability to use cultural products and materials to counter the perception of a malnourished poor child (181).

Despite the large number of publications, only researchers (Heinonen 2011, Aptekar 1991, and Bar-On 2001) who spent substantial time with street children and/or used ethnographic data or methods offer insight into the lives of street children, and their supposed delinquent behavior. For instance, contrary to what is believed, some street children pursue lives that are constructive and distinctive from that of the urban delinquent. Although many street children

may commit petty crimes, loiter on public grounds, and live in seemingly anti-normative social environments, their deviant behavior is, in most cases, a constructed response to society portraying them as delinquents (Aptekar 1991:333).

As stated numerous times by ethnographers, it is nearly impossible, except through extensive fieldwork and observation, to describe fully in words the culture of street children. Scholar Heinonen explains, “long-term field study was not intentional. Every time I thought that I had captured the essence of who they were, further revelations and their action shattered the certainty of my deductions. This was partly due to the inconsistency of their life circumstances and their passage from infancy to childhood and then adulthood” (Heinonen 2011:2).

While there were many inconsistencies in their daily regiments, what I observed most often was their strength and resilience--a truism that is polar opposite to the images strewn across the news. Very often the children, my participants, became my guardians, safeguarding me from the harms of their world on the streets. Through observation, I began to realize quickly that the streets of Abidjan were a thick collage of spaces where the street children had created a niche within the larger society. My subjects resided in a locale where other street children existed, and they had to compete with adult vendors and adult beggars working in the informal economic sector to survive.

The complexity of streetism (the culture of street children) is not often presented holistically, primarily because the nuances of any culture are only seen through time, introspection, and observation. This is a time intensive process that perhaps explains why few ethnographies on street children exist. The few scholars who have written on the subject testify about the battles, the joyous moments, and most importantly, the culture that street children have forged. Much of the ethnographic work has been written from an “insider’s” perspective,

meaning that native scholars (those born/and or raised in the country of research) carry out extensive fieldwork with street children. Two such scholars--Amantana (2012) of Ghana and Heinonen (2011) from Ethiopia--are both residents of their research areas and profess to be insiders, emic, or native. But, after evaluating the life and experiences of street children, one quickly discovers that ethnicity and race are secondary factors to the culture of most street children. Although a shared nationality between researcher and participants allows for a cultural bridge, class, age, education, and gender often create a wider gap than cultural affiliations. In addition to the native scholars, there are researchers who have spent extensive time in the field collecting their data (e.g. Andrew Aptekar). After examining their results, there is little difference between the findings of natives and outsider scholars, at least within the context of street children.

Since publications by Amantana, Heinonen, and Bar-On are examples of the objective model, the primary question is what is the difference between data gathered using the objective model versus that collected to fulfill the fear and protection model, which is common among mass organizations such as Save the Children, SOS Children's Village, and UNICEF. I would suggest that objectivity affects the quality of the data, the time spent with the children, the type of questions asked, the rapport established with participants, and the audience for the data. These differences also explain why the data from the aforementioned organizations (Save the Children and UNICEF), while helpful, do not offer a holistic view of street children. And, without ever investing the time, such studies will always neglect to offer a full description of the context of street children that includes an economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious perspective.

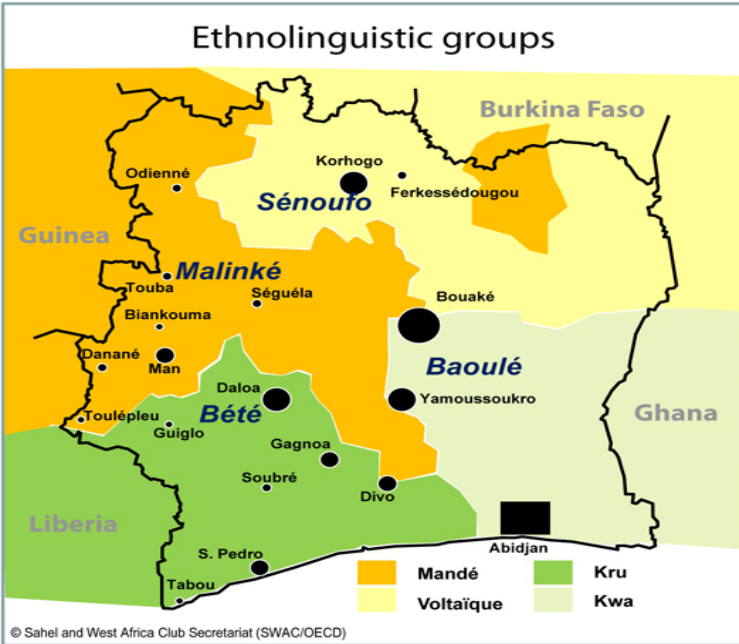
## Chapter 2

### Resilience among Abidjanese Street Children

“For while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn’t any other tale to tell, it’s the only light we’ve got in all this darkness.” (James Baldwin 1957:438)

#### History: Côte d’Ivoire

With a population of over twenty-three million, Côte d’Ivoire has over sixty ethnic groups residing in its borders. The nation’s four major linguistic clusters (Image 2.1)--the Kwa (Akan) in the East Atlantic region; Kru (Bété) in the West Atlantic; Mande (Malinké) in the Northwest; and Voltaic or Gur (Senufo) in the Northeast--demonstrate the lack of ethnic homogeneity in the country (Zolberg 1964:13). Without a dominant ethnic group, Côte d’Ivoire can be described as a nation under the “confluence of four African civilizations, [yet] the center of gravity of none” (Zolberg 1964:5). Many believe that this “lack” of ethnic unity serves as the root of political conflict that later erupts within the nation (Zolberg 1964).



**Image 2.1. Map of ethnic divisions in Côte d'Ivoire (Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat 2016)**

Felix Houphouët-Boigny, a Baoulé (Kwa) who became the nation's first president in 1960, was key in cultivating Côte d'Ivoire into a beacon of peace and prosperity until the final years of his "reign." Houphouët-Boigny's over thirty-year presidency (1960-1993) was based on a single party political system, the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI). His presidency ended with economic instability as cocoa prices (the nation's primary export) drastically fell worldwide and Houphouët Boigny sought assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to better his nation.

In response to a collapsing economy, the youth of Côte d'Ivoire, primarily students of the University of Cocody-Abidjan, began to vocalize their discontent about the unacceptable economic, political, and educational conditions of their nation. Through revolts, music, dance, and student led organizations, young Ivorians during the early 1990s introduced a major

ideological change in the country that offered commentary on colonial allegiance and Ivorian identity.

Prior to this period, the nation's identity closely aligned with that of the French. But, after the drastic decrease of cocoa prices in the 1980s, revolts, protests and campaigns against the one-party system of Houphouët-Boigny, and the sudden devaluation of the country's CFA (*Communauté Financière Africain* [African Financial Community]) currency by half in 1994 (due to International Monetary Fund), the sentiment toward the French changed. The presupposed inheritance of the *Ivorian Miracle*--an Ivorian notion of education, prosperity, and wealth that previous Ivorian generations had experienced—was deconstructed (Blé 2006:169). As a result, the disenchanted youth and young adults from this period challenged the nation to move in a new direction.<sup>19</sup>

Three years after the nation's first multiparty election (1990), Houphouët-Boigny died (1993) and his Baoulé (Kwa) successor, Henrie Konan Bédié, took office (though unrightfully, since the Prime Minister and next to take the presidency was Alassane Ouattara).<sup>20</sup> In a nationally deconstructive move, Bédié introduced a notion of national identity called *Ivoirité*.<sup>21</sup> This move resulted in ethnic divisions within a nation that had previously, since French rule, welcomed immigrants from northern countries (Burkina Faso, Benin, and Mali) for agricultural labor.

During his presidency, Bédié installed Article 35 [Appendix A (Ivorian Constitution 2015)],

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<sup>19</sup> Abidjan, formerly noted as the “Paris of West Africa,” became the country's capital in 1933. Known for its “extensive road and communications networks . . . diversified industries and banking system,” the site resembled many of the structural comforts found in Europe (French 1994). In addition to the infrastructure, the language and culture in many ways paralleled that of France.

<sup>20</sup> The position of Prime Minister was nonexistent prior to 1990. Prior to its creation in Côte d'Ivoire, the president of the National Assembly was to preside over the nation, in the event that the president died or could no longer serve in his office. Therefore the posting of Ouattara, under the auspice of the World Bank, created an uncertainty in the ascension to presidency.

<sup>21</sup> *Ivoirité* is a highly divisive concept created by Ivorian intellectuals and politicians to represent a sense of “national” unity. Henrie Bédié initially used the concept to exclude Alassane Ouattara, former prime minister under Houphouët-Boigny, from participating in the presidential elections (McGovern 2011:90).

which prohibited anyone from running for president without proof of both parents being Ivorian (McGovern 2011:17).

This biased legislation excluded many multi-generational immigrants from political positions, creating xenophobia along with ethnic and regional contention throughout the nation. In response to this assault to national unity, General Robert Guei, from Man in western Côte d'Ivoire, led a military coup in 1999 that sparked over a decade of socio-political unrest, and eventually led to the physical division of the nation. Ivoirité's concept of nationalism intentionally excluded specific ethnic groups, and nearly half of the country's population (immigrants and those of Burkinabe, Malian, or non-Ivorian heritage) from the folds of Ivorian citizenship.

The 2000 presidential election resulted in Laurent Gbagbo, a Bété (a rival ethnic group to the Baoulé), former professor at the University of Cocody and former political exile, winning. Gbagbo's political party, Front Populaire Ivorian (FPI), was the first to be established in the country, aside from the PDCI led by Houphouët-Boigny. Two years later (2002) marked the tragic onslaught of yet another coup d'état. But unlike earlier attempts, this coup led to the physical division of (Image 2.2) the country. In the north, Guillaume Soro, former student leader of Fédération Etudiante et Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) from 1995-1998, led the rebels or Forces Nouvelle de Cote d'Ivoire, while the southern half of the country was led by Gbagbo.<sup>22</sup> The United Nations created a blockade at Boauké in Central Côte d'Ivoire to divide the two regions, (see Image 2.2). In 2007, the two leaders signed a peace treaty announcing Soro as prime minister of the nation, while Gbagbo continued as president. Despite such acts of diplomacy, instability still remained beneath the folds.

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<sup>22</sup> Young Patriots and Groupement Patriotique pour la Paix (GPP) is the name of the militia sided by Laurent Gbagbo.



**Image 2.2. Map of Côte d'Ivoire during Civil War (Copnall 2005)**

Former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara won the 2010 presidential election, despite being the politically ostracized opponent in previous presidential elections because of his “supposed” Burkinabe ancestry. To protest, Laurent Gbagbo refused to yield his position as president; declared the elections dishonest; and claimed corruption by Ouattara’s party and military followers, Forces Nouvelles de Côte d’Ivoire (FNCI).<sup>23</sup> When the French intervened to “oust” Gbagbo, a crisis arose bringing to surface previous national contentions regarding ethnicity and religion (Christianity and Islam). After the overthrow of Gbagbo in April 2011, the nation displayed and continues to display a thin veneer of political peace and stability internationally, but its citizens, especially those who are not advocates of the current head of state, are wary of the spark that might ignite yet another civil war, such as the recent (starting in December 2014) mass kidnapping and murdering of children throughout Côte d’Ivoire in preparation (through alleged mysticism) for the upcoming October 2015 presidential elections (McGovern 2011; Central Intelligence Agency 2012, 2016; Roberts, Bouton, Kaplan, Lent,

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<sup>23</sup> In present day Côte d’Ivoire, Forces Nouvelle (FN) (rebel forces) are composed of northern Ivorians/pro-Ouattara party and the militia.

Townsend, and Walpole 1973; Longera 2015).<sup>24</sup> In late 2014, both Laurent Gbagbo and his wife Simone Gbagbo were placed on trial by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for their participation in the country’s political crisis of 2010-2011. While Laurent Gbagbo is still awaiting his trial for crimes against humanity in international court, his wife, Simone Gbagbo, is being tried domestically for “attempting to undermine the security of the state” (Ivory Coast Trial 2014).

Ivorian Ethnic Groups	Percentage
Akan	32.1%
Voltaïque or Gur	15%
Northern Mande	12.4%
Krou	9.8%
Southern Mande	9%
Other	21.2%
Unspecified	0.5%

**Image 2.3. Côte d’Ivoire’s Demographics. (Central Intelligence Agency 2016)**

While it has been suggested that the ethnic and religious diversity of the nation led to Côte d’Ivoire’s political instability, it was the nation’s openness to diversity (see Image 2.3) that allowed the country to gain economic and political stability in its first thirty years of independences. Immigrants were encouraged to regularly migrate to Côte d’Ivoire for labor and work, both under French and Ivorian rule. Thus, many Ivorians do not believe diversity is the issue. Rather, agitation, protest, and revolts were stimulated by dissatisfaction with the declining

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<sup>24</sup> In October 2015, Alassane Outtara successfully won the presidential election in Côte d’Ivoire.

economy of Côte d'Ivoire in the late 1980s. In fact, many profess that it is the politicians who create religious and ethnic rifts, not the citizens (Ebrie 2014).



**Image 2.4. Map of Abidjan (Map of Abidjan 2013)**

### **Abidjan Today**

To demonstrate how street children participate within greater Ivorian society, I propose to discuss their resilience by: 1) contextualizing their environment; 2) presenting brief narratives of their experiences; and 3) offering an Afrocentric and class focused explanation of their enculturation. By discussing these issues, I hope to avoid adding to the previous uninformed representations of street children disseminated globally.

While the aforementioned provides the historical and political context for the nation of Côte d'Ivoire, it is important to understand the physical geography of the country's largest city, Abidjan, because my informants dwell in its city's streets. As previously noted, over sixty different ethnic groups from within the state and neighboring countries reside in Côte d'Ivoire,

and all are represented in Abidjan. Kenneth Little (1974) states that between 1955-1967 the population of Abidjan increased by over 151%.<sup>25</sup> Abidjan now has 4.3 million (2011 census) and 20% percent of the national population lives in its metropolis. Of this 4.3 million population, over 30% percent (nearly a third of the city's population) are non-Ivorians.

Abidjan has undergone several physical changes to support its steadily growing population. For example, the construction of the Ebrie Lagoon, which lies on the Gulf of Guinea, with several water passages, now divides much of the city. When the Vridi Canal (**indicated with red arrow in Image 2.4**) was built, Abidjan evolved into several interconnected neighborhoods from le Plateau and Cocody, the central part of the city. Upon completion in 1951, the canal served as the city's north and south divide (see Image 2.5).



**Image 2.5. Districts of Abidjan (Wikipedia 2016)**

Within the northern part of the city, Abidjan is a mix of socio-economic groups. Near the canal are the popular communes or districts of le Plateau, Cocody, Yopougon, Abobo, and Adjamé. While le Plateau, the business district, and Cocody, a residential area and the location of the university, are noted for their modern infrastructure and affluent economic status, Yopougon

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<sup>25</sup> As people (Ivorian and non-Ivorian) from various ethnic groups entered the urban focal point of the nation, the process of urbanization occurred as a cash economy took hold and urban authorities gained influence (Little 1974:51-26).

and Adjamé both serve and house the working and lower income population.<sup>26</sup> And, Abobo, the most northern region of the city, is known for its slums and significantly higher poverty population. In contrast, the southern region of Abidjan, while housing several industries, is more homogenous in its socio-economic make-up. For instance, its communes--Koumassi, Marcory, Port-Bouët, and Treichville--all serve working class communities [Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) 2013].<sup>27</sup>

As the former cultural hub for West Africa and one of the largest inhabited cities of Africa (ranked number 9), it is evident why a city that was a beacon throughout the African continent for many years would become the cradle to many. After overcoming much political strife and economic instability, many of Abidjan's spaces/places and streets have now become the home to many street children (possibly 100,000), with several of them serving as the subject for my research. The following vignettes<sup>28</sup> (indicated with italics throughout the body of the dissertation) will demonstrate three of the spaces/places where I encountered street children engaging with music or musicking.<sup>29</sup>

## **Abidjanese Street Children Case Studies**

### *Vignettes*

#### **Le Plateau**

*The children at the Administrative Center of Education (ACE)<sup>30</sup> wait patiently every Wednesday afternoon to crowd into a single room and watch the live summer broadcast of the*

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<sup>26</sup> La Pyramid Market, designed by Rinaldo Olivieri, was built between 1968-73; St. Paul's Cathedral by Aldo Spirito was constructed in 1980-85; and Hotel Ivoire built in the 1970s.

<sup>27</sup> The exception is Zone 4 in Marcory where many expatriates and foreigners live.

<sup>28</sup> The vignettes provide descriptive snapshots of musicking events that I encountered while in the field. They are intended to depict a specific musical event when images and video are not given.

<sup>29</sup> Musicking is the discussion of music with all of its shared components, observers, objects, pre-performance, post performance, song, dance, and etc.

<sup>30</sup> The Administrative Center of Education was operated by the non-profit agency Bureau International Catholique Enfance (BICE) that was founded in Abidjan in 1987 (BICE).

children's television show *Wozo Vacances*.<sup>31</sup> Located in le Plateau, the business district of Abidjan, ACE is one of three offices operated by the non-profit organization, Bureau International Catholique Enfance (BICE), which rescues and houses children living on the streets of Abidjan. The weekly show, *Wozo Vacances*, displays the acting, storytelling, and dancing talents of boys and girls between three to fifteen years of age who have been selected from different groups that reside in various communities throughout Abidjan. Similar to the popular American TV show, *American Idol*, the children are scored by a panel that judges the performance of groups instead of individuals. The winning team or group advances to the next round.

The children at ACE cheer as they observe their peers performing compelling renditions of fictional stories,<sup>32</sup> traditional dance performances,<sup>33</sup> and popular Ivorian music. After three to four hours of intense gazing and deciphering the moves and songs transmitted through the crackle and static of the half-dead television, the ACE children immediately (after the show ends) begin to incorporate and reinterpret the newly appropriated moves into their personal dance, musical repertoire, and routines.

In the hidden, enclosed compound in le Plateau, under the surveillance of several apathetic staff workers and young interns, the twenty to thirty children at ACE spend their days entertaining themselves with a unique mixture of dance moves and music. Generally, they appropriate and transmit music and dance from three different sources: 1) *Wozo Vacances*, 2) memory,<sup>34</sup> and 3) the ACE staff.<sup>35</sup> *Wozo Vacances*, while depicting both traditional and popular music selections, is most noted for its renditions of songs by contemporary Ivorian artists, such

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<sup>31</sup> *Wozo Vacances* (Have Fun) is a children's summer broadcast. *Ahouamey* (Let's Play Together) is the children's show broadcast throughout the school year. Both shows are broadcast on the local, government owned network Radiodiffusion Television Ivoirienne (RTI) (Baba Cool 2012). The network describes the children's show as a space that allows children between the ages of three to fifteen to express, distract, instruct, inform, and occupy themselves (see show's website). There are five components of the show; three main sections performed by teams and two interludes are performed by individuals. Each group or team represents a different neighborhood of Abidjan and/or surrounding areas.

<sup>32</sup> YouTube video of conte finale (storytelling) of a group who made it to the final round (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=Q8x2lsEkHHA>)

<sup>33</sup> YouTube video of danse traditionnel (traditional dance) (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=L6obz5DrueQ>)

<sup>34</sup> Memory in this context means music and dance learned prior to entering the Center, including music learned from peers, family, or mediated commercial recordings.

<sup>35</sup> The staff that actually engaged with the children consisted of two men and two women. Throughout the day, a number of volunteers would enter and exit the compound, but it was only staff members who were primary in advising, keeping watch over the children, and teaching them camp songs.

as Claire Bally,<sup>36</sup> DJ Leo,<sup>37</sup> and Molare,<sup>38</sup> who are known for their performance of the popular music styles such as *coupé décalé*. Aside from the popular songs and dances transmitted on television, many children at the Center have prior knowledge of folk and religious songs, such as “*Fais quelque chose dans ma vie*” (“Do something in my life”) and “*Je suis dans la joie*” (“I am in the joy”), which they fervently share with their peers. Adding to this interesting mix of musical influences, the staff members at ACE use camp songs, such as “*Fa fa soft aye*” and “*Boomei*,” to entertain the children throughout the day, demonstrating the integral role of musicking in the lives of children at the Center.<sup>39</sup>

### **Marcory**

On the south side of Abidjan lives a group of about fifteen boys, ranging between seven to seventeen years of age, who sleep outside the club, Marcory Gaza.<sup>40</sup> Adorned with bright neon lights, the club is located in the working class, residential neighborhood of Abidjan called Marcory. The children silently wait from late evening to nearly midnight for the weekend crowd that visits the club and maquis for entertainment.<sup>41</sup> As midnight draws closer, the children awake from the cold pavement to entertain each other and coerce tips from the seated crowd of clubbers awaiting their food. The street was lined with open-air restaurants, each serving between 30-50 people. Each maquis had a seating area around 30 feet in length and 15 feet in width where customers sat at plastic outdoor tables waiting for their food, while listening to the blend of music from the surrounding amplified speakers. In this moment of idle time, while conversing with friends, the young boys entertain the club attendees and those dining at the maquis. Roaming from table to table to solicit funds, they perform complicated and

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<sup>36</sup> Claire Bally: “Comme ceci Danse” (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=V9Im39WcFzA>)

<sup>37</sup> DJ Leo: “Toubabou dance” (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=N9Nix-HJMrv>)

<sup>38</sup> Molare: “Tuage” (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=dllIMWspW7GE>)

<sup>39</sup> Both *Fa fa soft aye* and *Boomei* are phonetic spellings of the songs, as they are vocables and no one was able to tell me the actual spelling of the song titles.

<sup>40</sup> Mille Maquis (thousand maquis) is a party district in Marcory. It was known for its long strip of maquis, clubs, and music. It became a popular place after Rue Princess (party district in Yopougon) was raided and virtually destroyed during the country’s political crisis. Under the presidency of the current leader, Alassane Ouattara, a new highway has been constructed that cuts through Mille Maquis, forcing the area to be abandoned and destroyed.

<sup>41</sup> Maquis are out door grills (restaurants) found along the streets outside clubs where customers can purchase made to order food such as chicken and fish.

contortionist-like dance movements (e.g., kpango, placali, and zouglou)<sup>42</sup> to the music of DJ Arafat and Serge Beynaud amplified on loudspeakers outside the clubs.

### **Cocody**

*Standing outside the major shopping center, Sococé,<sup>43</sup> in II Plateaux Cocody,<sup>44</sup> a wealthy and commercial area of Cocody, a group of young children sell individual pocket tissues (Lotus) at 100fr (20 US cents) to cars at the intersection. When not selling, you may find a few kids, ranging from six to thirteen years of age playing a game in the dirt on the median or joking with their friends. Their presence follows the ebb and flow of the intersection and traffic to the supermarché. When not working, they are entertaining themselves eating or traveling. This is their designated area to beg at the other corners and intersections, and this is one of the few areas where their young age is used to their advantage. Behind the shopping center they have a public shower, and a market to find cheap food. A field to play soccer is diagonal to the shopping center and the major street running parallel to the mall has a maquis and restaurants blasting music and music videos virtually 24 hours, everyday in the week, to any and every passerby.*

The above vignettes demonstrate the various contexts and places –maquis (open air restaurant)/party districts, streets, and institutions--where I observed and worked with street children in Abidjan engaging with music. Marcory is one of two locations where I observed street children utilizing their environment to earn money through musicking. In this specific case, the children use the amplified music from the public sound systems owned by vendors and owners at maquis and clubs as their performance space. In doing this, the children demonstrate

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<sup>42</sup> Kpango (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=8LlcUZbUjqk>); placali (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=TwHgnt9ehl0>); zouglou. I am unsure about the movements and characteristics of the zouglou dance. There is a single by the group Magic System, entitled “Zouglou Dance” (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=BP0IOLxkyig>), but I do not know if this is the dance that the children were performing (personal interview August 20, 2010, Jean Tanoh, Marceline Abou, Samuel Ogu, Franklin Tanoh).

<sup>43</sup> Sococé is a shopping center in II Plateaux Cocody. Similar to a mall, this center is a part of a chain of shopping centers located throughout the country. All centers have a large grocery store (usually marketed through product and price to the expat community). A large appliance store may also be present, in addition to high-end shoe stores, clothing stores, perfume boutiques, and watch boutiques. The shopping center generally only draws customers from the wealthy and/or expat community.

<sup>44</sup> II Plateaux is one of the many residential areas of Cocody that houses primarily wealthy Africans and expats.

how they strategically manipulate a space for their own benefit to generate income, practice, play, as well as to share and perform dance moves.

Le Plateau exemplifies children's use of music for recreation. However, the vignette also demonstrates how institutions use music as a tool for socialization. Staff members at the center often persuaded the children to behave throughout the week by offering the opportunity to watch television as a reward for their good behavior. The viewing of the weekly children's show, *Wozo Vacances*, which is intended to promote national peace and ethnic diversity through music and dance skits, was an example of their reward for good behavior.

Lastly, the example from Cocody demonstrates a casual day with my most stable group of research participants. The children at Sococé made me privy to the intimate details of their life on the streets, guiding me through their network of friends, locales, and experiences. Similar to children in Marcory, street children here used their environment for musicking. They sang and danced for play to the music amplified from car radios, mobile sound systems, and television and stationary sound systems at maquis.

In addition to the places described above, I also worked with street children in Yopougon in the Bel-Air district and at a facility called Foyer Akwaba in Abobo.<sup>45</sup> Altogether I worked with children in five of the city's ten communes (Image 2.5), and interacted with children from over a dozen different ethnicities and/or surrounding nationalities (Appendix B). Although a nuclear family does not exist, their situation and economic status do not relinquish them as poor in culture, as some scholars would suggest (Harrison 2013; Araujo and Cambria 2013). Rather, my children consistently displayed a rich culture with music, dance, creativity, language, and sense of community, which I will discuss in the forthcoming chapters.

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<sup>45</sup> Frères des Chrétiennes is an organization established in 1972 whose primary goals are to educate, train, socialize, and reintegrate street children and at risk youth into the larger community (Foyer Akwaba 2010).

## **Short Narratives of Abidjanese Street Children**

Because street children in Abidjan are from disparate ethnic groups, religious affiliations, and geographic regions, it was not possible to limit my research to a specific ethnicity, religion, or one region. Rather, the elements that bind my participants are class, the urban environment of Abidjan, and their enculturation into an urban, impoverished society. Similar to other cities with significant street children populations (e.g., Accra, Addis Abba, and Dubai), a country's economic instability, which often impacts rural-urban migration, is a major stimulus for the street children phenomena.

Socio-economic class is a factor that heavily influences the selfhood of street children. In fact, poverty often has been a chain effect that leads to abuse (physical and emotional), divorce, death due to (unsatisfactory health conditions) and/or neglect, which is the common story for many children choosing the streets over their unstable households (Amantana 2012:29-77; Goldson 2011:11).<sup>46</sup>

Comments from my participants, seen below, reveal how their socio-economic climate affects their decisions to join the streets of Abidjan.<sup>47</sup> Sadly, many of their stories are similar to those in ethnographies about other street children across the globe, demonstrating that their situations are not isolated, but part of a systemic problem.

## **Words from Children**

### **Jean François**

I come from Bouaké. During the military rule of General Guei (Prime Minister under Henrie Bedié and military leader of Côte d'Ivoire from 1999-2002) my parents and I left

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<sup>46</sup> As stated in the introduction, streetism is not merely a developing nation phenomenon. In fact, it has a longer history in Europe than other parts of the world.

<sup>47</sup> Many of the children often come from families who were the products of financial instability, whether it was due to the economic crisis of the late 1980s, the devaluation of the CFA in 1994 (IMF structural adjustment plan), or the civil war that led to a flood of urbanization during the early 2000s.

Bouaké (Central Cote d'Ivoire) for Yopougon (commune in Abidjan). Since moving here, I have decided to find my way alone. It has been difficult sometimes. I can't do anything and I can't work. I would buy things to sell if I had money, but there has been too much pressure on me to save money and make business (become an entrepreneur).

### **Maxime**

My name is Maxime and I've been dancing on the streets for more than a year now (he was dancing in Marcory—a commune in Abidjan). I'm 11 years old and I don't attend school. I taught myself how to dance for the most part, but a girl called Oumou la Star from Petit Bassam (area of Port Bouët commune) also taught me. My favorite song is "Koumanlébé" by DJ Serge Beynaud.<sup>48</sup>

### **Moises**

I live here in II Plateaux (area of Cocody commune). My parents didn't get along well (which led to their divorce). My mother lives in Ire, a village near Divo (south central region of Côte d'Ivoire) and my father lives in Abidjan. I left the house when I was young, and have been on the streets for four years. I beg to get food and clothing by begging for money and food. I don't live with my father because he has no money and I'm not well fed there. My father knows that I live on the streets and sometimes we see each other and he greets me and continues on his way.

### **Stéphane**

I've only been living on the street for one month.<sup>49</sup> I'm from Yopougon, but my parents are no longer together. I was living with my father, but because I never returned home in time to bathe my father beat me. I always chose to stay outside and play soccer instead of returning home by 5pm. I then lived with my grandmother with my other siblings, but I stayed out too long and my grandmother sent me back to my father. I fled [his home] to be here. One day I came here, met some friends, and then decided to stay here. I beg for money and food to buy things. I've been told that I have a spirit following me that doesn't allow me to stay home. The spirit usually comes on Fridays. It causes me to move around a bit and then leave.

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<sup>48</sup> Go to YouTube for a video of "Koumanlébé" (<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=GFLmYoGp8II->)

<sup>49</sup> At the time, Stéphane was living on the streets in II Plateaux an area of the Cocody Commune.

## **Common Themes**

From these four narratives, a variety of themes become apparent. The most prevalent are financial hardship, mobility, spirituality, and physical abuse, with finances being one of the most prominent because all came from poor families. In the case of Maxime, what was not included in this extract was the story that led him to the streets. He was responsible for some funds given to him by his father, and upon losing, misplacing, or wrongly spending the money, he felt the need to flee the situation rather than go home and confess (implying probable domestic abuse). In other cases, children tell stories of how their parents or guardians were not able to meet their basic needs, such as sustenance, causing them to leave the home. And, shockingly, in virtually every case, the children know the whereabouts of their parents and/or guardians, but willingly choose not to return to their previous circumstances.

Second to finance is mobility. In all narratives, the children mention the various places they have lived either with their family or since being on the streets. For instance, Stéphane migrated from Yopougon to Cocody; Jean François, with his family, moved from Bouaké to Abidjan; and Maxime talks about traveling in the southern region of Abidjan (Marcory and Port Bouët). Of the over fifty children I encountered, virtually none were in the same place or region where they initially began life as a street child. Children often migrate around the city searching for the most economically viable place to find funds and the best locales to “have fun” (Junior 2013). Unlike most perceptions of street children, decisions about their street home (locales and spaces) are selected strategically; specific corners, regions, communes, and routes are chosen based upon viability, danger, and fun.

Another theme in the above narratives, but, perhaps is more prevalent in other parts of the continent, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria, is spirit possession (Foxcroft

2009; Cadogan-Poole 2013). Occasionally, some Ivorian kids spoke of otherworldly or spiritual experiences as an explanation for leaving their home. However, in Côte d'Ivoire my research shows that of those children who identified with having a "spirit," few tend to be beaten and ostracized from their immediate family, which is contrary to narratives by children in the above-mentioned nations.<sup>50</sup> In fact, some children would describe the spirit as a spirit of disobedience, or possibly attention deficit disorder (ADD) explaining their inability to stay home, return as directed, or do as they are told. In response, their guardians would send them to an extended family member, such as a grandmother who could possibly aid by taming their extra spiritual experiences.

This also ties into the physical abuse that occurs among many children living on the streets. Anthropologist Aptekar found that many societies in Colombia view street children as "a plague" threatening the fabric of traditional family discipline (Aptekar 1991:327), which can explain the many cases of abuse documented globally.<sup>51</sup> But, the majority of my participants were raised in "broken" family structures where divorce, death, sickness, or financial crises had altered the nuclear family, causing a strain on the family income and eventually resulting in the children to flee. Instead of experiencing abuse from non-familial figures, as seen in Brazil, Colombia, and elsewhere, my subjects most often encountered abuse from family (usually a father or step-mother). I commonly heard stories about the new stepmom or lonely, single father who became physically abusive because of the changing circumstances in the home environment, leading the children to flee for their own safety.

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<sup>50</sup> However albino children have historically been used for traditional cultural practices. And with the onslaught of the 2015 elections, Ivorian children have been abducted and found murdered and mutated. It has been rumored that these murders were affiliated with supernatural practices to spiritually prepare for the presidential elections (Monnier 2015)

<sup>51</sup> For further discussion of this subject, see Dimenstein 1991; and All Party Parliamentary Group on Street Children 2006.

After examining the aforementioned themes, and considering the large number of international and local agencies (Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (BICE), SOS Children's Villages International, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), UN Development Program, Foyer Akwaba, and Don Bosco [another facility established by priests to focus on male street youth]) organized to assist at-risk youth and street children in Côte d'Ivoire, the major question is why do children continue to flee to the dangerous and violent streets, especially in regions in Latin America (Brazil and Colombia) where researchers indicate that the social abuse is much more fierce than that of Africa? I argue that it is the resilient nature of the children, a natural consequence of being raised and acclimating to poor, urban spaces from their early youth.

Heinonen (2011), Aptekar (1991), Amantana (2012), and Bar-on (2001) all state that the streets often offer more opportunities for the essentials of life (e.g., food, money, social advancement, jobs, and entertainment) than what can be found in their homes or villages. An investigation of the contemporary enculturation of impoverished children could possibly shed further light on the lives of street children. Since children throughout the world are socialized into society in varying ways, an examination of the various conceptions of childhood and enculturation in the African context is necessary and will perhaps help in understanding the resilient nature of African street children (Amantana 2012:3).<sup>52</sup>

### **Resilience against Adversity**

From a European perspective, the behavior of street children is an anomaly. Yet, when investigating the environment where many of the children grew up prior to living in the streets, their actions do not seem extraordinary. For instance, in many rural and/or impoverished African

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<sup>52</sup> Since literature on the childhood of African children is very limited, this topic is something to be studied in the future.

communities, children are expected to become fairly independent around age six or seven years of age, the same age that many of the children I worked with first entered the streets (Rogoff, Moore, Najafi, Dexter, Correa-Chavez, Solis 2005:251;2008). At this age, often the children (if living at home) would be responsible for caring for their siblings, or assisting with household or farming tasks (2005:251).

In some societies, children are made aware of their adult duties when they are between seven to nine years of age. For instance, among the Gonjas in northern Ghanaian communities, some females are taught at an early age that if they have no dowry when married, they must save to afford and furnish the necessities of her future household (Amantana 2012:118). Similarly, within many patriarchal societies, the boys are taught at an early age to care for the lands because they may become the family's primary source of income, especially if they have an elderly or sickly father (Amantana 2012:110). In these situations, the children must mentally prepare for their position as patriarch and financial provider for their family from a young age.

While many of the aforementioned examples apply to rural regions, the use of fosterage is a concept or idea that extends to poor or impoverished families in both rural and urban locales. And, depending on the region, fostering is no longer limited to the extended family; large and/or impoverished families often foster or lend their children to nonfamily member(s) or wealthy families either in the village or urban areas, whichever is more economically stable. In some situations, children are treated equally within their new households, but quite often they are treated as household help or servants. When/if they are beaten and ordered around, children often flee (Harkness and Super 2008:185). Because this family structure has roots in traditional kinship and is so prevalent among large struggling families, it creates a social environment where children, both boys and girls, are taught fairly quickly to distance themselves from the ties of

their immediate family and to act independently as they may be relocated to a foster family and/or depended upon to aid their immediate family (Amantana 2012:123-131).

Concerning resilience, Amantana (2012) has offered that based upon Western ideologies, there is plenty of reason to believe that street children would have self-defeating behaviors but, oddly, most seem able to cope effectively with the harsh challenges they face each day.

Amantana (2012) has considered the circumstances where presumably “bad habits” such as glue sniffing, drug use, and sexual promiscuity have developed, but these problems are not widespread, nor are they specific to street children. These vices are mechanisms used by street children to cope with their situation, and, in spite of such activities, many testify of the importance of their peers in surviving on the streets more than the stated vices. This is best exemplified through the testimonial of a fourteen year old Ghanaian street child:

After a discouraging day of work a young man was ready to give up and go back home, but he changed his mind because of his friend’s encouragement. “If you give up and will not get your chop money (food money), so you have to go to work. You have to go. . .” I decided to go back home, but I don’t go because my friend give me courage to go on . . . so all of us talk and share an idea together. (Orme and Seipel 2007:493)

Quite often street children consider the welfare of the greater whole by being “particularly imaginative. . . [and using] cooperative efforts to make sure each had some income” (496), as seen in the following statement: “My friends are these people (street kids). They love me and I love them too. They are so kind to me. Sometimes, if I don’t have money, they help me by giving me some money to buy food to eat. Sometimes, if I am very ill then they will take care of me” (493).

To further demonstrate their resilience, many street children are well informed and know how to utilize the social services rendered them through organizations. They fulfill expectations by attending required meetings or classes for the sole purposes of obtaining food and money

from these organizations. Such behaviors, for children between ages six to eighteen who are attempting to survive on the streets, demonstrates their coping strategies and resilient nature.

As Bar-On explains, researchers “need to be aware that the grounds for their objections [to child streetism] are primarily moral, not empirical.” We, as scholars, should expend our energies by “helping street children in their liberation . . . protect their right to better their position as street children” (Bar-On 2001:198). Street children are not the (or a) problem. They are the result of many factors beyond their control. As agents of their own future, they have opted to leave conditions more dismal than the streets. Despite what we would like to believe, the family environment of street children, prior to the streets, was not as nurturing as we would like to believe, and is not perhaps always the best alternative. Since poverty is a problem that will always exist (Mark 14:7), my objective as a researcher is to accept who they are as street children so I can understand better the intricate workings of their culture and what they need to survive and thrive in the larger society.

## Chapter 3

### Music and Community: Discovering How Music Functions in the Lives of Street Children

“In the African tradition, music had three basic functions: moral and spiritual order and as a means of self-expression.” (Minister Daniel Aldridge, source and date unknown)<sup>53</sup>

#### The Field

My days in the field were spent primarily doing one of three things: searching the streets of Cocody looking for “my kids;” taking woroworos (shared taxis) to where I worked as an intern, in either Abobo or le Plateau; or searching the precarious and vice filled alleyways of party districts for street children dancers.<sup>54</sup> From my fourteen months of “wandering” in the field between 2010 and 2014, I was able to work with five groups of street children in five separate regions of Abidjan. These five groups and their locales (Marcory--Mille Maquis; Yopougon--Bel Air; Cocody—Sococé Hypermarché; Abobo--Foyer Akwaba; and le Plateau—International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)) have become the focus of my research. In these five locations I encountered, observed, and interviewed over 50 street children. Their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and nationality varied, along with their status (children *of* the streets vs. children *in* the streets). No matter their status as a street child, the streets were their primary space for convening.

As stated in Chapter 2, companionship and community are essential features of life on the street. Through the persuasion and aid of friends, most children find the courage to leave their homes and take to the streets. Furthermore, it is these same peers who encourage and support them when times get hard on the streets. Because this bond was seen and prevalent in all locales,

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<sup>53</sup> Minister Daniel Alridge was a free black man in the 1700s who was a Calvinist minister. He presided over an all-black congregation at New York’s Greet Street Chapel and was the father of actor Ira Alridge (Russell 2009:118).

<sup>54</sup>Label given by vendors and workers in the area because we were together so frequently.

I think it important to discuss community, both as a general concept and as a fixture essential to the fibers of street children's survival.

### **Street Children and Community**

Street children, although more autonomous than most children, do live and thrive in communities. Instead of the chaos and anarchy often identified with them, there is a structure and a networking schema that the children follow (Aptekar 1991). For example, when asked how they and/or why they (my kids) chose their locale, I received the following responses:

***Stéphane:*** I came here one day, and I met some friends and then I stayed with them

***Interviewer:*** So, why did you choose to come to this place?

***Junior:*** I didn't know this place before. Friends invited me.

***Interviewer:*** You just said the other boys were with you in Agboville, right? But how did they get here?

***Child:*** We worked and then collected money together to leave Agboville.

From their responses, it is evident that networking is essential. Also, a predetermined plan is in place prior to leaving their homes, implying that relations are often forged prior to relocating.

A community can be any number of things—people of shared characteristics; social groups in the same locale; or people of the same heritage. Despite the ideas of sameness shared among people in communities, scholar Benedict Anderson believes that the idea of community is a construct “distinguished not by their falsity and genuineness, but by the styles in which they are imaged” (Anderson 1991:6). The imagined aspect of community is made more evident when working with my participants, who fail to share many of the characteristics (e.g., shared religion, heritage, nationality, and ethnicity) that would ordinarily forge community. Rather, it is their

locality—the streets of Abidjan— their position as youth, and their economic status that bound them together in communities. In addition to these factors, music also plays an important role in cementing their communities.

On the subject of music and community among children, education scholar Patricia Shehan Campbell suggests that community is essential in their learning, practicing, performing, and creating music:

Children, from infancy, across their childhood years and onward into their adolescence, . . . sing, dance, and play music because they must. They consume it as they also create it. As avid listeners, they escape to it and find safe haven in it. Their natural propensity for musical engagement is fostered and facilitated by families, communities, schools, and the media. . . Children develop their musical sensibilities as their surroundings allow it, and from their innate instinct to be musical they grow more musical through cultural interaction and education. Yet they are not passive recipients of the music they value but active agents in choosing the music they will take time to listen and respond to, to make, and to choose to preserve, reinvent, or discard. (Campbell 2013:1)

Campbell, in the above statement, articulates the importance of community in affecting one's musical sensibilities. Similarly, this chapter will focus on the function of music within communities of street children.

In evaluating the function of music in communities, I am “concerned with . . . searching for answers to the question of what music does for and in human society” (Merriam 1964:219). Therefore the purpose of this chapter is threefold: 1) to discuss the various spaces/communities where street children may engage with music; 2) to present the various functions of music in these different communities; and 3) to analyze the role of community in the construction of identity amongst street children.

### **Music and Community**

An assessment of literature on music and community can be rather expansive. In her article, “Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music” (2011), ethnomusicologist

Kay Kaufman Shelemay begins the discussion by explaining why the definition of community must be reevaluated in the “changing intellectual landscape.” Shelemay states that in this global age, the musical community has transcended from the physical and intimate space that it once was (direct one-to-one communication) to something that is now interconnected through the worldwide web, connecting seemingly unrelated people across the world.

Similarly, when discussing the concept of musical communities, the term has altered through time, transcending past groups of music makers to groups of admirers, fans, and followers. In this current context, Shelemay encourages scholars to embrace the changing landscape/soundscape and combine these ideas with our former notions of community. She explains:

Rethinking the notion of community opens opportunities first and foremost to explore musical transmission and performance not just as expressions or symbols of a given social grouping, but as an integral part of process that can at different moments help generate, shape, and sustain new collectives. (Shelemay 2011:349-50)

Shelemay suggests that limiting or specifying the definition of community and/or musical communities is not necessary. Maintaining a fairly loose conception of what communities entail allows for the concept to shift and materialize in various forms based on the individual and context. While I will continue to use the term musical communities, several music scholars have recently introduced new terms to better articulate new forms of musical communities. These terms—subculture, art worlds, musical pathways, and the music scene--transcend the previous limitations of the term, similar to the concept musicking coined by Christopher Small (1995) that includes all aspects of music making (participants, observers, space, locale, etc.).

Because such terms are a bit constricting for my study, as I am working with several musical communities of street children, I will be using the term community to describe my participants who live in similar spaces and conditions, and I will discuss their musicking in these

communities.<sup>55</sup> For instance, of the five locations and places where I worked with street children, I will focus only on three musical communities (quotidian, institutional, nightlife) that have been determined from the similarities of their communal conditions and the function of the music in each.

### **How Music Functions in Communities**

For each space, I will also discuss how music impacts the self-identity of the participants through its function. Discussing the function of music may seem like an antiquated discourse, especially in the field of ethnomusicology. However, since little research has been done on the musical lives of street children, I think it necessary to examine the most basic elements of their music culture—its function. Alan Merriam proposes ten functions of music in *The Anthropology of Music* (1964:219-227)--1) emotional expression; 2) aesthetic enjoyment; 3) entertainment; 4) communication; 5) symbolic representation; 6) physical response; 7) enforcing conformity to social norms; 8) validation of social institutions and religious rituals; 9) contribution to the continuity and stability of culture; 10) contribution of the integration of society—that I will use to discuss musicking in the three communities of street children with whom I have worked.

Unlike contemporary studies in music psychology and sociology that focus on the “everyday” use of music in Western societies, where music consumption is more of a solitary act (Boer and Fisher 2010:181; Sloboda, O’Neil, and Ivaldi 2001:11), Merriam’s work, though dated, specifically explains functions in “non-literate” (non-Western) societies. As a musical anthropologist, Merriam acknowledges that non-western societies more often share and consume music communally. Similarly, musicologist Meki Nzewi believes that African children commonly learn music and acquire special aptitudes and abilities through informal active

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<sup>55</sup> I use space because their living conditions are not limited to any physical location.

participation, once again emphasizing the participatory and communal aspect of learning and performing music in non-Western cultures (Nzewi 1999:73).

Street children not only share their experiences in consuming music, but also as citizens in a postmodern society, their methods of music consumption vary from what might be expected. Like others in the larger society, street children engage with music through television, phones (passersby), mp3 players (radios), loud speakers, and amplification systems. However, street children do not control many, if any, of the music sources from which they consume music. Rather, the music consumption is dictated solely by their soundscape, making it a similar communal and shared experience referenced by Merriam in his mid twentieth century work, yet very different.

### **Quotidian**

Twice a week I met with a group of young street children in front of a major shopping center in II Plateaux--Hypermarché Sococé. Often we would agree to meet early at their sleeping locale, a stoop at a local storefront, and then slowly migrate the several blocks to Sococé, which is where they spent the majority of their days working and playing. While I tried to deconstruct the adult-child dichotomy and age hierarchy between my participants and myself, as I most certainly did not want to be portrayed in a maternal light, it was inescapable. Many workers in the neighborhood (security guards, workers at the maquis, ladies working the food stands, and adults in the surrounding area) quickly recognized my persistent work with the children. Jokingly, they would label my participants as “[mes enfants] my children.” Although, they were told daily to call me simply Ty-Juana, they all referred to me as tantie (aunt[ie]).

Soon, I learned through observation, that despite my endeavors, children in Côte d’Ivoire are acculturated into a society where age hierarchies are to be respected. Therefore, despite my

requests, and the fact that we are not related, the children have been socialized into a system, if only briefly, where adults (all adults) are given a title. Familiar women are labeled as tanties (aunties), whereas men are referred as tonton (uncle). Therefore, such a title was rendered as a sign of respect for my age and familiarity. The children saw me in a pseudo maternal, friendship position. They confided in me, without the consequences of being reprimanded for their actions, while also seeing me as a provider, without the consequences of being chastised for their actions. And later, they too guarded me on the streets.

When word spread that a black American (a phenomenon in itself) was interested in street children, offering food, clothing, and sometimes money, children from other corners and areas flocked to Sococé. In those moments, “my children” began to assert their “position” of ownership of me. Without any word from me, my usual kids (Stéphane, Jean Marie, Moise, Amara, Junior, Cheikh, and Evan) would force the newcomers to leave. This point of contention was intriguing in analyzing how the children forged an alliance in this situation, causing me to question whether their communities are flexible and shifting, and if my presence altered or maybe created and/or solidified a previously non-existent community.

I considered these long walks with casual discussion and observation as key to build rapport with my subjects while also providing an opportunity for me to understand better the nuances and intricacies of their culture. For instance, in addition to musicking, I observed them playing games (“touch game,” gambling, soccer); selling products (Lotus-pocket tissues); working (washing windshields for cash, begging on street corners); arguing with one another; navigating the urban space governed by teenagers migrating throughout the city; delineating

themselves from other children; and going through the normal gamut of emotions: anger, sadness, illness, and happiness, as demonstrated through the text and vignette below:<sup>56</sup>

**Interviewer:** What sort of activities do you do to have fun?

**Moise:** I dance and eat food, sometimes.

**Interviewer:** How do you get clothes to wear?

**Jean Marie:** I buy new clothes with the money that I get from people when I beg.

**Research Assistant:** They didn't have bath for days, public bath is 50 CFA (10 US cents), I will take them to have bath and buy new dress.

**Interviewer:** How long have you been living on the street?

**Jean Marie:** Some days ago, since 2012.

**Interviewer:** So, what do you do to have fun sometimes?

**Jean Marie:** We play soccer.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me about things that happened to you on the street?

**Jean Marie:** Living on the street is not a good thing. We get stolen from most of the time, while sleeping and our money is taken away from us. Drunkards more often chase or beat us when we sleep.

**Interviewer:** So, how did you manage to earn money and buy clothes?

**Stéphane:** I beg and use it [the money] to buy food and new dress [clothes] and have bath [to bathe].

[break]

**Interviewer:** How do you feel about begging?

**Stéphane:** No.

**Interviewer:** So, what would you like to do to stop begging?

**Stéphane:** I prefer selling Lotus [personal packages of tissues].

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<sup>56</sup> Interview material is given verbatim in an effort to offer the "literal" words and voice of my participants.

**Interviewer:** I'm here with Stéphane, Jean Marie, Moise and Amara. So now, I'll ask you what you do from daylight to the evening every day when you get up. You can tell me everything, is that ok?

**Stéphane:** When we get up my friends and I go to beg money and when we get enough, we buy new clothes or foods and take a shower. And we all bed together during the night till the morning. And we go to Las Palmas [a neighborhood in Cocody] to beg again the next day.

**Interviewer:** Where do you sleep?

**Stéphane:** There's a place called the grass, we all go there to sleep.

**Interviewer:** Are you afraid of anything when you sleep?

**Stéphane:** No, we all sleep together.

**Interviewer:** Whom do you sleep with?

**Stéphane:** We are three persons (Jean Marie, Stéphane, and Moise), so when we get up, we go and beg.

**Interviewer:** All right.

**Jean Marie:** My name's Jean Marie, when we get up we go and wash our face and then go to beg and we come back around midday to play a bit.

**Interviewer:** What kind of game do you play?

**Jean Marie:** We play "touch game," we close our eyes and then try to touch someone else. And a man tried to cut our heads off some days ago while sleeping. We suddenly got up and started to run away.

**Interviewer:** But who did that? Did you know him?

**Jean Marie:** Some old men, they cut our heads off to sell it.

**Interviewer:** And you, what's your name?

**Moise:** My name's Moise.

**Interviewer:** What do you do when you get up in the morning? And during the night, where do you sleep?

**Moise:** When I get up every morning...

**Interviewer:** Tell me your story, I want to know it.

**Moise:** When I get up in the morning, I join my friends and see what the schedule will be like. Before sleeping yesterday, I had two hundred (200CFA = 40 US cents) in my pocket, but I cannot find them now, someone has stolen them in the night. We all went to Sococé to play “touch game” and wait for you to come.

**Interviewer:** Why did you decide to go to Sococé?

**Moise:** It’s because I love that place and people there give a lot of money.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and you?

**Amara:** My name’s Amara.

**Interviewer:** Tell me, what do you do when you get up in the morning?

**Amara:** When we got up yesterday, my friends and I took the money that’s been given to us by a man and went to buy foods and a man came up to us and said we beg money to play to play lottery games with it and suddenly overturned our foods on the ground. Our first reaction was to beat him but another came and separated us and asked, “Why did we want to beat that man?” And we said, “He’s overturned our food on the ground.” Then the man said, “If we touch that man again, he’ll himself beat us.” And we started to fight again. The man threw a rock at me and then some took sticks and the other took bottles and broke it on the man’s head. And after that, we have been chased away from that place, so we went back to pick up our foods on the ground and eat it.

*The children at Sococé were not “professionals” who performed for money. They simply danced and sang to music they heard and liked in their soundscape. From viewing music videos on televisions in the local maquis, they became familiar with all of the best dance moves presented in music videos. One day, my kids led my assistant and me to the grassy field that rested just behind a large apartment complex near Sococé to talk. In spite of its location at a major intersection, the large, shaded grassy area had relatively limited foot traffic. We sat in this secluded place talking about music and the streets, and dancing. Three of the boys loosely surrounded us in a circle as they danced together. Their movements were somewhat synchronized, knowing the upcoming moves from memory as they listened to the random selections of coupé décalé playing on my assistant’s phone. There they danced. One child attempted a handstand while incorporating his own free style elements, wildly moving his arms*

*and legs extemporaneously. And when fatigued or unsure of the next moves, he would briefly sit out portions of the dance. Unlike the free style antics of their peer, the other two boys maintained with the basic coupé décalé dance with bended knee, rotating pelvis, and rotating arm movements, following the basic moves they had memorized from the video.*

At noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays the children and I would gather in front of Sococé to eat near the shopping center at a cheap, local, dank maquis (of their choosing) and talk until the ladies running the maquis requested that we move to make space for her other customers. There, the number of kids meeting with me weekly ranged anywhere between two to eight persons. During these meetings as described above, they would tell me about their week, express their needs (e.g., clothes, medicine, shoes, toiletries, shower money), and/or answer any questions I might have.

After the initial interviews of asking about music directly, I was more intrigued about how music and dance were incorporated in their lives organically, leading me to observe their behavior from afar.<sup>57</sup> I observed as they performed for each other to the music in their soundscapes: either from television (placed in a maquis (see Image 3.1)); a passerby's phone on speaker phone; an advertising truck (speaker trucks); amplified speakers from a major event in the area; or simply a passing car. The world was their stage. In those unexpected and, sadly, often undocumented moments, I gleaned the musical community of my children.

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<sup>57</sup> I also realized as an adult they felt obligated to “perform” for me, and my research assistant would often turn my interrogative questions (Are there any songs you’d like to sing or dances you’d like to share?) into imperative statement (Faut chanter, Faut danser (One must sing, One must dance)).



**Image 3.1. Maquis. (ThisFabTrek 2008)**

However, in this same setting the moral and religious stance of some children were also revealed. While most of the children participated in dancing and singing to any amplified popular music, there were two children from Sococé who were *on* the streets (only using the streets to acquire funds and food during the day and returning to their families at night) who often would not participate in the singing and dancing of secular music. These siblings (Cheikh and Aicha (aka Amara)) were raised in a Muslim household.<sup>58</sup> As they still lived with their parents, who are recent migrants from Mali, Aicha and her younger brother Cheikh opted to not dance nor sing the popular songs mediating the soundscape of the streets of Abidjan. Despite this barrier, I did observe that they seemingly enjoyed their time of play and wage earning with their peers.

However, while Aicha and Cheikh did not dance or sing popular music, such as coupé décalé, zouglou, and others secular forms of music, Aicha did kindly share a song (see Track 10 and Music Example 3.1) in the style of Alima Coulibaly who is popular amongst Muslims in

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<sup>58</sup> The religious demographics of Côte d'Ivoire are: Muslim 40.2%; Catholic 19.4%; Evangelical 19.3%; Methodist 2.5%; other Christian 4.5%; animist or no religion 12.8%; other religion/unspecified 1.4%. However, while constituting 40% of the population, many Muslims in Côte d'Ivoire are not stark followers of all the religious practices.

Côte d’Ivoire.<sup>59</sup> As the song is in Dioula, Aicha’s indigenous language, she was not able to recall the title, or the name of the musician. Therefore, I do not know the lyrical content. However, musically (see Music Example 3.1), the song is quite different from most children’s songs. While the transcription below offers an approximation of the audio in Music Example 3.1, it does reveal the range and contour of the melody. Instead of the limited range and simple rhythm expected, the piece that Aicha performed fits loosely in a major pentatonic mode and has a range of over an octave. As seen below, the melodic line generally hovers around the tonic-E. However, during the third beat the melody usually leaps by a fourth or fifth, creating disruptions in her “rapid declamatory phrasing,” which is a common vocal style among ethnic groups in the Western Sudanic region (DjeDje 1998:446). Because Aicha is singing solo, she takes certain liberties with the tempo, sometimes fluctuating the timing of the beat.

Title Unknown

**Music Example 3.1. Song performed by Aicha (title unknown). Also see Track 10.**

In addition to offering entertainment and revealing aspects of their religious affiliation, a few of the children articulated a desire to become artists as seen in the statement below:

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<sup>59</sup> Alima Coulibaly, born Alimata Coulibaly, labels herself a Muslim songstress. She was born in Adzopé (southeast Côte d’Ivoire) yet was raised in Koumassi in Abidjan, where she attended Qur’anic school. At 10 years of age, she “discovered her musical and artistic potential, and later demonstrated an interest in composing” (Coulibaly 2012).

*Child:* I want all of you to know my true calling which is to become a dancer so that to help financially my family. May God bless us all, God is able to do everything, bye.

And his friend Junior said:

*Junior:* I would like to become a dancer.

Therefore, they see performing and dancing as a successful means of earning revenue, and is perhaps a profession that is within their reach and ability.

### **How Does Music Function in the Quotidian?**

In this environment, I observed the everyday use of music in the lives of the children, which may appear unimportant in ethnomusicology. However, as suggested by Merriam, it is important to observe the mundane, banal, and quotidian to understand the functions of music in society.

From the descriptions of street children at Sococé in the above, one can parse out the various functions of music in the daily lives of some street children. Of course, many of these functions overlap, therefore, using the functions proposed by Merriam (1964), I will discuss the two most obvious: 1) entertainment and 2) validation of social institutions and religious rituals.

While none of the children were terribly gifted in dancing or singing, they did find enjoyment in peering over the fences of the maquis to watch music videos on television from a distance, and sharing the songs and dances with one another, as described below.

*Interviewer:* Where do you listen to American music?

*Stéphane:* On TV.

*Interviewer:* But where do you watch TV?

*Stéphane:* At home, in Yopougon.

*Interviewer:* But now that you no longer are living there, where do you watch it?

*Stéphane:* At the restaurant (maquis).

**Interviewer:** What sort of activities do you do to have fun?

**Moise:** I dance and eat food, sometimes.

Songs have the power to validate social institutions by emphasizing what is proper in society, and likewise offering to others what society deems improper (Merriam 1964:225). In the case of my participants, music was used to profess what they believed and what they deemed improper. For instance, those who strongly associate with either Christian or Muslim beliefs, validate such beliefs through songs, actions, or inactions. Aicha, for example, who had been raised in a conservative Muslim household, chose not to dance—her inaction demonstrated her values. Instead, she offered a selection by a popular Muslim songstress.

Similarly, another child whose father was a pastor preferred Christian religious songs, as seen in the text below. Merriam reaffirms that “religious systems are validated, as in folklore, through the recitation of myth and legend in song, as well as through music which expresses religious precepts” (Merriam 1964:224).

**Interviewer:** Do you love music? What kind?

**Moise:** Yes, I do. I love religious music.

**Interviewer:** So, let’s sing a bit.

**Moise:** (Singing) My father is faithful, he’ll never let me down!!! I know many songs.

**Interviewer:** Who taught you all those songs?

**Moise:** I learned them at the church.

**Interviewer:** Are you still going to church?

**Moise:** No.

For those in the quotidian musical community, the intersections between people (family and friends) and space (sound and places) on the streets of Abidjan are evident in the ways that music functions in their daily lives. The following discussion of children communities will offer

another environment where children are engaged with music daily; however, the functions and locale differ.

## **Children in Institutions**

### **Foyer Akwaba**

Foyer Akwaba (Welcome Home) was first established in Abobo-Avocatier (N’Ponon), Abidjan (Image 3.2) in October 1999 by Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes, an organization based in four countries in West Africa: Togo, Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, and Guinee, Conakry.<sup>60</sup> The organization’s objective is to develop an educational program that promotes both formal and agricultural education, and to support women. Located on 14,465 square meters of land, Foyer Akwaba broke ground in 1996 with the help of several organizations (BICE, la Mairie d’Abobo, and le district Abidjan) with similar agendas--to encourage children in difficult situations and street children. The primary objective of this center, as stated online, is “pour accueillir les enfants en situation difficile, surtout les enfants de la rue” (to aid children in difficult situations, especially those children residing on the streets) (Foyer Akwaba 2010:7).

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<sup>60</sup>As stated in Chapter 1, at Foyer Akwaba I interned three days a week. Initially I observed, acting as other educators in enforcing the rules for the children, aiding where necessary, but primarily ensuring that they do not harm each other. As time passed, I was given space and time throughout the day to meet with an allotted group of children who were interested in talking with me. During this time, I would ask questions, record their musicking and offer music lessons on the recorder if they desired. Slowly my position and relationship with them changed. When I was once deemed an official, I was quickly seen as an older peer and the butt of some jokes because of my American sounding French.



**Image 3.2. Foyer Akwaba Emblem (Foyer Akwaba 2010)**

The center opened its doors October 16, 1999, and on April 20, 2000, the center was officially given the status of an ONG (nongovernment organization), with the capacity to house sixty residents and assist fifty program participants (Foyer Akwaba 2010:6). See below for the center's statement:

La mission essentielle du Centre est d'accueillir et accompagner, dans un processus éducatif d'épanouissement global, d'insertion sociale et familiale, les enfants de la rue et ceux ayant une situation difficile, afin de les réintégrer progressivement dans leurs familles respectives et dans la société en général" (Foyer Akwaba 2015).

The essential mission of the center is to aid and accommodate in the educational process of global development, social and familial connection for street children and high risk (children in difficult situations) so that they might progress and be reintegrated into their families and in general society (Foyer Akwaba 2015). [Translation by author]

In addition to the mission statement, the ten goals of the center include the following:

Facilitate living conditions and help build relationships for kids living in the urban environment, including street kids and kids exposed to possibilities of social exclusion.

Develop a genuine bond of partnership with kids to accompany them in their growth.

Build bonds of mutual respect and kindness by teaching them self-esteem.

Make the center's goals transparent to the diverse partners, users and responsible people.

Progressively reinstate kids into the educational system, or into learning a vocation.

Encourage their development with work by helping them rely upon their own strengths and resources for their success in life. Educate them to be responsible and sharing.

Create links between the child and the parents in order to motivate their return back home, while also assist in strengthening the family and parental responsibility.

Encourage children to live like ordinary people in the neighborhood to facilitate their integration.

Prepare the adolescent for the acquisition of a socio-economic autonomy through vocational work.

Create an effective system for them to follow routinely so that they might return to family, school, or apprenticeship.

Organize prevention practices and orient kids and adolescents for kids at risk for social exclusion to rehabilitate while living at Foyer Akwaba in Abobo.<sup>61</sup> [Translation by Samuel Lamontagne]

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<sup>61</sup> Faciliter les conditions d'écoute et les relations d'aide pour les enfants vivant en milieu urbain, enfants de la rue et exposés aux risques de l'exclusion sociale

Établir un véritable rapport de partenaire avec les enfants pour les accompagner dans leur recherche des solutions.

Établir des rapports de respect mutuel et de gentillesse en leur apprenant à s'autoestimer.

Rendre transparent le projet du Centre et rendre compte de sa réalité aux différents partenaires, usager et responsables.

Réintégrer progressivement les enfants dans le système éducatif, dans une école de rattrapage, ou dans l'apprentissage d'un métier manuel.

Favoriser leur développement par le travail les aider à compter davantage sur leur propres forces et ressources pour réussir leur vie. Les éduquer à la responsabilité et au partage

Créer des liens entre l'enfant et les parents, afin de les motiver à retourner dans leur foyer, assister la famille et renforcer la responsabilité parentale.

Faire vivre les enfants comme des habitant ordinaires du quartier afin de faciliter leur intégration

Préparer l'adolescent à l'acquisition de l'autonomie socio-économique par le biais d'un métier manuel.

Créer un système effectif de suivi dans leur milieu habituel de vie : retour en famille, scolarisation, apprentissage.

Mettre en place des pratiques de prévention et d'orientation des enfants et adolescent exposés aux risques d'exclusion sociale vivant dans la commune d'Abobo.

The center offers housing and education for five categories of young boys between the ages of seven to sixteen: 1) les enfants en difficultés familiales [children from troubled families]; 2) les déplacés de guerre, les victimes de maltraitance ou ayant subi des abus sexuels [children displaced or victims of war or sexual abuse]; 3) les enfants accusés de sorcellerie [children accused of sorcery]; 4) les enfants du quartier dont les parents sont trop pauvres pour payer l'école ou l'apprentissage [children from financially unstable families]; and 5) les apprentis, filles ou garçons, qui sont pauvres et viennent bénéficier de activités du Foyer [apprentices who are in poverty and could use the services of the center] (2010:12). These five categories of children in distress are similar to the stories of street children in different parts of the world (see Chapter 2).

On par with their mission statement, Foyer Akwaba offers schooling to the children who live at their center and those in the surrounding community. In addition to providing a fundamental education for all of their children, at all levels, the center also offers trade programs (e.g., mechanics, welding, plumbing, and electrical work) for older students who have aged out of school. Another primary objective of the center is to facilitate relations between the children and their families. This is achieved through educators and counselors, who are employed at the center meeting one-on-one with the family and children to discuss problems triggering their separation; scheduling weekend visits between the children and their families; and arranging for children to have short-term, leading to eventual long-term visits with their families. In an effort to collaborate with the community and other organizations, the center also holds several events throughout the year with invitations extended to parents, members of the community, and other organizations so all parties can engage with the children and discuss the issues and methods needed to assist children with assimilating into the larger society. In an effort to fully

“rehabilitate,” Foyer Akwaba offers a strict schedule to assimilate their inhabitants from their non-structured lives to a strict regime. It was believed that to create a well-rounded citizen, time for cultural activities should be incorporated into their weekly schedule, as seen below:

**3.2.8. - PROGRAMME D'ACTIVITÉ**

Horaire/ Jour	8 h - 12h	15h - 18h
Lundi	Ecole de base Écoute, permanence	Écoute, permanence Activités sportives, culturelles ou récréatives
Mardi	Ecole de base Écoute, Permanence	Alphabétisation Permanence, écoute Activités sportives ou culturelles Écoute des apprenants
Mercredi	Travaux ménagers Jeux	Tutorat par petits groupes Temps libre
Jeudi	Ecole de base Écoute, Permanence	Alphabétisation Écoute, permanence Activités sportives

**Image 3.3. Schedule at Foyer Akwaba (Foyer Akwaba 2010)**

Monday and Tuesday evenings were specifically allotted for sports and/or cultural activities, including storytelling, songs, and plays. While the list of activities (Image 3.3) does not emphasize the teaching of music in an educational sense, what is not apparent from this schedule is that their daily “ecoute” session (announcements) demands that students open with songs. One song, “Bonsoir les amis” (see Track 1 and Music Example 3.2), is used to greet the workers at Foyer Akwaba and each other. The song lyrics differ depending on the time of day. For instance, on Track 1 the children sing “Bonsoir les amis” [Good evening friends], and conclude with “nous nous somme reunir pour vous dire bonsoir” [We have come together to say good evening]. But when performed in the morning, the children would sing bonjour. Musically

(see Music Example 3.2), the song is pentatonic, primarily syllabic, and rhythmically simple. Although the function of this song is to enforce good manners, that is, training the children on the importance of proper greetings, this piece also serves as an alarm and aural roll keeper. Once the song commences, all children should be seated with their group at the gazebo, where all meetings are held. If a child is not present, he must be accounted for or found by their “chief” or group leader. All children who do not have a valid excuse, such as illness or a sanctioned activity, are reprimanded once they arrive and join the group.

**Bonsoir les Amis**

a mis ? bon soir ? ? ? Text unclear

5  
bon so ir bon so ir a dieu bon soir

**Music Example 3.2. “Bonsoir les amis.” Also see Track 1.**

Another example (Track 11, also see Music Example 3.3) aids in organizing children by their designated groups--abeille (bee); coq (cock); loup (wolf); lion (lion); castor (beaver); and aigle (eagle). The group names coincide with the age of the group members. For instance, the abeilles (bees) group includes the youngest and smallest members, while the lions (lions) is the group with the oldest and biggest members. In addition to saying the name of their group, each group must also perform a cry or sound, usually mimicking the group’s name (i.e., lions roar, coqs crow, bees buzz). In the event that a group has a name that cannot be easily imitated by the human voice, another sound or onomatopoeia would be used. Being a cheer, the performers repeat the same pitch throughout the piece. The call and response elements (see Music Example

3.3) between the chief (caller) who initiates the call (nonsense syllables were used to depict the call and response element), and the group members give the piece its cohesiveness. Because of the distortion of the group names, as seen with the elongation of the word “abeille,” it is difficult to understand the text of the cheer. “Bonsoir les amis” and “Cheer” both serve multifaceted roles; they are used to take attendance, demonstrate solidarity among groups, and energize the children for the day.<sup>62</sup>

**Cheer**

The musical score for 'Cheer' is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves: 'Response' (treble clef) and 'Call' (bass clef). The 'Response' staff has lyrics: 'a beil le a beil le a beille unknown unknown'. The 'Call' staff has lyrics: 'a lu a lu a lu'. The second system also has two staves. The top staff (treble clef) has lyrics: 'unknown unknown coq coq coq coq'. The bottom staff (bass clef) has lyrics: 'a lu'. There are empty rectangular boxes on the left side of the second system, one next to the top staff and one next to the bottom staff. A measure number '5' is written above the first measure of the top staff in the second system.

**Music Example 3.3. “Cheer.” Also see Track 11.**

**Day of the African Child**

While Foyer Akwaba held community days throughout the year to celebrate several holidays and events, one of their largest celebrations was “The Day of the African Child.” This day, June 16th, is a continental holiday to honor the over 20,000 students from Soweto, South Africa, who, in 1976 protested against injustice in their nation. Their outspoken words and

<sup>62</sup> Because of the quality of the recording and the pronunciation used by the children, a transcription of the lyrics could not be offered for “Cheer,” and “Bonsoir les amis.” It is through interning at Foyer Akwaba and informal conversation that I was informed of the content of both songs.

ability to take a stand against apartheid and speak for equal education led to the death of hundreds of children and the injury of thousands. This day later memorialized as National Youth Day in South Africa, became The Day of the African Child in 1999. Since nearly a quarter of the children's population in Africa is out of school, the day is significant on a continental rather than the merely national level. For this reason, each year a committee appoints a theme for the day and year. In 2014, the theme was: "A child-friendly, quality, free, and compulsory education for all children in Africa" (Adegbulu 2014).

At Foyer Akwaba, most of the major NGOs (SOS Children's Village, Don Bosco, St. Mairie, BICE) that work with children were present for the "opening ceremonies" to celebrate the day's events. Prior to the formal ceremonies and during intermission, the children were allowed to dance and play as they wished to the mediated sound of Ivorian popular music heard through the amplification system. The main event of the day consisted of competitive arts. Each NGO arranged for a designated group of children to present poetry, song, dance, and a skit in competition with the other NGOs.

For students of Foyer Akwaba, these acts were taught and learned during their scheduled times of *Activités Culturelles* (see Image 3.4). Although the weeks leading to the competition were filled with intense rehearsals, which proved stressful for some, these special events allowed for the children to interact, and in some cases reconnect with their peers at other centers.<sup>63</sup>

### **BICE (International Catholic Child Bureau)**

Similar to Foyer Akwaba, BICE was founded in Paris in 1948, but is now based in thirty-five countries worldwide. Its mission, "To defend the rights and dignity of children worldwide" (BICE 2013), includes the following points: affirm that the child has rights; promote dynamism in all children; ensure full development for the child; work on the ground with children in

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<sup>63</sup> As discussed in Chapter 5, staged competition is a common activity for children and youth in Côte d'Ivoire

difficulty; stimulate thinking and research on the child; and convey the voice of the child. As is clear, their objective, similar to Foyer Akwaba, is most directed to children in distress or at risk.

I was first introduced to BICE in 2010 because their national office, located in le Plateau, Abidjan's downtown, business district, has an archive and library, including published studies and articles provided by BICE that I often used for my research. The main office coordinates the different facilities throughout Abidjan and the rest of Côte d'Ivoire. As stated in their charter, BICE aids all children and youth at risk. Therefore, in addition to having facilities throughout the city that aid street children, the physically disabled, abused, and children with mental disabilities, their staff also coordinates with the local adult prison (MACA-Maison d'Arrêt et de Correction d'Abidjan) in assisting the hundreds of youth in prison who have been arrested for petty crimes and held with adults. I worked only at the facilities in le Plateau, where children roaming the streets were sent immediately after the police had found them. After their arrest, they were taken to the main BICE office and eventually the le Plateau location. There, they were provided with short term housing before being reunited with their family or next of kin. Because of a number of reasons (children were unwilling to cooperate with staff, the cumbersome bureaucracy, and/or lengthy investigations), reunification often did not occur. When I arrived in 2010, some children had been at BICE several years, and upon my return in 2013, I saw some of the same children from my 2010 visit.

Because the facilities were not intended to offer long-term lodging, BICE was primarily a holding cell for the children, providing inconsistent and informal teaching of basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, despite the display of a stringent weekly schedule (see Image 3.4). Aside from cleaning the facilities, preparing the three meals a day, and running various tasks for the staff, the children spent their days entertaining one another, sometimes creating new songs and

singing popular songs. Weekly meetings were held to debrief the staff on the children's conditions at the center. Similar to Foyer Akwaba, the children were expected to update the staff about activities in their groups (gris, abeille, coq, lion, castor, and agile). To make the meetings somewhat engaging for the children, each group had a call or tag that they yelled out when their name was called, and several children were allowed to lead the group in a song of their choosing (similar to the protocol used among the children at Foyer Akwaba). During these meetings and activités culturelles times, the staff taught camp/game songs to the children, which were often incorporated into the personal repertoire of the children (Chapter 4).



**Image 3.4. BICE Schedule (image taken by author 2010)**

### **How Does Music Function in Institutions?**

As would be expected, musicking in institutionalized spaces such as BICE and Foyer Akwaba is for entertainment or play, but, in addition to music offering entertainment, music also enforces social norms. The tags/calls and organized competitive performances taught to the children conjure the notion of teamwork and conformity. As Merriam explains:

All societies, for example, make distinctions between the social roles of children and adults, which are reflected in music. [For instance], in almost all cultures, there are special songs sung by children, and these are not ordinarily employed by adults. Game songs, counting songs, language songs, and many others are specific to children, although

as he grows older the child gives up these songs special to age, and moves either abruptly or gradually into the sphere of adult music. (Merriam 1964:247)

Staff members at such institutions regard their actions, even the teaching of music, as a method to assimilate children into normative Ivorian cultures, which is children performing children's songs (Merriam 1964:223-226).

### **Nightlife**

It was startling and unexpected when I was first introduced to street children in August 2010. They were literally stacked one on top of the other, huddled together to gain warmth against the cold pavement. Ironically, as the music amplified and the time crept closer and closer to midnight, the children peeled from the pile--stretching, yawning, and then dancing.

### **Marcory**

I was introduced to Mille Maquis through a friend, Michelle Tanon-Lora, and scholar who created a Nouchi dictionary.<sup>64</sup> Her research location became my own, although I worked primarily with youth, not teenagers. Every weekend I spoke with and interviewed street youth to gain access into their world. At the Mille Maquis and eventually other party areas of the city, I sat and observed with a pit in my stomach as I saw fifteen to twenty children piled on top of one another trying to keep warm. They laid there seemingly lifeless as the music blasted through loud speakers along the strip. As the hours rolled on and the clubs and maquis began to fill with guests, the children peeled off of the pile, one by one. First dancing for each other and then slowly facing observers, putting on a smile, and "performing."

Every weekend during the summer of 2010, my assistant and I returned to Mille Maquis and observed the same group of children dancing for money. The club bouncer acted as a

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<sup>64</sup> While Nouchi is an argot composed of Ivorian French and several different indigenous languages, the word Nouchi is thought to mean literally moustache, signifying a strong or powerful man; however, its exact definition has been contested (Nouchi.com).

guardian, allowing them to sleep near the entrance of the club, but preventing strangers from doing them harm. After observing them dance, I approached the bouncer, explained my research, and asked him to speak with the youngest members of the group of mostly teenage boys to determine if they were willing to answer a few questions about their experience on the streets. The four youngest (Jean Tanoh, Franklin Tanoh, Marceline, and Samuel) children shared the stories of their experience on the streets as the weeks went on. In this situation, I was regarded as a journalist who provided goods (clothing, food, and drinks) to the children.

### **Post-initial Fieldwork**

After the political crisis of 2011-12, I returned to Marcory in 2014 to the same location to see if street children still resided there. Upon arrival I was informed that the area, as other former party districts in the city (Rue Princess), was in the process of being demolished. Under the new administration, strides had been made to invest in the private sector and infrastructure through the expansion of major highways in an effort to redevelop the dissolving economy. Unfortunately, this was done by diminishing the informal economy, such as locally owned and operated maquis, street vendors, and other small business that spread throughout the streets and alleyways of much of the city. When construction and expansion of major highways occur in Abidjan, the plans always “coincidentally” cut through or demolish areas that thrived from informal business sectors such as Mille Maquis and Rue Princess (see Image 3.5 for “before and after images” of the Mille Maquis).<sup>65</sup> While the area now is without lights and the glamour it once had, vendors continue to occupy the area hoping to muster business from the few who used to attend the bustling party area.

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<sup>65</sup> Mille Maquis, the club where I was first introduced to street children, has yet to be demolished, but the building is closed and dilapidated.



**Image 3.5. Before and After Image of Mille Maquis (images taken by author)**

### **Yopougon**

With Mille Maquis and Rue Princess areas of the city closed, I had to depend upon word of mouth (again) to find street children performers. Suggestions from youth in the city helped me to find street children performers when I returned to the field in 2013-2014. While one can find a party in Abidjan virtually any night of the week, I used my weekend nights to find street children performers in some of the most vile, dark, and sketchiest parts of the city. The search began at party areas or their remnants, and then I followed the recommendations of youth and friends near Allocodrome in Cocody, Mille Marquis (Marcory), and Rue Princess in Yopougon. It was not until I searched the streets of Yopougon and literally followed the music that I stumbled across a maquis in Bel-Air called Le Pitch. This maquis had a DJ performing live for the audience, and because of the live performance, children flocked to this location and held signs indicating they were fans of the DJ who was performing (Image 3.6).



**Image 3.6. Children with sign outside of Maquis Pitch (image taken by author)**

*I found street children dancing at the gate of the maquis, as they were restricted from entering the seated area that was limited to paying customers. After the DJ left and the crowd began to dissipate, the children continued dancing and drinking the remaining beer, soda, and food left by former patrons. As they finished off the bottles, I gathered (after asking their permission) those who were still sober together and asked them about their lives on the street. Ironically, unlike previous interactions with street children who appeared to be fearful when I asked to interview them, these children calmly sat down and upon seeing my audio recorder asked if I was a journalist. I asked each several questions about their lives.*

Interestingly, the majority of the children I met, as described in the previous vignette, had migrated from Agboville together, a city a little over 80km north of Abidjan (see Image 3.7).



**Image 3.7. Map of Agboville, Côte d'Ivoire (About Africa Travel 2016)**

An excerpt from their interviews demonstrates the theme of rural-urban migration and the various reasons children leave their homes.

Interview with a child from Agboville:

*Interviewer:* But how do you know all those boys?

*Child:* I don't know those boys over there, I only know those right here.

*Interviewer:* Where were you before living on the street?

*Child:* I was in Agboville.

*Interviewer:* Why did you leave Agboville?

*Child:* I left because of my stepmother.

*Interviewer:* Who are you living with in Abidjan?

*Child:* I'm alone and I sleep on the street.

*Interviewer:* You've just said the other boys were with you in Agboville, right? But how did they get here?

*Child:* We worked and then collected money together to leave Agboville.

Because street children are highly migratory, as expected, the children were not to be seen at Le Pitch, the following week. However, after further inquiry with ladies working at the maquis, I found many of the same children dancing at the exterior of the crowded maquis, Yoro

Gang (owned by DJ Arafat), in another region of Yopougon. Because street children are often plugged into the best and most populated locales in the city, one simply had to follow the loudest music or the most populated event to find them. However, many of these events were not publicized, causing me as a researcher to spend hours often wandering the streets with my research assistant, searching and asking women at maquis and Abidjanaise youth about street children who perform.

### **How Does Music Function in the Nightlife?**

The function of music among street children is so varying and vast because, unlike children in quotidian musical communities, nightlife children generally shift locales each night. However, I will highlight what I believe are the three most obvious functions: aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, and symbolic representation. While they perform for enjoyment and entertainment, nightlife musical communities primarily use music to gain income from audiences. And, unlike other spaces where children are permitted to share their experiences with one another, the nightlife is a competitive space. Those who are part of the community are accepted, but those are considered outsiders or unworthy to perform are shunned away.

Dance provides an outlet for street children to express their individuality. In this case, street children performers are similar to break-dancers in hip-hop culture; their movements often infer their autonomous identity. Such moves flow with ease from the bodies of talented children who solicit money at maquis, clubs, discotheques, and musical events in hopes of gaining a profit from their talents; however, the prestige gained amongst their peers is as important as their economic capital. In those moments of performing, the children see themselves in a different situation or light. For this reason, music performance also functions as symbolic representation

for nightlife communities (Merriam 1964:239). Perhaps these moments of performance represent their future. A future possibly filled with success and income.

No matter the function, it is clear, as stated by Merriam, that community informs one's musical choices and vice versa; thus, music is an integral part of culture, reflecting the general and underlying principles and values that animate the community as a whole (Merriam 1964:250). As we continue to investigate street children and the role of music in their lives, their impact on greater Ivorian identity will become even more pronounced, as we parse through elements of their culture.

## Chapter 4

### Music and Memory: Who I Am and Who I Want to Be

“Memory is the foundation of self and society. We are always ‘steeped in memory’ and without it, there can be no self, no identity.” (Edward Casey 1987:ix)

Through numerous interviews and hours spent observing street children in Abidjan, I have observed how music helps to evoke and recall memories of a street child’s family, ethnicity, religion, and, in some cases, their future. Because of the prevalent role that these recollections play in their life, this chapter will focus specifically on how memories evoked by music impact aspects of one’s self-identity (e.g., ethnicity, religion, race, class, and nationality).<sup>66</sup> And, in the case of street children, this is especially relevant given that they are commonly believed to have been without culture or history, lacking the cultural elements and social structures that create their self-identity.

Anthropologists Jacob Climo and Maria Cattell express aptly the importance of engaging memory when discussing self-identity:

Without memory the world would cease to exist in any meaningful way, as it does for persons with amnesias or dementia that make them forget the self through inability to remember some or all of their past and or to create new memories in their ongoing life. Without memory, groups could not distinguish themselves one from another, whether family, friends, governments, institutions, ethnic groups, or any other collectivity, nor would they know whether or how to negotiate, fight or cooperate with each other. (Climo and Cattell 2002:2)

Street children are dependent upon their memories to “distinguish themselves one from another” (Climo and Cattell 2002:2). These memories help to construct their complex identities that include many layers and dimensions (Chapter 2). Subsequently, identity is a heavily

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<sup>66</sup> Self-identity is the “ability to articulate differences between self and other.” This can be self constructed or ascribed by others (Stokes 1994:8). Most significantly, self-identity is realizing the components, which differentiate one person from another, such as race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, class, and age.

discussed topic, with scholars such as Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2005) proposing a systematic analysis of identity, and music scholar Keith Negus (1996) sharing the significance of the concept in popular music. In this work, I will discuss how aspects of one's identity, such as ethnicity, religion, class, age, and nationality, can be demonstrated and solidified through music performance.

### **How Does Memory Affect the Identity of Street Children?**

From the above, it is clear that memory has a tremendous impact on our identity. When social structures (family, kinship, ethnicity, class, and social hierarchies) have elapsed, the components that inform one's identity begin to dissipate, as seen with those suffering from cognitive disorders such as amnesia and dementia.<sup>67</sup> Those diagnosed with ailments that damage their memory not only have trouble learning new information, they also encounter problems reasoning, communicating, and focusing. Sometimes there are personality changes, as their foundation, their individual identity, has been altered.

Anthropologist Paula Heinonen in Ethiopia suggests that while street children appear to be more or less outside the direct guidance, moral inculcation, and economic dependence of their parents, they rely upon lived experiences and/or memory to inform their identity (Heinonen 2012:3). Because street children are believed to have limited, inconsistent, or severed access to the structures that form their identity (i.e., family, kinship, or religion), some researchers suggest that this may be the reason they have identity issues. This is why I have chosen to use music and memory as a platform to discuss the identity of Abidjanese street children because NGOs

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<sup>67</sup> Amnesia is a condition caused by the loss of memory, either wholly or partially. Memory is housed in several parts of the brain's limbic system, and any condition that interferes with the operation of the limbic system can cause amnesia (Amnesia-Therapist.com 2016). Dementia is not a specific disease. It is a term that describes a wide range of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities (Amnesia-Therapist.com 2016).

commonly propagate that African children are “imped[ed] . . . from speaking for themselves or choosing the way they wish to represent themselves globally” (Heinonen 2011:4).

## **Memory**

Memory--the process of encoding, storing, and retrieving information--can be placed into two categories: retrospective and prospective. Retrospective memory is the recollection of past events and actions, while prospective memory is the recollection of intended acts (McCauley, McDaniel, Pedroza, Chapman, and Levin 2009:202). Prospective memory, in particular, is most relevant among street children performers because of the way urban youth culture is transmitted through Ivorian popular music. Embedded within the culture of some music genre’s history and performance style are images of success and wealth. Through performance, a memory of an imagined future of success is triggered, created, and enacted.

For this chapter, focus will be placed on how the idea of prospective memory (PM) applies to my research. Prospective memory is commonly triggered by either time-based or event-based tasks. The former refers to the performance of “an intended action at a certain time or following a specific time interval,” while the latter is “remembering to perform an intended action in response to a certain target event” (McCauley, McDaniel, Pedroza, Chapman, and Levin 2009:202). In the case of my participants, I believe prospective memories are triggered by music performance or an event-based task.<sup>68</sup> The events that trigger an imagined future image in the minds of street children performers will be discussed later.

Numerous ethnomusicologists have used the topic of music and memory for investigation, because “fieldwork opens doors into the past through memory and narrative”

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<sup>68</sup> In addition, numerous studies have been conducted on prospective memory and how its common cues trigger the retrieval of an intention, or prospective memory. A few of those cues are: “providing a reward (or manipulating task-attractiveness); relative importance instructions (emphasizing the prospective memory relative to other ongoing tasks); absolute importance instructions (emphasizing the prospective memory task per se); and providing social motives” (Walter and Meier 2014:1). In the case of my participants, I believe event-based tasks cued by providing social motives help them to recall their prospective memories.

(Bithell 2006:3). Caroline Bittell states that as scholars, “our aim rather is to explore the ways in which echoes and legacies from the past can still be heard in the present and to consider the extent which musical practices in the present are shaped not only by past experiences but also by ideas, feelings, and beliefs from the past” (Bithell 2006:4).

Ethnomusicologist Kay Shelemay writes that “if notions of memories as contained within physical and psychic spaces draw on cultural knowledge, we must also explore the ways in which musical sound is conceived as a storehouse for memory,” suggesting that music has the ability to evoke sounds, individuals, sounds, sights, and events of the past (Shelemay 2006:22). Similarly, ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger states that “history can only be created and interpreted through repeated performances,” inferring that music and performance are the best indicators of one’s past, as the performance is remembered and repeated (Seeger 1993:24).

As an extension of Bithell’s comment, some ethnomusicologists use the “ideas, feeling, and beliefs from the past” to propose narratives that contradict written history, and spotlight voices who previously have been muted. In this vein, scholars today are using the memories of those in the present to create a new narrative. The following works show how “memory is not like a journal, an object recording life in the sequence it occurred.” Instead, they present memory as “a disorder of select moments, impressions and subjective states” that can be used to present a new narrative (Shanks 1992:101).

When examining the scholarship of some ethnomusicologists who focus on memory as it relates to music in Africa, two themes are emphasized: 1) the contesting and negotiating of preexisting history through music, and 2) the forging of a new narrative or collective memory through musicking.<sup>69</sup> To explain the preexisting history surrounding apartheid in South Africa,

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<sup>69</sup> In contesting history, musicians share a new component to the prevailing narrative, while the forging of a new narrative is the act of forgoing the old for something new altogether.

ethnomusicologist Christine Lucia (2002) discusses how South African jazz musician, Abdullah Ibrahim, deliberately embeds in his compositions memories of his personal experience during apartheid. Adding his story to the prevailing narrative, Ibrahim contests the preexisting narrative by “using the past to create an anchor that both had a spatial axis and a temporal one” (Lucia 2002:126). This allows his music to be a familiar anchor for others from his generation, while simultaneously telling his life experiences to South Africans who did not experience the national injustice first hand (2002:126).

Other examples of artists using music to reconstruct a historical narrative can be seen in works by Raoul German Blé (2006) and Angela Impey (2011:41), who both investigate the creation of a musical genre and the corresponding cultural movement that contests the homogenous normative cultures. Blé, in “Zouglou et Réalités Sociales des Jeunes en Côte d’Ivoire” (2006), examines how Ivorian youth during the 1980s and 1990s forged a philosophy and culture—“philosophe zougloutique.” This new cultural movement created a space for Ivorian youth to critique their nation, while simultaneously fashioning a more sexually liberated and vocal youth culture. Blé suggests that zouglou presented a narrative of the true condition of the nation, thus challenging the idealized, dominant narrative of prosperity, equality, and economic development. Similarly, Angela Impey, in “Songs of the In-Between: Remembering in the Land that Memory Forgot,” discusses how rural women in South Africa became agents of change and protest during apartheid, but women’s “folk” songs were omitted when the victorious history of black protest musicians against apartheid was created.

As demonstrated, the study of memory and music, as well as works that challenge the dominating narrative of a particular culture are not new to the field of ethnomusicology (Bithell 2006; Shelemay 2006; Lucia 2002). Whereas Bithell and Lucia focused on populations that have

historically been ignored, my research on Abidjanese street children offers a different perspective, giving voice to those who seemingly have little to say.

### **Memory and Street Children**

Although my investigation critiques the prevailing sentiment about the conditions of street children globally (Chapter 2), it is not my intention to use music to create or contest the historical narrative about Côte d'Ivoire. Rather, I focus on how music among street children in Abidjan can be used to rekindle aspects of their past, and “create an imaginary time-place. . .” in memory where the longed for, imagined, is expressed (Lucia 2002:128,136-137).

Instead of labeling this future memory as the realization of an imagined space from the past, I will use the term prospective memory. Because Abidjan's urban youth culture is linked with performance, and street children dwell in the space where this culture is cultivated and lived out, the two worlds intertwine. Anthropologist Sasha Newell explains:

Ivorians used the word *bluff* to describe both the act of artifice through which young men and women project the appearance of success and the people who performed it: *les bluffeurs*. A combination of dress, attitude, physical comportment and spendthrift practices, the bluff is not only a performance of success beyond the financial means of the actor in question, but also a demonstration of the cultural knowledge and taste of the urbanized citizen. It is a demonstration of the superior person one would employ all the time if one had the money for it, a display of potential. While the performance would seem to be an act of deception, an illusion meant to fool the audience into believing the success of the performers, it paradoxically would seem to skewer such impression by drawing attention to its own performativity—it is explicitly a bluff. (Newell 2012:1)

As inhabitants of the street and dwellers in the culture of bluff, street children are caught in a liminal position, observing this culture of bluff, yet seemingly unable to participate in it.<sup>70</sup> To add another precarious layer to the story of street children, the streets are often considered a space of in-betweenness, a path to one's place, but, in the case of street children, the streets serve as a home or final destination. This unclear position is even more blurred when coupled with

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<sup>70</sup> The notion of bluff is primarily influenced by the emergence of the music genre *coupé décalé*.

various ideas about childhood as a place of in-betweenness—a place where human beings lack autonomy and are still considered as property. In addition, many street children in Abidjan and elsewhere in the nation lack documentation—making them stateless. Therefore, their consanguineous families are non-existent or not readily accessible; their ethnicity is attached to a land they often do not know or have never seen; their citizenship is nonexistent; and their community is composed of diverse children from various ethnicities, regions, religions, and families (see chart in Appendix B). All of these components demonstrate the complex identity of street children, and further support why it is important to evaluate their identity through memory as the “ethnographer is thus an important but largely unacknowledged player in the elicitation of memories and the construction of histories” (Shelemay 2006:18). Therefore, when working among individuals who are believed to have no culture and/or history, I have found that a discussion of music sparks the discussion of self-identity and the future.

Consequently, similar to the many youth and young adults who bluff their success in the maquis, many of the street children, in performance, evoke an ideal of themselves as les bluffeurs. They see a future image of themselves as successful, prominent, and visible. As previously mentioned, several scholars have discussed how artists have used music to either reconstruct or contest the prevailing normative narrative. However, from my observations, the music performed by street children is used as a tool to rekindle their retrospective memories (recollection of past events) and create their prospective memories (the recollection of a future intention).

After collecting dozens of songs, I decided to divide them into four categories: 1) game/camp, 2) religious, 3) indigenous, and 4) popular/new creations. Game/camp songs are communal in performance, allowing the children to share experiences and create prospective

memories as intended by facility educators. Religious and indigenous songs, which are performed and remembered individually (though there are a few exceptions), commonly initiate nostalgia or retrospective memories about the child's heritage and past. Similar to game and camp songs, popular songs/new creations also involve communal performance. And while new creations are "new," their form, style, and content imitate songs performed by popular Ivorian musicians, posing insight on the impact of Ivorian urban youth culture on street children. These categories (game/camp, religious, indigenous, popular and new creations) provide a wide range of the musicking performed by Abidjanese street children. Using musical examples from each category, in addition to the children's own words, my observations, and the words of others, I will describe how songs recall memory and inform the identity of the street children populations. The songs will then be partnered with the narratives collected from my participants to shed light on their individual memories, both retrospective and prospective.<sup>71</sup> Finally, I will discuss the affect of Abidjan's urban youth culture on street children to determine how Ivorian popular music impacts their self-identity.

### **Games and Camp Songs**

Through coaching and forcing their participation and learning of certain songs, NGOs and government organizations (Chapter 3) attempt to furnish the children with a musical foundation similar to that taught in "normal" academic institutions (i.e., schools and camp). The content of such songs often fortify the notion of fraternity, hard work, and respect for social hierarchies and national democracy, a knowledge base that some believe street children lack prior to entering their facilities. For instance, Isaac, one of the educators (teachers) from Foyer

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<sup>71</sup> As noted in the foregoing, prospective memory is when one acts in the present upon a remembered or recalled future ambition, allowing a person to bring desires for success into fruition—if only momentarily—through the triggering of an event or time. Retrospective memory is the recalling or recollection of a past event or memory.

Akwaba states: “The children did not make music before arriving at the center.” (Isaac 2014). What I inferred from his remarks and similar comments by other staff members at Foyer Akwaba is that the music that the children sang on the streets of Abidjan—popular Ivorian music—was not deemed to be music. Instead, the songs taught by the center, primarily camp/game songs, was music of higher value. Furthermore, Isaac’s statement suggests that the repertoire taught by organizations such as Foyer Akwaba was essential in countering many of the behavioral patterns created on the street (e.g., independence, self sufficiency, and seemingly anarchist behavior), which most adults believed to be typical of street children.

There has been an ongoing history of adults governing and controlling the consumption of material culture by youth. Scholars such as ethnomusicologist Matt Swanson (2015) have discussed how scholars and educators ignore the agency of children in their choice of music consumption by prescribing music to their population and perpetuating the idea of them as passive consumers of cultural products (Quota and Odeh 2005; Buckingham 1997; Barber 2008, 2009; and Cairns 1996). Similar to the legal battles and music censorship introduced by the American Family Association (AFA) in the United States, the staff and educators at Foyer Akwaba act as referees of children’s musicking because they believe music can transmit subliminal messages (both positively and negatively). Therefore, in an attempt to socialize children and help them develop into formidable citizens, Foyer Akwaba and BICE (see Chapter 3) are purposeful and strategic in their use of camp/game songs.

The previously discussed example, “Bonsoir les amis” (see Music Example 3.2 and Track 1), offers the sort of camp/game songs commonly taught in these centers. Similar to U.S. game songs, as noted by ethnomusicologist Kyra Gaunt (2006), such songs provide the foundation for which many adults learn music. Therefore, the learning of game songs serves as a form of capital

for most children/youth. Since such camp and game songs are well known among adults and youth attending school in Abidjan, regardless of age and/or socio-economic status, one would assume that such songs serve as a musical foundation for many, similar to the “Alphabet Song,” “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” or “Humpty Dumpty” in the United States.

The game and camp songs performed by subjects reveal a broad range of topics and content. Some offer salutations, as seen in “Bonsoir les amis” (Track 1), while others are full of nonsense words and syllables. Most are largely group participatory songs. They are all strophic, limited in melodic contour, primarily in major keys, and fairly simple to sing and/or chant. Nearly all songs were sung in French and/or infused with vocables or nonsense syllables.

As the content rarely provided a cohesive message, we can presume that the familiarity of a song is of utmost importance, aligning repertoire to prestige. The repertoire is anticipated to trigger prospective memories--a shared cultural product that children should be able to draw upon once they are socialized into a more normative adult Ivorian society. For instance, the vignette below offers a context for Track 11, (see “Cheer,” Music Example 3.3)..

As previously discussed, this cheer was described by educators as a tool to organize the children by groups (through cheering the loudest, quickest, and strongest) and fortify the bond among group members. This song also helps children to learn how to work in groups and develop a sense of pride and work ethic. Through song, the staff is attempting to integrate the children into the greater Ivorian society through knowledge and action.

### **Religious Songs**

In Côte d’Ivoire, the religious division is 38.6% Muslim, 32.8% Christian, and 28.6% other/none. As religious and ethnic tensions remain high in the nation, I purposefully chose to not ask children about their religious affiliation, and commonly, when religious affiliation was

mentioned, many responded by manipulating their eyes in different ways or restating their ethnicity. However, scholars have found that the enfolding of faith with ethnic identity is common. For instance, scholar Daniel Reed, an ethnomusicologist working among the Dan people in northwestern Côte d'Ivoire, found that one's faith can dictate one's "social ideals, values, and ethics" as the Ge does in Dan society, making religion the root of society and one's existence (Reed 2003:1). Since Ivorians' views on ethnicity and religion are sometimes conflated, this may explain the confusion experienced by some children.

The religious songs I collected were obtained by asking simple questions: "What is your favorite song?" or "Do you have a song that reminds you of your family?" Common responses led to the performance of either religious songs or songs in their indigenous language. In either case, when further information was inquired about their song choice, the children would reveal from whom they learned the song, as demonstrated below:

**Interviewer:** What job does your father do?

**Moise:** My father is a tailor and a pastor.

**Interviewer:** But why don't you live with him?

**Moise:** Because he has no money.

**Interviewer:** But you just said that your father works.

**Moise:** He always says he has no money.

**Interviewer:** But, why don't you want to live with your parents?

**Moise:** I don't want to live there because I'm not well fed.

[Later in the Interview]

**Interviewer:** Do you like music? What kind?

**Moise:** Yes, I do. I love religious music.

**Interviewer:** So, would you sing a bit for me?

**Moise:** (Singing) "My Father is faithful, he'll never let me down" I know many songs.

**Interviewer:** Who taught you all those songs?

**Moise:** I learned them at the church.

The questions and the suggesting of a few notes from the melody allowed the child to recall his Christian faith and his father, who is a pastor, which are all meaningful components of his religious identity and position as a son. Even while separate from his family, Moise identifies with the Christian faith, and musicking helps him recall that element of his self-identity.

Similarly, Track 3 displays how a young girl is reminded of her mother and her Christian faith through the recitation of the song, “Fais quelque chose dans ma vie seigneur.” The girl shared this song when asked, “Do you have a song that reminds you of your family?” Upon further sharing, she admitted that her mother taught the song to her. Thus, her retrospective memories cause her to think of her mother when she sings that song (Sonia 2010). This song (Music Example 4.1), similar to the style of many American contemporary worship songs, has simplistic lyrics that are repetitious and easy to sing. However, Sonia only knew the lyrics to the chorus, so she offered filler words throughout most of the song (as heard in the recording). The melodic range lingers around a fifth, sometimes extending to a sixth. Unlike the previous camp songs, this song is more rhythmic, using sixteenth notes to begin the second half of the melodic phrase (as seen in measures 1, 5, and 9). Although I did not ask Sonia about the denomination that she and her mother belonged to, after searching the web for more information, I found that this song is commonly performed in Protestant, Evangelical Francophone African congregations -- e.g., Mission for Christ International Church, Centre Evangélique Puissance Resurrection (CEPR) and MRJ (unknown--possibly men of Reform Judaism), Bethel Ministry, Strasbourg. Since Evangelical denominations are known for their more buoyant worship practices, this might be one of a number explanations for the more lively rhythms performed. For this discussion most

important is that this song was responsible for recalling a retrospective memory, which was tied to a family member and their religious (or ethnic) affiliation.

Fais quelque chose dans ma vie

The image shows a musical score for the song "Fais quelque chose dans ma vie". It consists of three staves of music in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the notes. A blue box highlights the first measure of the first staff. A second blue box highlights the word "quelque" in the third measure of the third staff. A bracketed annotation "[stumble over words]" is placed above the notes for the words "ma wu" in the second measure of the first staff.

6 Do bles so ti Bu de do bles so ti ma wu [stumble over words] Bu de do ma wu Me wo de do bles so ti wo de

9 do bles so ti me wo de do bles so ti ma wu Fais quelque

chose dans ma vie quelque chose dans ma vie quelque chose dans ma vie Jesus

Music Example 4.1 “Fais quelque chose dans ma vie.” Also see Track 3.

Indigenous Songs

As noted in the introduction, Cote d’Ivoire has over sixty different ethnic groups and four different ethno-linguistic clusters (Mande, Gur, Kwa, and Kru). The children I encountered on the streets came from various ethnic groups within the country and several of its surrounding nations (Burkina Faso, Liberia, Guinea, Mali, and Togo). Although the children’s population was ethnically diverse, when asked to share “a song that reminds them of their family” or “their ethnic group,” most could not recall a song in their indigenous language. Nevertheless, those who could remember were from the Doula (Gur) (Track 4) and Mooré (Burkinabe) (Track 5)

ethnic groups in Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>72</sup> The song in Track 5 (no transcription given) was introduced from the following dialogue:

**Interviewer:** What is the song about?

**Interviewee:** It is about family

**Interviewer:** Who taught you?

**Interviewee:** My [grandmother.]

**Interviewer:** Is your grandmother still alive?

**Interviewee:** Yes she is.

**Interviewer:** Next time will you ask her about the content?<sup>73</sup>

**Interviewee:** Ok, ok, I will

The child later stated that while he was not fluent in Mooré, he did recall his grandmother explaining the content of the song to him.<sup>74</sup> As this child was in process of being fully reunited with his family, he often had extended visits with his family, which is why he was familiar with the song and could agree to find out about the content at a later meeting.

Similar to the religious songs, the indigenous songs reveal vestiges and retrospective memories of children's heritage and family. Based upon the loose translations offered by the children, most of the songs concerned rural life and daily activities in the village. However, since the children often did not speak their indigenous languages, they were not able to give a detailed explanation of the song's content.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, when children performed these songs amongst their peers who were not from the same ethnic group, others often joined in while they sang because the songs had been shared amongst the children.

<sup>73</sup> This particular child lived at a center and after many years had begun the process of reuniting with family through short-term visits, which is why he knew and visited his family (grandmother).

<sup>74</sup> Mooré is a language spoken among the Mossi people in central Burkina Faso. During French colonization the French for labor in Ivorian plantations significantly exploited their population (Mossi 2016).

<sup>75</sup> Indigenous songs learned and transmitted to children will be a topic of discussion in later research.

## Popular and New Songs

Of all of the material I collected from the children, popular Ivorian genres (e.g., coupé décalé and zouglou) and American popular music were their favorites, and they were all too eager to share such songs with me. To my surprise, the center's educators and staff were strongly opposed to these popular styles of music as demonstrated below. Foyer Akwaba staff worker, Dembele, explains:

**Interviewee:** I do not like coupé décalé because [it is too noisy], and we do not understand what they are saying because of the nonsense things in coupé décalé. Music is not only done for making music. It is also the art of expressing oneself, a way of educating people and giving them good messages. But, in coupé décalé we do not find all these aspects, they make only nonsense and noise which is meaningless. Coupé décalé has brought a new style in Côte d'Ivoire. Many young people now dress strangely because of coupé décalé, (i.e., some pull their pants down). Can you imagine this kind of thing? Instead of educating people, on the contrary, it spoils them; so that is why I hate it [coupé décalé].

**Interviewer:** But tell me, there are some [artists] who have sung for peace, right?

**Interviewee:** Of course, but you must know that in everything some are good and others bad. For me the only good person in coupé décalé is DJ (Jean Jacques Kouamé). He is the only one whose music is meaningful in coupé décalé, and on top of coupé décalé, he is a part of other activities. And he is an example of someone who is always well dressed, so I like him. But unfortunately I do not like coupé décalé, but I like him above all. Coupé décalé is today the worst music in Côte d'Ivoire. They insult each other in song. They just play technologies and start threatening people instead of singing good music. At the beginning in 2002, coupé décalé was good, because the war had traumatized many people, so coupé décalé with Douk Saga at the head came with this concept in order to make people forget the war. Douk Saga was also a good example because he used to dress well. They used to give away money to people, a way of making them forget their troubles. But after the death of Douk Saga, coupé décalé has become very bad. (Dembele 2014)

Staff workers, as previously noted, disapprove of the consumption of coupé décalé, due to the present day lyrical content, lack of musical technicality, and influence that the artists have on popular Ivorian culture through dress, language, and attitude. Nevertheless, in spite of the dissuasion of the staff and their view of the genre, most children at the center prefer and seemingly identify with coupé décalé because of its aural presence everywhere, and the similar family background between some of the leading artists in the genre with that of many street children.

While coupé décalé is the most common genre of popular music performed and enjoyed by children, many of the participants I interviewed did not feel limited to single out this particular genre. When given the opportunity to perform, they presented examples of rap music, zouglou, coupé décalé, and newly created works as described below.

As an intern at BICE, it was primarily females who participated in hand games and game songs. However, at Foyer Akwaba, I interviewed a group of boys who had created their very own game song with clapping accompaniment that resembled a hand game in sound because of its rhythmic emphasis, interlocking between the vocal line and clapping. When I asked for a translation or an explanation for the song's possible content, I was told that it meant nothing. As seen in Music Example 4.2, the limited text (consisting of vocables, so I created my own spelling) is repeated indefinitely along with the accompanying clapped pattern.

### Title Unknown

The musical score is written in 4/4 time. The top staff is labeled 'Clapping' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Cl.'. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are: 'Yag ba blo wa yea Yag ba' for the first line, and 'blo wa yea Yag ba blo wa yea Yag ba blo wa yea' for the second line. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above the first measure of the second line.

#### Music Example 4. 2 New Creation Song (unknown title). Also see Track 8.

In addition to these new creations, American popular music was popular, such as a rendition by a young lady at BICE in 2010 of Shakira’s “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)” ; see Track 7. The fact that the World Cup was held in South Africa made this African derived pop tune a hit during the 2010 Fédération International de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup series. Unlike the previous categories where music evoked memories of past events, family, religious ties, and other identity markers, popular music and new creations channel the potential in each performer. More specifically, this is seen through the popular genre, coupé décalé. As stated by Dembele, the genre content originally focused on conceptions of escapism and wealth. However, Dembele’s generalizations about the current state of the genre are inaccurate. In fact, many of the concepts and tropes that first existed in the genre persist today. In order to fully understand the significance of coupé décalé in the lives of Ivorian youth, including street children, further explanation must be given about the founding, development, and philosophy of the genre that has had a great impact on the youth culture of Côte d’Ivoire and street children.

## Coupé Décalé

Coupé décalé is a music and dance genre created by immigrants from Côte d'Ivoire in the cosmopolitan city of Paris, France, but gained popularity in Côte d'Ivoire. The inventors of the genre are believed to be Douk Saga (Stéphane Hamidou Doukouré), Molare, Solo Beton, Lino Versace, and Bobo Sango, all of whom were middle class immigrants from Côte d'Ivoire who amassed a substantial amount of wealth while living in Paris (Aliman 2013). Coupé décalé, literally meaning “to cut and shift,” has an alternate meaning among the genre’s young urban Ivorian audience that speak Nouchi.<sup>76</sup> Within the context of this language, coupé décalé connotes “cheating someone and running away,” referring to the fraudulent, playful nature by which its inventors acquired funds and wealth. Although its primary purpose is to accompany dance (e.g., prudencia, décalé chinois, avian flu, guantanamo), the genre is also noted for its lyrical content that flaunts wealth, materialism, and sexual desires.

Before coupé décalé became known as a musical genre, the term, starting in the late 1990s and early 2000s, referred to a subculture amongst Ivorians in France that centered on extravagance. The popularly known group of sharp-dressing gentlemen who call themselves les sapeurs inspired this subculture. With origins among the Congolese in Brazzaville, les sapeurs forged a society, S.A.P.E. (Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes [Society of Tastemakers and Elegant People]), with branches in the Congolese and African diasporas.<sup>77</sup> Douk Saga, though Ivorian, was among the African immigrants who embraced les sapeurs culture, adorning himself in extravagant clothing from France and Italy. To accompany his

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<sup>76</sup> As noted in the foregoing, the word Nouchi literally means moustache, which signifies a strong or powerful man (Nouchi.com).

<sup>77</sup> Les sapeurs are men from the working and middle classes who dress extravagantly in fine designer suits. The culture has roots in colonialism, as it was initially an attempt to imitate European colonizers. However, nearly half a century after independence, such trends continue. For some, the culture surrounding les sapeurs signifies Western acculturation, while other practitioners view the style as a sophisticated art in which men cleverly use themselves as the canvas and their clothing as the paint. Aside from aesthetics, les sapeurs also have a political inclination. They are known for being pacifists, which is significant given the hostile sociopolitical conditions of much of Central Africa, where this culture had its beginnings (Taylor nd(a)).

extraordinary attire, he lived an extravagant life, dancing, drinking, partying and flaunting his wealth (the source of which was never publicly known or determined) to those in the nightclubs. During his partying in clubs, Douk Saga acquired a following with his extravagant lifestyle, clothing, grandiose behavior, and dancing. His dance moves resembled the Congolese dance, ndombolo, which is the foundation of the coupé décalé dance.

It was only after financing and management by David Monsoh (producer at OBOUO Music) that Douk Saga became a musical star. Monsoh produced Saga's first release, "Sagacité," and financed his video under the same title. Artists such as Douk Saga, Boro Sandji, Molare, Versace, and Solo Beton were part of the first generation (beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century) or the jet setters of coupé décalé. The disc jockeys who provided the music for these men to dance and exclaimed their praises as MCs in the clubs decided to join the scene and contribute to the making of coupé décalé. The introduction of DJs, such as DJ Jacob, DJ Caloudje, and DJ Jonathan between 2004 and 2008, initiated the second generation of coupé décalé performers (Taylor nd(a)).

Later, in the third generation and most contemporary style of coupé décalé (beginning in 2008), emphasis was placed primarily on dance. With artists such as DJ Arafat, Serge Beynaud, and Kiva Kedjevara, break dancing, crumping, street dancing, and acrobatics became crucial components of the genre. This style of coupé décalé music and dancing is most popular among Abidjanese street children. Street children intensely watch music videos from the fences of maquis and discotheques (clubs), memorizing the dance move to later practice and imitate to perfection.

In 2004, the genre's founder, Douk Saga, released the song "Sagacité" (also spelled Saga Cité) (Lively Minded), which introduced coupé décalé as a musical genre to the world. The song

was originally performed in the Club Atlantis in Paris, France, in 2002 and thereafter spread to Abidjan through Douk Saga, his fellow jet setters, and other DJs. “Sagacité” commences with the familiar popular dance rhythm (see Music Example 4.3), and an introduction by the singer (see below, the full lyrics can be found in Appendix

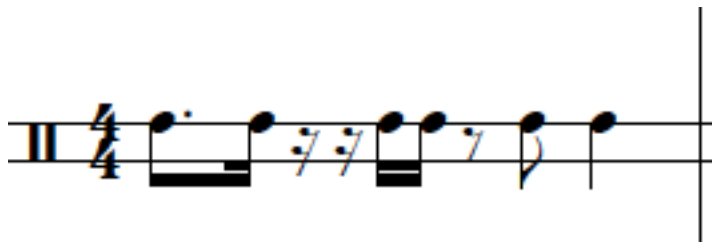
### Introductory Lyrics to “Sagacité” (Douk Saga 2016):

Original Lyrics	English Translation
Hé hé	Hey Hey
Stéphane Doukouré	Stephane Dokouré
Douk Saga de la Sagacité	Douk Saga from “Sagacité” [Wisdom]
Le créateur du coupé décalé	The creator of coupé décalé
L’ennemie de l’homme c’est l’homme !	The enemy of man is man!
Les gens n’aiment pas les gens	Men don’t like men
Affaire de prodada	Case of showing off
Seul le travail paie	Only work pays
Silence ici on travaille	Silence here, we’re working
Le feu sans le feu	Fire without fires
Celui qui n’a pas peur n’a pas le courage	Whoever doesn’t have fear doesn’t have courage
David gai Fatigua de Milano	David gai Fatigua de Milano
Linon Versase	Linon Versase
Chacoulé	Chacoulé
Donc OFF! Le champion	So Off! The champion
Hé Hé	He He
Y’a une danse qui à été crée là : décalé coupé	There’s a dance that was created: décalé coupé
Celui qui la crée s’appelle : sagacité	There was a creator whose name is: sagacité
Y’a une danse qui à crée la ho ho : décalé coupé	There’s dance that was created: décalé coupé
Celui qui la crée s’appelle : sagacité	There was a creator whose name is: sagacité

Following the introduction, the picked guitar palmwine-style riff accompanies the call-and-response chorus.<sup>78</sup> The lyrics have no particular form and are primarily comprised of repetitive short phrases and words, such as coupé décalé, sagacité and a variety of vocables (see Appendix C). Throughout the song, vocables are interjected with lyrics praising individuals (Douk Saga, Versace), and places (New York, Abidjan, Bouaké, London) are heard. The vocal style is a mixture of speaking and singing that is slightly more melodic than rap, and the

<sup>78</sup> Palmwine is a West African popular music style established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that emphasizes voice and guitar. The guitar played a melodic and rhythmic role, as the emphasis was on the plucking element of the melodic line. Palmwine is also known for its fusion of African traditional elements with Caribbean rhythms such as the dance rhythm in Music Example 4. 3. This style of music preceded and heavily influenced the popular African genres highlife and soukous (Collins 1992 a/b, 1996, 2002).

accompanying music is constructed of layered, rhythmic repetitive motifs. The popular dance rhythm (see Music Example 4.3) is the initial motif played, but after a few bars, a guitar motif enters, and more digital instruments and digitally modified motifs are added to the mix. The lyrics of “Sagacité” set the precedent for the genre, with its loose structure appearing to be an exchange of lyrical ideas from one singer to another. Therefore, while the music is very repetitive and constructed of looped motifs, the lyrics appear to be constructed almost extemporaneously.



#### **Music Example 4.3 Coupé Décalé dance rhythm**

Musically, the song evolves from a single motif, developing with the layering of other motifs. Because the genre is dependent upon short electronically created motifs that evolve minimalistically, repeating and layering one after another, many scholars have critiqued coupé décalé for being a genre composed by non-musicians (also suggested in the interview by Dembele). However, while some view the music as having no substance, the culture bred from this genre has greatly influenced youth culture in Côte d’Ivoire.

As previously noted, Côte d’Ivoire was facing a civil war during the introduction of coupé décalé and many of the country’s youth were looking for distractions from the violence and war. During this time, the ostentatious dress and flaunting of material items associated with coupé décalé amused listeners and established a mood of delight—ambiance—which allowed

youth to escape from the realities of war. They could project their thoughts towards their ambitions or prospective memories.

After the genre was transported to Côte d'Ivoire, *coupé décalé* (music and dance) became a way for Ivoirians to escape the daunting realities at home, including war, lack of jobs, national instability, and economic decline. This function differentiates the genre from its popular music predecessor, *zouglou*. *Zouglou* was a tool to express the sentiment of dissatisfaction and protest by youth against injustice and mistreatment, while *coupé décalé* aggrandizes a culture of materialism and wealth for the poor. In present day Côte d'Ivoire, *coupé décalé* is primarily known as party and dance music; however, some artists have used the genre as a platform to express their discontent with the government and comment on the 2002-2007 civil war, 2011-2012 political crisis, and the general political and economic condition of the nation (Chapter 5). However, the majority of performers express the desire of acquiring wealth and goods.

This genre and culture have been made popular primarily by Ivorian youth. Côte d'Ivoire, similar to many African countries, has a huge youth population with 58.89% of the nation's population under twenty-four years of age (Central Intelligence Agency 2016). With such large numbers, urban culture in Abidjan is shaped by the youth. Anthropologist Sasha Newell describes Abidjanese youth culture as bluff or mimicry, stating "there is not shame then, in being derivative. It is precisely in the ability to imitate with precision that many Ivoirians locate their sense of prestige," noting that there is the façade of success and prestige being played out in the streets of Abidjan everyday (Newell 2012:1).

While "mimicry" suggests that the youth of Côte d'Ivoire lack creativity, I would like to situate Newell's statement in the context of African music. In African music, repetition or mimicry is highly regarded and essential for mastery. John Miller Chernoff explains: "In African

music, the chorus or response is a rhythmic phrase which reoccurs regularly . . . . In essence, if rhythmic complexity is the African alternative to harmonic complexity, the repetition of responsive rhythms is the African alternative to the development of a melodic line” (Chernoff 1979b:55).

He later states:

The repetition of a style is important as a way of maintaining the tension of an ensemble’s beat, and the duration of the style is important in terms of the crucial decision of when to change to get the maximum effect. In the timing of the change, the drummer demonstrates his own awareness of the rhythmic potential of the music and his personal control of its inherent power, but most important, he demonstrates his involvement with the social situation in a dramatic gesture that will play upon the minds and bodies of his fellow performers and his audience. (Chernoff 1979b:113)

Therefore, repetition, as an African sensibility, has its links in traditional forms of musicking and is held in high esteem. Similarly, within the context of Ivorian popular music, the ability to mimic well distinguishes one performer from another. This element is essential in informing the imagined self-identity of street children performers.

The history of bluff as a concept can be traced to the initial introduction of coupé décalé, when Ivorians embraced the music for its ability to trigger a memory into an imagined reality of success and wealth. From unknown sources, creators of coupé décalé were able to acquire funds to invest in the fashioning of their identities or bluffs of well-dressed wealthy, popular, and important figures. Ivorian youth--feeling hopeless since the promise for education and advancement had failed many, and economic instability, along with ethnic and religious divisions, were causing rifts in the nation--envisioned themselves acquiring success similar to the jet setters (founders of coupé décalé). Therefore, they appropriated the style, language, music, and dance of the originators. This idea of wealth, success, and prestige or the bluff of wealth, success, and fame stimulated the dream of hope while the country went to war.

The genre therefore fed into Ivorian youth's ideal of their future, their prospective memories. And the street children of Abidjan, as inhabitants of the streets, club areas, and maquis where the bluff is being manifested, accrued a similar sentiment and desire for themselves. Furthermore, prominent musician and dancer, DJ Arafat has a myth shrouding him that he was himself a street child. And, through dancing he gained notoriety, which eventually led to wealth. Therefore, the bluff (through dancing) allows street children to gain respect and prestige from their peers for their moves (abilities), similar to many of the bboys in hip hop culture, while also pressing towards their goals of wealth and fame, like DJ Arafat (Marie 2012:4).<sup>79</sup> On the surface, it seems that street children use breakdancing to acquire income for themselves individually; however, its function as a tool to trigger their individual identity becomes more evident through observation.

Historian Osumare explains that:

the performativity of their movements—often unconscious but meaningful series of bodily postures, gestures, and movements that implicitly signify and mark a sense of social identity of identities in everyday pedestrian activity. The performativity of gestures and body language constitutes the manner in which we understand ourselves through our bodies, literally through the muscular and skeletal structure as well as semiotically and metaphorically. (Osumare 2002:31)

Therefore, these movements, though imitative, explore and express the self-identity of street children outside the norms of most children their age. This then coincides with the idea that children unknowingly deconstruct societal norms, such as familial structures and age hierarchies, because they “ha[ve] taken over adult’s role in the public as well as the domestic sphere. . . [and are] active entrepreneurs themselves teaching their parents, siblings, and even

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<sup>79</sup> Hip-hop is an African American tradition that was birthed out of postbellum spoken word traditions, such as field hollers, work songs, toasts, and spirituals. After the Civil War, freedmen migrated to urban settings in the northern half of the United States. Then popular music genres emerged in these urban spaces and new vernacular tongues emerged. These vernacular tongues became popularized through radio DJs and spoken word groups (The Last Poets and the Watts Prophets). In the New York Bronx during the 1970s, black and Latino youth used the recordings from funk, and soul artists, to mix and create a musical background for their oratory, which included influence from spoken word and vernacular “jive” talk. Rapper and former gang leader Africa Bambatta formulized the hip-hop culture that we know today as an alternative for gang culture. Instead of fighting on the streets, the youth used spoken word (rap) and dance (bboying and bgirling) to combat on the streets peacefully. In addition to DJing and breaking, MCing and graffiti are major components of hip-hop culture (Keyes 2002).

adult workers the trick of trading in the informal sector as well as parenting their parents and siblings” (Heinonen 2011:3). Musicking thus allows the children an escape from their own reality. In dancing, they further liberate their bodies from normative positions while also gaining funds to finance their daily lives. Furthermore, when street children share and teach the dance among their peers, they create a cultural product of street culture forged from prospective memories.

The evoking of prospective memories can also be seen in their new creation songs (see Track 9). The following vignette highlights how some street children recall the values of hard work and good ethics gained from centers such as Foyer Akwaba and BICE:

*At Foyer Akwaba, I gave a weekly music lesson to the children, teaching them the recorder and showing them my different personal flutes (Western classical and dizi (Chinese bamboo flute)). Using the recorder, I initially tried to teach the kids how to play a few American children’s songs that I thought they would be familiar with in French. After a few lessons, they expressed that they preferred learning popular songs or creating their own tunes, as they did not have patience for me teaching them the correct fingerings or embouchure. Instead they decided to fiddle around on their plastic recorders (I bought over a dozen for the children to use) and create their own tunes. After growing tired with the limitations of the recorder, some kids tried to rap with a recorder in their mouth or rap using a recorder to beatbox (vocal percussion done with the mouth). One day, in lieu of the lesson, the children wanted to share their own musical creations with me. We met in the gazebo, our usual weekly meeting spot for those who wanted a music lesson, and instead of playing the recorders they presented a “show and tell session.”<sup>80</sup> A group of the older kids had created a group called Safarel. Consisting of five boys between ten to fifteen years of age, they performed several original works for me. Their group included dancers and rappers, and their performance style was a mix of rap, coupé décalé, and zouglou music.<sup>81</sup>*

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<sup>80</sup> This particular day I allowed the kids to perform for me, showing me the musicking that they had been working on.

<sup>81</sup> Zouglou (zoo-gloo), a popular urban music and dance genre blending highly syncopated traditional dance rhythms and vocals with modern electronic instrumentation, is considered by some scholars to be the premier music genre of Côte d'Ivoire due to its national popularity and its pan-ethnic appeal. In contrast with previous Ivorian popular genres that were commonly comprised of very specific musical elements signifying and appealing to ethnic-identified Ivorian traditions, such as dopé, zigliblithy and zoblazo, zouglou has no specific ethnic or religious affiliation. To further its pan-ethnic appeal, the lyrics of zouglou are

*Standing before me in a loose construction of a semi-circle, they performed the rap song, “C’est pas toi est là là” (Track 9). This is a rap telling the story of a person who took the less honest path to success and eventually his methods led to his demise. Three of the children traded off rapping verses, while another child beatboxed over the rap, and yet another did handstands (in an attempt to breakdance). Their physical gestures, grabbing of the crotch (reason is unknown), hand movements that coincide with the flow and content of the rap, and slightly hyper masculine demeanor, all reflect stereotypical elements of hip hop culture.*

The chorus in Music Example 4.4 proposes the rhetorical question: “Aren’t you here?” The lyrics (see translation of Track 9), suggest that the kids are asking “Why don’t you get it?” Your path to success is not the best route for victory, demonstrating the influence of Foyer Akwaba in their musicking, as this song directly aligns with one of the agenda points of the center “Encourage their development with work by helping them rely upon their own strengths and resources for their success in life. Educate them to be responsible and sharing” (Foyer Akwaba 2010). The value of work ethic is demonstrated through the creative musicking of the children.

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primarily sung in French and some artists also utilize Nouchi (a popular urban argot spoken primarily among impoverished Ivorian youth) in their lyrics. Nouchi blends French and a variety of local languages (including, but not limited to Bété, Dioula, Baoulé, and Ebric), enabling zouglou to reach a broader multi-ethnic audience while masking the satirical critique of national politics that commonly is heard in zouglou lyrics. This creative linguistic blend gives the genre the ability to articulate the sentiment of the everyday Ivorian, while incorporating diverse musical influences from Côte d’Ivoire (Taylor nd(b)).

C'est pas toi est là

The image shows a musical score for the song "C'est pas toi est là". It consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system includes a Rap part (treble clef, 4/4 time), a Beatbox part (bass clef, 4/4 time), and a Hype People part (treble clef, 4/4 time). The lyrics "C'est pas toi est là là C'est pas C'est" are written below the first Rap staff. The second system includes a Rap part (treble clef, 4/4 time), a BB part (bass clef, 4/4 time), and an HP part (treble clef, 4/4 time). The lyrics "pas toi est là là C'est pas toi est là là C'est pas C'est pas toi est là là" are written below the first Rap staff. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a "3" above it in the second Rap staff.

**Music Example 4. 4 Chorus of “C’est pas toi est là.” Also see Track 9.**

**English Translation of Track 9:**

**(Chorus):** Aren’t you here? Aren’t you, aren’t you here? HEY (Hype People)<sup>82</sup>  
 Aren’t you here? Aren’t you, aren’t you here? HEY  
 Aren’t you here? Aren’t you, aren’t you here? HEY

**VERSE:** You don’t want to listen to me when I talk to you, when I say I will beat you, you refuse to listen to me. I want you to speak and now you shut your mouth.

**(Chorus):** Aren’t you here? Aren’t you, aren’t you here? HEY  
 Aren’t you here? Aren’t you, aren’t you here? HEY  
 Aren’t you here? Aren’t you, aren’t you here? HEY

**VERSE:** When you were driving the nice cars, I asked you some money and you told me to get out of your face.

<sup>82</sup> The “hype people” interject a “hey” throughout the song.

**(Chorus):** Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY  
Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY  
Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY

**VERSE:** Aren't you the ones who were going with girls from maquis to maquis? And you didn't listen to me when I told you to work and stop living this kind of life because you will regret it one day.

**(Chorus):** Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY  
Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY  
Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY

**VERSE:** Today, you have no money in your pocket. Then you came up to me begging again, so I say go to hell.

**(Chorus):** Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY  
Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY  
Aren't you here? Aren't you, aren't you here? HEY

### **French Lyrics of Track 9**

**(Chorus):** C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey

**VERSE:** C'est panthère ou bien? C'est pas toi qui est là là quand je te parle tu ne voulais pas m'écouter. Je t'ai dit mon amis je vais t'attrapper dans un coin. Aujourd'hui faut parler, maintenant tu as la bouche fermée.

**(Chorus):** C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey

**VERSE:** Quand tu roulais dans les belles voitures je t'ai dit mon ami j'ai besoin d'argent tu m'as dit quoi? Quitte devant moi bizarre! Je n'avais rien!

**(Chorus):** C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey

**VERSE:** Tu trainais avec les filles dans les maquis quand je te parlais tu ne m'écoutait pas. J'ai dit petit faut aller travailler, faut aller jouer avec les filles bientôt tu vas comprendre

**(Chorus):** C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey

C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là? C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là? Hey

**VERSE:** Aujourd'hui tu aux sous au maquis. Tu as rien dans les poches. Quand vas á la maison tu dit donne moi de l'argent.

**(Chorus):** C'est pas toi est là là , C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là , C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là Hey  
C'est pas toi est là là , C'est pas, c'est pas toi est là là Hey

This song evokes ideas learned while at Foyer Akwaba, while also incorporating the idea of the bluff (When you were driving the nice cars, I asked you some money and you told me to get out of your face,” “Aren't you the ones who were going with girls from maquis to maquis? And you didn't listen to me when I told you to work and stop living this kind of life because you will regret it one day”) prevalent in urban Ivoirian youth culture. Through the guidance of educators and staff members at Foyer Akwaba, the children demonstrate through song that they have become more critical of the culture that they once admired.

### **Conclusion**

When engaging with music, I find it fascinating how this particular cultural product has the power to evoke memories that impact and mold our existence. This chapter demonstrates how 1) music rekindles memories of the past; 2) institutions utilize music as a tool in molding the minds of children; and 3) music allows for the construction of one's imagined future. In all cases music was significant in informing the self-identity of the children. Furthermore, as “history and memory are co-implicative” (Apter and Derby 2010:xviii), we can see that the history of a genre, coupé décalé, established by immigrants in Europe in the early 2000s, can impact the daily lives and imagined memories of street children in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, over a decade later.

As the global population of street children (inclusive of children *of* the streets and children *in* the streets) is estimated to be around 150 million, according to UNICEF, it is important to investigate how these growing numbers may positively affect nations and global society. The next chapter will discuss the role that music plays in promoting and demonstrating nationalism, interethnic and interreligious tolerance, and peace in a nation recovering from over a decade of civil conflict.

## Chapter 5

### Music and Reconciliation: Performing Peace

“It is easy to romanticize poverty, to see poor people as inherently lacking agency and will. It is easy to strip them of human dignity, to reduce them to objects of pity. This has never been clearer than in the view of Africa from the American media, in which we are shown poverty and conflicts without any context. If I were not African, I would, after watching the coverage, think of Africa as a place of magnificent wild animals in which black Africans exist as tour guides, or as a place of desperately poor people who kill or are killed by one another for little or no reason.” (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie 2006)

Street children, whom I have described as resilient, strong, independent, and counter cultural, are a product of a long history rooted in colonialism. Similarly, the problems of the post-colonial state have its roots in colonial rule. As Côte d’Ivoire has undergone much change and political instability over the last twenty years, many plans and initiatives by various organizations and the Ivorian government have been proposed to “fix” the wrongs and problems that were ignited by war and economic instability. The administration and citizens have made great efforts to create a public dialogue of peace and reconciliation. The arts, which highlight Abidjan’s history as the cultural hub for African artists from the 1970s to the 1990s, have been one of the most highly publicized platforms used to promote reconciliation (Impey 2008).<sup>83</sup>

In addition to Abidjan’s significant presence in the world music production scene, music has also been used as a forum for Ivorian youth over the past twenty years to protest their disapproval of injustice and corruption of the state, as seen through the lyrical content and philosophy surrounding zouglou.<sup>84</sup>

Currently, music is still being used as a vessel to report information and appease the masses. In an effort to meet the people half way, the current administration merged with different

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<sup>83</sup>From the 1970s to the 1990s, Côte d’Ivoire housed subsidiaries of major foreign labels, and beginning in 1993 became the site for the biannual music industry fair, Marché des Arts et Spectacles Africains (MASA) (Impey 2008).

<sup>84</sup> As noted in the forgoing, zouglou (zoo-gloo), is a popular urban music and dance genre that fuses highly syncopated Ivorian traditional dance rhythms and vocals with modern electronic instrumentation (see further discussion later).

entities (US Embassy and NGOs) to maximize the impact of the arts in mediating a message of national reconciliation and peace. This has been done through several music events and television shows: Annual Daniel Pearl Peace Conference; Fally Ipupa Concert de la Paix (November 15<sup>th</sup> 2013); Affou Keita, Mam Miss, Kortoum Kamara Live Concert Peace and Unity Ivory Coast (October 20<sup>th</sup> 2013); *Wozo Vacances*; and *Caravan pour la Paix et de la Réconciliation* 2011.

In order to understand better the significance of street children communities in Côte d'Ivoire (discussed further in the conclusion), this chapter will focus on two government-sponsored productions that were used to facilitate a message of Ivorian nationalism and reconciliation through the arts. This chapter is divided into two sections. First, I will introduce the children's show, *Wozo Vacances*, a TV program that commonly propagates the themes of peace, nationalism, and fraternity. This discussion will include a description of the program's history, along with my personal experience as a guest on the show in 2012. This chapter's second section focuses primarily on the concert series, *Caravan pour la Paix et de la Réconciliation*, and discusses how the message of peace, fraternity, and nationalism is imbued through a six city tour that was organized and hosted by the then newly elected president (Alasanne Outtara). Although the two topics appear unconnected, my objectives in this chapter are to: 1) analyze from the available footage and data how the current administration (Alassane Ouattara) uses the arts as a method to reconcile the nation; 2) analyze and discuss how methods of promulgating peace, via mass media, differ with children and youth audiences versus adults; and lastly, 3) approach the topic of how street children societies may have something substantial to contribute to the discussion on reconciliation and peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

## **Dialogue of Peace**

Two platforms, a nationally funded concert and a children's show, both organized and funded by government entities, demonstrate ways in which the government utilizes the arts, specifically music, to promote a message of peace and reconciliation. As mentioned previously, the rhetoric of peace is not new to the people of Côte d'Ivoire. After undergoing nearly a decade of civil war and political turmoil, the dialogue of peace is audible. Through the following list of organizations founded to aid in the dialogue for peace, one can see that the message has been mediated to virtually every demographic (children, women, youth, rural, urban, etc.) of the nation: African Women Welfare Committee Ivory Coast (AWECO); African Union Club-Ivory Coast (UACI); Center for Research and Action for Peace (CERAP); Organization of Active Women in Ivory Coast (OFACI); Search for Common Ground (SFCG)-Ivory Coast; Service for Peace (SFP); and West African Network for Peace Building-Côte d'Ivoire (WANEP-CI).

## **Music and Nationalism**

The concept of nationalism is a modernist phenomenon that has caused much bloodshed across the globe, as people are forced to coexist in imagined communities called nation-states (Anderson 1991). As discussed in Chapter 2, the early postcolonial history of Côte d'Ivoire was peaceful and economically successful unlike many newly independent African nations during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially given that the nation is a mixture of nearly sixty different ethnic groups. However, because of the nation's complex mix of ethnic groups and close (some say neo-colonialist) affiliations with France, Côte d'Ivoire had limited aural and visual icons that solidified its national identity, aside from the national anthem and flag.

This is contrary to the many West African countries that have formed and promulgated their national identities through the creation of national orchestras, dance companies, and

festivals so that their national identity may be displayed abroad (e.g., Ghana National Theatre, Les Ballets Africains [National Dance Ensemble for Guinea]). Such celebrations, scholars have written, frequently codify the sense of identity within a nation. For instance, Michelle Duffy (2003), in “‘We Find Ourselves Again?’ Recreating Identity Through Performance in the Community Music Festival,” discusses the transitory experience participants and observers may have at community music festivals. Through participation and attendance at such events, performers and attendees often reify their identity as Australian. Similarly, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2000) addresses the process by which products of culture, such as music, develop into symbols that gain meaning outside their original intention. For instance, in the context of Zimbabwe, the reifying of specific cultural products, like Shona music and dance after independence, led to the creation of Zimbabwean cosmopolitan culture. Unlike Zimbabweans and many newly independent African nations charged with creating a new national identity, much of Ivorian culture cleaved to its francophone roots until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Popular Ivorian artists such as Les Soeurs Comoe, Amédée Pierre, Ernesto DjeDje, Meiway, and others gained prominence during their careers, but their music was intended to index or symbolize an ethnic style, Baoulé, Bété, or Appolo, not the nation. Reggae artists Tiken Jah Fakoly and Alpha Blondy were the first to transcend their ethnic identity through performance, but as performers of reggae, the music has cultural ties to Jamaica and the Rastafarian faith, not Côte d’Ivoire. So, while Turino and other scholars have noted a conscious trend in a nation’s early years of independence to create an aural and visual identity through cultural material on the global stage, Cote d’Ivoire with its economic prominence and success had no need to reify its identity in its early years of independence.

However, as the economy waned in the late 1980s and civil unrest ensued during the early 1990s, a national style of music was forged—zouglou. This new genre was formed primarily by the youth of the nation. With its musical formation, a youth movement, akin to a counter cultural movement, known as zouglou philosophy was ushered in (Kadi 2011, 2013; Akindes 2002; Schumann 2009; Tanon-Lora 2008). Youth, primarily college age adults, began to vocalize about the atrocities in their government, including details about outrageous and improper spending of national funds; the continued unbalanced neo-colonial relations between Côte d’Ivoire and France; the lack of a true democracy due to the pseudo democratic rule by the same figure for nearly thirty years; and the sudden devaluation of their currency (by half) by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to “stimulate” the economy. All of these travesties were expounded by Ivorian youth’s lack of power and inability to prosper as past generations had under the Ivorian Miracle. In response to the problems, young people created a culture with a new dance, a new language, a new music genre, and a new philosophy, which drew upon traditional elements that were repositioned for performance in urban settings (Akindes 2002).

Zouglou was the first time Ivorian youth created metropolitan, pan-Ivorian music. However, this new genre was not intentionally crafted to identify with the national populace. Instead, similar to calypso in Trinidad, afrobeat in Nigeria, and raï music in Algeria, it was the music of protest and commentary created by the marginalized that was later commodified and appropriated by the masses (Guilbault 2007; Labinjoh 1982; Aadnani 2006.). It was only after zouglou’s widespread popularity (domestically and internationally) that the genre was embraced and acknowledged as the first Ivorian musical genre.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Zouglou remained a relatively local Ivorian genre until the release of the single “Premier Gaou (1er Gaou)” (1999; re-released 2002) by Magic System. Many believe this track to be the catalyst for popularizing the genre nationally and internationally. “Premier Gaou” creatively weaves a variety of popular music components from genres throughout the world to manifest a sound strangely familiar, yet simultaneously unique (Taylor nd(b)).

When the civil war began at the turn of the century, a new generation of youth, experiencing a different national issue (religious and ethnic division), consumed and popularized another Ivorian genre—coupé décalé (described in Chapter 4). However, this genre was created abroad and originally popularized by those in the diaspora. Drawing on the musical elements of zouglou, while manifesting a different cultural product and forging a different youth culture in Côte d’Ivoire, coupé décalé has since traveled the globe. Instead of contesting the space where they live, the youth who created coupé décalé used the music to escape and forge a “new” identity.

In spite of the differing messages advocated by the creators of both genres, zouglou and coupé décalé are aural indices for Côte d’Ivoire’s growing and changing urban youth culture. Because of its popularity among youth in a primarily youthful nation, music has been used by the current administration and NGOs to deliver the message of peace and national reconciliation.

### **What Led to This?**

While we have discussed why officials used music to offer a message to the nation, it is necessary to briefly discuss the country’s recent history, coupled with the economic events (previously mentioned) that led to the civil war of 2002-2007 and crisis of 2010-2011. As previously stated (Chapter 2), the concept of Ivoirité was formalized in 1998 through the amending of the national constitution of Cote d’Ivoire. President Bédié, the second president of the republic, changed the constitution by adding the 35<sup>th</sup> amendment (Appendix A). The clause, “He must be Ivorian by birth, born of a father and of a mother themselves Ivorian by birth,” in many ways legalized and expounded the xenophobia taking place on the political level. This clause was specifically targeted toward former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara (current president), to prevent him from being nominated for the presidency because of his alleged

Burkinabe heritage.<sup>86</sup> Since the end of the civil war in 2007, the nation has been trying to bandage the wounds created by such a drastic and divisive political move.

### **Comparative Study**

The focus on national reconciliation will be juxtaposed with my research on Abidjanese street children (Chapters 1-4) in order to provoke discussion on the importance of including the voice of youth in addressing national unity and peace. In addition, I believe this data will help policy makers concerned with the social welfare of children to ask the question of whether street children or streetism (the culture of street children) is an issue or a potential solution. As stated in Chapters 1-4, street children challenge the normative structures and dynamics of societies such as the adult vs. child dichotomy. More importantly, streetism provides an opportunity for scholars to reevaluate the narrative surrounding the idea of childhood in Africa.

To compare the two cases, I use footage from YouTube along with field recordings, participant observation, and interviews from my fieldwork to discuss both *Wozo Vacances* and *Caravan pour la Paix et de la Réconciliation*.<sup>87</sup>

### **Wozo Vacances**

*Wozo Vacances* (Let's Play) airs on the national network (RTI--Radiodiffusion Television Ivoirienne). The network describes the children's show as a space that allows children three to fifteen years of age "to express, distract, instruct, inform, and occupy themselves" (N'Doli 2013). The show consists of three main sections performed by several groups or teams, and two interludes performed by individuals. Each group represents a different neighborhood in

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<sup>86</sup> After serving as Prime Minister under Houphouët-Boigny from 1990-1993, Ouattara, having a history with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prior to involving himself with politics, then returned to IMF to serve as the deputy managing director from 1994-1999.

<sup>87</sup> Although I have watched the show several times in informal settings with children and because of the political atmosphere of the time, it was not safe for me to be in Côte d'Ivoire during the time (2010-2011) of the Caravane pour la Paix et de la Réconciliation.

Abidjan and/or city in Côte d'Ivoire and is led and organized by adult directors who hold auditions for the children.

*Wozo Vacances*, established in 1989, was broadcast live from the Palais de la Culture, a beautiful, modern amphitheater on the periphery of Treichville overlooking le Plateau (Image 5.1) (Baba Cool 2012). However, due to renovations, the show has been filmed in Doraville (Image 5.2), a playhouse for children in Cocody, and Palais des Sports in Treichville (Image 5.3) in 2014.



**Image 5.1. Palais de la Culture (2016)**



**Image 5.2. Doraville (image taken by author)**



### 5.3. Palais des Sports (2016)

The large group sections of the show are composed of three components: storytelling; traditional music and dance; and flash back, which is a contemporary dance segment. Members of each group are given three minutes for each segment and are forced to strictly abide by the time frame to avoid penalties (the deduction of points). The opening of the storytelling segment is an introduction presented by one or two members of the group. The children are adorned with ornate costumes, jewelry, makeup, and there is a well-developed set design for each segment (see Images 5.5 and 5.6). With maturity and professionalism, the children orators introduce the story to be acted out by the group, supplying information about the city, the context, and the population. The rest of the group then comes on stage and dramatizes a story, incorporating historical tropes and current political events, such as the war, slavery, and a realization of the “fight” for independence (Video 1 and Video 2), while others include mythological creatures and traditional tales.<sup>88</sup>

After each team performs its three minute segment of storytelling, a small group of children, ranging between four to seven years of age, enter the stage in traditional clothing to model their garments, dance, and give a visual representation of their region (see Image 5.4).

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<sup>88</sup> Video 1 offers an example of the storytelling portion of the show. This brief segment depicts the remnants of war, while also incorporating the themes of peace, unity, and fraternity through its use of props. Video 2 shows a brief clip of the traditional dance segment of the show. This portion of the show will be discussed in more detail within the chapter.

This interlude, the only individual-based competition on the show, provides an opportunity for smaller children to be heard and seen.



**Image 5.4. *Wozo Vacances* Interlude (image taken by author)**

Because each episode of *Wozo Vacances* is three or more hours in length, I will focus solely on the traditional music and dance segment because this is the part that offers the most detail about ethnic identity and diversity in Côte d'Ivoire. Each group demonstrates a region or ethnic group within the country through dance. Although the groups are composed of children of different ethnicities, only the dance and music style of one particular ethnic group in Côte d'Ivoire is chosen. Each group is scored on a thirty points scale with different points given to choreographed movements, traditional wardrobe (masks, raffia, and traditional fabrics), and the set. In addition, members of the group perform traditional instruments to accompany the dance. Despite regional differences, common instruments include an assortment of idiophones (rattles (shakers)<sup>89</sup> and membranophones (dunduns and djembes)<sup>90</sup> (see Image 5.5).

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<sup>89</sup> The shakers differ by name depending on the ethnic group and region. In addition, as the musicians were not the focal point of the performance, video footage of the actual instruments, especially the idiophones, were rare.



**Image 5.5. Musicians playing Gur and Mande Instruments (djembes and balafon) for *Wozo Vacances* (image taken by author)<sup>91</sup>**

When I observed the performance, nationalistic themes were prominent so much so that it was unclear if the topic was one episode, the season, or the entire show. Therefore I searched the network site and YouTube for older episodes.

After reviewing and analyzing twenty segments of the show’s traditional music and dance that included segments between 2010 (the oldest episode available online) and 2014 (the most recent episodes available), the theme of nationalism became evermore present through text, music, symbols, colors, and props (see Video 2 and Video 3). I also noticed a trend in the ethnic groups and performance styles selected for each group, which will be discussed more thoroughly below. From this analysis, I believe *Wozo Vacances* does provide a platform for children to participate in a dialogue of peace and nationalism. However, I am unsure about the amount of

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<sup>90</sup> The dundun, among the Mande, is a large, double-headed cylindrical drum that is played with a stick, and commonly accompanies the djembe. Similarly, the djembe has its roots among the Mande. Since the popularity of the Les Ballets Africains (National Dance Company from Guinea), the djembe has become a “universal” African drum, crossing ethnic boundaries and transcending national borders (Charry 2000:5).

<sup>91</sup> The balafon is indigenous to the Mande. This gourd resonating instrument is the ancestor to the xylophone commonly known in the Western European performances spaces (Charry 2000:4).

input and agency children give to the production, direction, and content of the shows that include a political message.



**Image 5.6. Traditional Dance Segment *Wozo Vacances* with children performing a traditional Senoufo dance from northern Côte d’Ivoire (image take by author)**

### **Traditional Dance Segments**

For further analysis, I selected episodes that originally aired in 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2014. My inability to find any episodes from 2011 suggests that *Wozo Vacances* was not filmed that year due to the crisis of 2010-2011.

All of the dance segments demonstrating people from the northern region of the country were labeled Senoufo (Gur) and Mande, while musicians from the southern region tended to be Akan or Kwa (Baoulé, Angi, Ebrie). Although it is not my intent to promote thirty-one regions, with over twenty three million people, and sixty different indigenous ethnic groups divided between the north and south, a clear regional division exists in the type of music, instruments, and dances selected for performance.

Each group represents cities from different parts of Côte d'Ivoire, including Abengourou, Touba, Katiola, Adiake, Bongouanou, M'Biahiakro, Kouto, Béoumi, Doropo, and quartiers of Abidjan, such as Jacquville, Treichville, Marcory. As seen in Image 5.7, these locales can be found across the nation, demonstrating that the performances offer a fair representation of the diversity within the country.



**Image 5.7. Map of Côte d'Ivoire with cities of each performance group circled. (mapsofworld 2016)**

As noted earlier (Chapters 1-4), there are four major ethnolinguistic culture clusters (Gur, Kru, Kwa, and Mande) in Côte d'Ivoire, but only the Kwa (Akan), Gur (Senufo), and Mande are represented in the twenty videos I observed, and the Kru cluster is omitted entirely. Despite the name, nearly all groups included an amalgamation of nearby and related regional traditions and cultures in their performance.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Given the content and lack of specificity in dance, music, wardrobe, and themes, the show is attempting to promote broad ethnic identities to a national audience.

## **Kwa Performance**<sup>93</sup>

*The Palais des Sports, a stadium built in Treichville in the southern part of Abidjan, has the capacity to hold over three thousand people. This stadium had the majority of its seats filled for the filming of this Wozo Vacances (see Video 3). Members of the group, Les Stars Pros, open their skit with the Ivorian national flag stating “fifty-four years of independence,” adorning the stage. Then a young man makes a statement about national reconciliation by calling all ethnicities in Côte d’Ivoire to come together. Following this announcement, the national anthem, “L’Abidjanaise (The song of Abidjan),” is amplified on the speakers. As the anthem fades, girls whose bodies are covered in white powder and dressed in long red dresses with white trimming, enter the front stage. A small girl dressed in a plain all white ankle length dress, also covered in a white powder, leads the other dancers. She waves a horsetail to dictate the direction that the other dancers should follow. As the backdrop of the Ivorian flag is dismantled and the girls dance off the stage, we see a raised stage with dignitaries watching and young men in loincloths guarding them; kente cloths and other fabrics with adinkra symbols (Asante visual symbols that represent aspects of Asante philosophy such as life and religion) adorn the stage.<sup>94</sup> A boy in traditional woven materials goes to center stage to offer libations. As he leaves the stage, boys in white tops with kente printed shorts (orange, green, and white) enter the stage to dance with stools. Simultaneously, they leave the stage as females with baskets on their heads, wearing white tops with woven traditional fabrics as wraps for their bottoms, enter the stage. They encircle a girl with traditional fabrics wrapped around her waist and another wrapped around her chest, leaving her mid section exposed. Her body is adorned with white circular patterns that have been painted on her skin, and she wears golden colored beads in her hair. She rises from the center of the circle with the adowa dance.<sup>95</sup> On the sides of the stage stands a mask dancer,*

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<sup>93</sup> Kwa is the ethno-linguistic cluster that is a branch of the Niger-Congo language family. The Western Kwa cluster spreads through southeastern Côte d’Ivoire and southern Ghana, with the Akan language cluster being the most predominate in the region.

<sup>94</sup> Kente cloth is an interwoven fabric indigenous to the Akan. It was traditionally worn by royalty and for sacred events. The woven patterns and colors are believed to hold symbolic meaning.

<sup>95</sup> Adowa is traditionally funeral music and dance for the Akan people. Today it is performed in a number of ceremonies aside from funerals, puberty rites, marriages, and traditional festivals. It is believed that the movements originated from the imitation of an antelope, however it is uncertain. No matter the origin, the dance is a woman’s dance and is “distinguished by its charming movements and complex footwork as well as gesture of the hand and delicate bending and twisting of the body” (Ampomah 2014:119).

*constantly changing his mask from red to yellow (Image 5.8) throughout the two minute, thirty-second show. The adowa dance concludes the performance.*

*The instrumentalists, though unclear in the video due to the fact that the drums were wrapped in fabrics, appear to be a djembe and three to four dunduns (the drum type is uncertain since they were wrapped loosely in fabric and placed in a wooden harness) set up on their side to mimic the sound of the fontomfrom.<sup>96</sup> At least two drums were played with angled sticks, while the djembe was played with hands. The drum patterns' relationship with the dance moves are aurally similar to that heard with Akan drumming, as each pattern correlates with the moves of the dancer, demonstrating the communication between the two.*

As offered in the description above (see Video 3), nearly all groups performing Kwa (Akan) dances included red and white costumes, a symbol of sanctity, purity, life, and creation, along with white powder and white circular drawings that adorned the body, which are signs of purity and sanctity among the Akan (Blay 2008:173-174; Hagan 1970).<sup>97</sup> Other Akan symbols represented in their performances include gold adornments, the use of an umbrella (bamkyim) in processions, and the wearing of clothes made from kente cloth.<sup>98</sup> The adowa dance was also a common feature. This dance, intended to show off graceful moves of the female, is performed at funerals and naming ceremonies, as well as festivals and other public social events (Ampomah 2014). The instrumentation, similar virtually for every group, consisted of djembe and dundun drums. Some groups used the balafon (Image 5.5). Rarely would the instrumentation be distinct to specific groups. For instance, some used Ewe drums,<sup>99</sup> while others used Asante drums<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Fontomfrom drumming is a form of traditional Asante drumming. Traditionally, the tall cylindrical drums were used in celebration and honor for chiefs. In addition to synchronizing with the moves of the dancers, the fontomfrom also is known for its ability to replicate speech, as a talking drum (Tanson 1976).

<sup>97</sup> I saw similar markings on females at a Bété ceremony. There I was told the patterns signify purity.

<sup>98</sup> The bamkyim is a large ceremonial umbrella made with silky fabrics and reveals the entrance of the chief from a distance.

<sup>99</sup> A traditional Ewe consort of drums includes gankogui (iron bell); atoke (banana bell); atsimevu (master drum); sogo (master and support drum); kidi (support drum); kagan (support drum); and axatse (gourd rattle) (Ladzekpo 1980:232-233).

along with the dundun and djembe that are Mande derived. Similarly, the playing technique—using hands or sticks--varied among groups, as seen in the above vignette.



**Image 5.8. Baule Red KpanMask (ArtTribal 2016) <sup>101</sup>**

### **Gur and Mande Performances<sup>102</sup>**

*The name of the group shown in Video no. 2 is uncertain. The performance stage is set to present an event or show for diplomats, given their attire, position on a pedestal in the center stage, and the presence of guards. On stage, the dancers are adorned with pink and white raffia. In addition, two masked dancers lead the dance on stage. While both dancers are adorned with raffia around their ankles and wrists, the mask and quick paced dance movements suggests that one mask is Zaouli, a more contemporary mask and dance tradition created by the Gouro*

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<sup>100</sup> The traditional Asante consort of drums includes fontomfrom (lead drum), atumpan (lead drums played in pairs), apentema (goblet shaped drum played with sticks), apetia (smallest of consort, goblet shaped drum played with sticks), and akasa (rattle) (DjeDje 1998:464).

<sup>101</sup> The kpan is a masquerade celebrated during the Goli ceremony. The Baoulé adopted the Goli ceremony in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from a neighboring ethnic group. This daylong event is described as being “sweet, beautiful, and joyous” (Evanoff 1985:58). The kpan, seen in Image 5.8, is one of four pairs of masks used for the festival. The kpan is last in performance since it is considered to be the most beautiful and prestigious mask. While believed to have religious associations, the Baoulé has now abandoned such relations, using the ceremony solely for entertainment (Evanoff 1985:58-59).

<sup>102</sup> The Gur ethno-linguistic cluster belongs to the Niger-Congo languages. This group exists primarily in the savanna region of West Africa, northern Côte d’Ivoire, southern Mali, Burkina Faso, northern Ghana, and northern Togo. In Côte d’Ivoire, the Senoufo languages are the most prominent among the Gur. Because of its vicinity, Mande languages have significantly influenced Senoufo languages, which also explain the cultural overlap between the two clusters.

*(Mande) people in north central Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>103</sup> Because the instrumentalists are on the far side of the stage, it is difficult to decipher their instrumentation. From the sound and the few glimpses seen, they have rattles, drums (djembes), and a whistle.*

As seen in the performance description of Video 2, the standard instrumentation for groups representing the Gur or Mande ethnic clusters included djembe, dundun, balafon, and rattle (dried gourd wrapped in beads). One group did however use the Fula flute.<sup>104</sup> Similar to the instrumentation, the wardrobe was pulled indiscriminately from different parts of northern Côte d'Ivoire. The triangular hat and traditional wear of Dogon hunter's material were particularly popular. The dances all included familiar tropes associated with Mande and Gur dance (i.e., acrobatics, fire dancing, and broad arm and leg movements).

### **Comparison**

Although regionally generic, perhaps these performances represent far more than what appears on the surface. Of the twenty videos randomly selected from 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, all signified either Gur or Mande traditional dance elements or features identified with the larger Akan cluster, which suggests that the groups are paying homage to the nation's largest ethnic clusters: Akan 42.1%, Voltaiques or Gur 17.6 %, Northern Mandes 16.5%, Krous 11%, Southern Mandes 10%, and other 2.8 %. (Central Intelligence Agency 2016). In addition, I question if it is a coincidence that the nation's first two presidents, Felix Houphouët Boigny and Henrie Bédié, and the nation's current president, Alassane Outtarra, are ethnically rooted or connected to these two areas? Boigny is a Baoulé (Akan) from Yamoussoukrou; Bédié, an Akan from Beoumi; and Outtara, a Senufo, from Diambokro in central Côte d'Ivoire, has family roots in Burkina Faso.

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<sup>103</sup> The other masks in the performance looked similar, however I could not determine the group they are identified with.

<sup>104</sup> The Fula flute is a transverse flute constructed of vine or reed. The term used to identify the flute varies by group, just as the construction and tuning system vary by the maker. Being primarily known in Sudanic West Africa, the instrument has historically been known to be associated with herdsmen, while in other cases, it has been used as a court instrument (DjeDje 2008:64).

However, the most recent former president, Laurent Gbagbo, a Bété from Gagnoa, has no representation in the program. Although the Bété or Krou people only constitute 11% of the national population, Bétés are well known in Ivorian history for their influence and impact on Ivorian music. Ernesto Djedje and Amédée Pierre were well known for their innovations in popular music between the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>105</sup>

### **Peace and Reconciliation**

Initially, I viewed the content of *Wozo Vacances* as a means for children and youth in the nation to be more informed and actively engaged with their heritage, as well as to artistically cope with the post war environment. However, after I presented a paper on this topic at the annual meeting of International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) in 2013, I questioned my original interpretation. After seriously considering the comments of scholars familiar with the region and the viewing of several other episodes over the span of time (four years, 2010-2014), it was unclear whether the children performers had any agency or say in the coordination, content, or formulation of their performances. As previously stated, *Wozo Vacances* is broadcast on the nationally accessed and government owned network RTI, and portions of the shows are streamed online.

From personal observation, viewing *Wozo Vacances* is a treasured summer event among Ivorian children. It is watched religiously every Wednesday afternoon, and in many ways it has become a communal event with neighboring children gathered in one home to watch the show weekly. With such great popularity, it would not be surprising if the content and message of the show were tailored to impact and make an impression on the nation's future—Ivorian children. Whilst the show is nationally broadcast weekly, the show production staff also tours various

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<sup>105</sup> With further research fieldwork, I hope to learn more of the content, scheduling, and objectives of the governing bodies that dictate the content of this show.

regions of Côte d'Ivoire, allowing different audiences to live-view and participate. Not only does this demonstrate the show's bearing on its viewing audience, but also it reaches youth throughout the nation. One can argue that this is a strategic move by the government (owners of RTI) to facilitate a message of unity, which is also duplicated in the country's history textbooks for the elementary grades (CP1, CP2). In addition to stories and myths about traditional culture, textbooks include information about the history and cultural traditions of the major ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire. However, unlike textbooks, *Wozo Vacances* provides an artifact for its viewers, demonstrating to its youthful audience an image of "them with their partners in conflict through nonviolent relations" (Warshel 2007:324). In other words, shows such as *Wozo Vacances* allow their audiences to view peaceful conditions in a performance setting before such plans have come into fruition in reality. From previous studies on children and media, such an image is vital in stimulating the idea of reconciliation—seeing themselves at peace before being at peace—a message commonly reiterated in their skits, despite the groups being in competition with one another.

*Wozo Vacances* is far more than a show that allows children between the "ages of (three to fifteen) to express, distract, instruct, inform, and occupy themselves" (translation by author), which is the philosophy statement for the show. In essence, the show is a platform to articulate an idea of nationalism, reconciliation, peace, unity and anti-war. Perhaps it was also intended to mediate a message for children to cope with the trauma of war, and plant a seed of peace for future Ivorian generations. While *Wozo Vacances* has targeted children with music, dance, and storytelling, Côte d'Ivoire's current administration has also used the arts "to ameliorate conflict by attempting to alter children's-(people's) attitudes and behaviors through the use of peace communication" (Warshel 2007:311). Instead of using one event like a television show, the

government launched a six series monumental event. The following continues the discussion about the Ivorian government's use of the arts to promote peace. However, in this case, the focus is on peace initiatives targeted to adults, such as with the six-stop tour Caravan pour la et de la Réconciliation.

### **Caravane pour la Paix et de la Réconciliation**

In an effort to calm and reunite the nation after the political crisis of 2010 and 2011, President Alassane Ouattara advocated for Caravane pour la Paix et de la Réconciliation, which took place October 20<sup>th</sup> through November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012. The government arranged for artists from various genres, ethnicities, and religions to perform in concerts in six major cities--San Pedro, Gagnoa, Man, Korhogo, Abengouro, and Abidjan--throughout Cote d'Ivoire (Image 5.9).<sup>106</sup>



**Image 5.9. Map of Côte d'Ivoire and concert locations (List of Cities in Ivory Coast 2016**

The caravan, coordinated primarily by reggae musicians Tiken Jah Fakoly and Alpha Blondy, and zouglou artist Alfonso Goudé from Magic System, showcased over three hundred artists to millions of people throughout the nation. The gamut included popular music performers

<sup>106</sup> While the concert series was conceived as a good thing, many contest its validity. For instance, in a time when the nation was undergoing financial hardship, the administration contributed 824 million CFA (\$1,429,722 USD) to fund the series. While some of these funds were donated to families that were victims of war, the majority of the wages went directly to the musicians. There was also concern that no representative or delegate from the CDVR (Dialogue, Truth, and Reconciliation Commission), which was created in 2011 (Boguy n.d).

from Côte d'Ivoire's various genres—reggae, coupé décalé, zoblazo, zouk, and zouglou. It was truly a platform for musicians from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds to gather and symbolize peace and solidarity through their lyrics, gestures of peace, and presence.

Since I was not in the field during this period, I am dependent upon YouTube footage of the final concert in Abidjan and secondary sources to discuss this concert. While there have been a number of peace concerts hosted by the Ivorian government since its years of civil unrest, the Caravan was organized by the current administration and purposefully presented artists as diplomats and ambassadors of peace. The concert series also beacons musicians who historically did not perform on the same stage--Alpha Blondy and Tiken Jah Fakoly--because of differing political affiliations. Their public reconciliation was symbolic for that of the nation. This is unlike the initiatives taken by the administrations in Zimbabwe and Tanzania (Turino 2000; Askew 2002) where such festivals “indicated a successful ministry strategy to solve the perceived ‘problem’ of uniting [multiple] groups into an imagined and socially enacted nation” (Askew 2002:218). In this case, Côte d'Ivoire's current administration employed popular genres, such as reggae, coupé décalé, zouglou, zoblazo, and zouk, which have no ethnic specificity, to manifest a sense of unity within the nation. Perhaps, by using popular music forms, the government avoided nepotism and the reifying of traditional music practices identified within the upper echelons of the political structure that may have caused even more strife and contestation (Askew 2002:273).

Since there were over three hundred performers participating in this six-stop tour, I will highlight only the major artists who headlined the tour: Alpha Blondy, Meivay, and Tiken Jah Fakoly. In addition to the musicians touring across the nation, the final concert in Abidjan was also streamed via the national network *RTI*. The government intended the message of

interreligion (religious tolerance), inter ethnicity and nonviolence (ethnic tolerance), and nationalism to be disseminated to the national audience.

### Artists



**Image 5.10: Alpha Blondy (*Mystic Power*, 2013); Tiken Jah Fakoly (*African Revolution*, 2010); and Meiway (*Professeur*, 2012b)**

The three leading acts of the Caravan demonstrate the diverse ethnic, regional, and religious makeup of the nation. Reggae artist Alpha Blondy was born to a Christian mother and Muslim father, yet was raised in a household, where he was taught “to love everyone,” in Dimbokro, near central Cote d’Ivoire. Tiken Jah Fakoly, also a reggae artist, is a practicing Muslim, who was raised in Odienné in northwestern Cote d’Ivoire. And, lastly, popular artist Meiway was born in a Christian household in his Nzema village in Grand Bassam in southeast Côte d’Ivoire. These artists merely represent some of the top performers on the tour. There were over three hundred acts representing musical genres, styles, ethnicities, and religions from across the nation.

### Nationalism

*Following Magic System and several announcements, Tiken Jah Fakoly makes his appearance. His large, live, and racially diverse band (including both black and white musicians whose ethnicity, and nationalities are unknown) includes a kora player,<sup>107</sup> drum set, trumpet,*

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<sup>107</sup> The kora is a 21-string harp-lute with roots among the Mande people in West Africa.

tenor saxophone, *ngoni*,<sup>108</sup> trombone, keyboardist, guitarist, bass guitarist, and three female back-up singers. Prior to Tiken Jah Fakoly appearing on the stage, his band, already on stage, plays a medley of tunes while the audience awaits his entry. Unlike the preceding group, Magic System, Tiken Jah Fakoly enters the stage wearing a large, ankle-length kaftan (pullover robe) of bogolan, a traditional Malian mud cloth. In addition, his primarily male band members were wearing African traditional clothes, such as the long loose male garments known as boubous. The female vocalists were wearing coordinated kaftans with matching head wraps. Since I was unable to determine his introductory song, I will discuss the second song of his set, which is “Ça va faire mal.” This song, employing a reggae rocksteady style, speaks very directly of pan-Africanism, as seen in the lyrics. In a slightly hoarse voice Tiken Jah Fakoly runs across the stage for over an hour with energy and legs lifted high to his reggae-playing band while singing songs about unity, pan-Africanism, and African pride.

Artist Tiken Jah Fakoly (Track 12), as described in the above performance vignette, reiterated the concept of nationalism through his song “Ça va faire mal” (see partial lyrics below, full lyrics are in Appendix D):

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<sup>108</sup> The *ngoni* is the Mande term for a short-necked plucked lute, an instrumental type known throughout West Africa.

## Lyrics to “Ça va faire mal”

### French

Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme les Etats-Unis, ça va faire mal !  
Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme le royaume-unis, ça va faire mal!

On pourra contrôler, on sera respectés  
nous pourrions dialoguer, on pourra  
s'imposer  
ça va les étonner de nous voir évoluer!

### English Translation

When we are united, It will hurt  
Like the United States, It will hurt!  
When we are united, It will hurt  
Like the United Kingdom, It will hurt

We will have control, We will be respected  
We will dialogue, We will assert ourselves  
They will be astonished to see that we have  
evolve

Tiken Jah Fakoly uses reggae to state the colloquial statement “It’s Going to Hurt” (Ça va faire mal). The song asks for unity (quand nous serons unis), the eradication of poverty and oppression (on pourra bien lutter contre la pauvreté), and the launch of dialogue on national development (nous pourrions dialoguer, on pourra s’imposer ça va les étonner de nous voir évoluer). The lyrics are an obvious plea to the nation for reformation, opposing neocolonialism—stating that Côte d’Ivoire’s (and Africa’s) unity will foster economic growth that will upset the growth of Western European nations such as the United States and Great Britain as they prosper from the resources in African nations. Tiken Jah Fakoly’s afrocentric text is a call for national autonomy and pan Africanism.

### Interreligious

*The video clip shows a completely packed audience, but the venue is unclear. Alpha Blondy, perhaps in an effort to further emphasize the message of unity, has a racially diverse band consisting of both black and white individuals from unknown nationalities. Similar to Tiken Jah Fakoly’s band, the musicians are all male, aside from the two female backup singers. All of his musicians wait on stage for Alpha Blondy’s grand entrance. “Jerusalem” was the introductory song for his set. Unlike the original version released in 1986 that begins with a flute playing in the style of music from Northern and Sudanic West Africa, using microtonality and a nasally, airy timbre accompanied by a synthesizer playing the melody in fragments, Alpha*

*Blondy started this live show with the keyboard sustaining a chord and him beginning with the lyrics off stage. This, in turn, created a ubiquitous presence, allowing the meaning of his lyrics to resonate with reverb throughout the venue. While concluding the first verse, Alpha Blondy arrives on stage where he is met with an amazing applause and response from the audience. Before beginning the next verse and transitioning to the next section of the song, he screams “Ça va Abidjan!” Finally, the tempo increases, the entire band (electric guitar, electric bass, saxophone, trombone, and drum set) begins playing, establishing the rocksteady groove. Dressed in a vibrant and colorful ensemble, similar in style to what is pictured on his album cover (Image 5.10), Alpha Blondy sings “Jerusalem” interjecting and blending words from the Holy Bible, the Qur’an, and the Torah, cleverly weaving Arabic, English, French, and Hebrew. To close the first song of his set Alpha Blondy screams “Abidjan, je t’aime je t’aime” to segue to the next song.*

The lyrics for “Jerusalem” (Track 13) by Alpha Blondy promotes religious unity by stating, “You can see Christians, Jews, and Muslims living together and praying. . . Amen! Let’s give thanks and praises.” “Jerusalem” is used metaphorically as “Zion,” a utopia that accepts Christians, Jews, Muslim, and all faiths. This message is especially pertinent in Côte d’Ivoire as the religious partition is 38.6% Muslim, 32.8% Christian, and 28.6% other/none.

### **Lyrics to “Jerusalem” (Track 13) by Alpha Blondy**

Barouh ata adonai  
 Barouh aba yeroushalaim  
 From the bible to the coran  
 Revelation in Jerusalem  
 Shalom, salamalekoum  
 You can see Christians Jews and Muslims  
 Living together and praying  
 Amen! Let's give thanks and praises  
 Barouh atat adonai  
 Barouh aba yeroushalaim  
 Jerusalem here I am  
 Jerusalem je t'aime  
 Jerusalem here I am  
 Jerusalem je t'aime

Israela yakirati  
 Israela yakirati  
 Ani ohev otarh  
 Israela yakirati  
 From the bible to the coran  
 Revelation time  
 Shalom, salamalekoum  
 You can see Christians Jews and Muslims  
 Living together and praying...  
 Amen! Let's give thanks and praises  
 Barouh atat adonai  
 Barouh aba yeroushalaim  
 Jerusalem here I am  
 Jerusalem je t'aime

To further demonstrate the coalescing of faiths, nationalities, and cultures, Blondy uses Hebrew, English, and French in his lyrics, while mentioning both the Bible and the Qur'an. Aurally, the song begins slowly in the style of a Jewish cantor, mixing Hebrew and French while reciting sacred text. After evoking the aural tradition of chant that rests as the musical foundation for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Blondy introduces the rocksteady style that dominates much of the piece. Blondy's piece exhibits religious merging through lyrical content and the blending of musical styles.

### **Nonviolence**

Frederic Desire Ehui, popularly known as Meiwai, released *Professeur* in 2012. Inspired by Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 post elections political crisis, the album includes tracks such as "Koukoumele" (bend your knees) and "Attié Oyé" (Bravo Attié People), that promote peace. And while I do not have footage (video or audio) of his performance at the Caravan, journal articles provide commentary on his performance. Although his lineup was not given, I chose to discuss his most popular single, "Attié Oyé," from his *Professeur* album. The lyrics for "Attié Oyé" can be found below.<sup>109</sup> Metaphorically, the lyrics promote peace and non-violence by stating in a whimsical manner that it is better to shoot and eat a snail than to kill a man and bury him. While the lyrics are metaphorical and pertinent for the time, the comical video clip, demonstrating a clumsy hunter tripping through the "jungle" with a large, dated rifle in search of snails, tones down the very direct anti-war message of the song. This particular song, though popular throughout Côte d'Ivoire, is primarily sung in Attié (Akan). Despite being linguistically specific to the Attié people, aurally the piece speaks to a larger audience as it blends the rhythmic elements of zouglou with brass accompaniment, and the palmwine guitar picking style. This mixing of traditional elements (e.g., language, traditional dances, traditional rhythmic patterns,

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<sup>109</sup> Video for "Attié Oye" by Meiwai can be found on YouTube ([https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=znd\\_PUJE16s](https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=znd_PUJE16s))

traditional attire, and traditional instrumentation) with popular styles (e.g., zouglou, coupé décalé, mbalax, zouk) is a trait of Meiway and key to his longevity.

### Lyrics “Attié Oyé” in English. (Translation from Attié by Aristide Wise Boigy)

**(Intro):** What do we do to them and they laugh at us

**(Chorus):** They say that Attié people kill snail with gun, but killing a snail is better than killing human being (3x)

**(Verse):** Isaac Isaac Bredou  
People are laughing at us  
They say that we Attié us guns to kill snail  
We kill snails to make pepper soup  
Pepper soup everybody eats that soup  
Killing snail is not the same as killing a human being  
Dr. Charles Rosalie kills snails but she has never killed a human being  
DJ Rodrigue killed a snail but all DJs eat snail  
John Shahim kills snails but people from Agbgagu never never kill human beings

**(Chorus):** They say that the Attié kill snails with guns  
But killing snails are better than killing human beings. So killing snails is better than killing a human being (3x)

**(Verse):** Ayaooh killing to eat is better than killing for burial ohhhh  
Anassin Mambo Darius, Dr. Chiadon  
Delphine kills snails but never never has she killed human beings  
Achi Boniface has killed snails but people from Montezo has never never killed human beings  
Yapi Zimbabwe has killed snails but people from Adzopé have never never killed human beings

**(Chorus):** Attiés use guns to kill snails but killing snail is better than killing human beings  
They say Attiés use guns to kills snails but killing snails in better than killing human being (3x)

Evaluating the content of these songs demonstrates why the current administration wanted to use artists and their music to promote the ideology of national unity. With both *Wozo Vacances* and the *Caravane*, the over sixty ethnic groups coalesce in order to emphasize the importance of interreligious tolerance, interethnic cooperation, nonviolence, and nationalism. In many ways, one can see that the religious and ethnic tolerance hoped for by the current administration, already exists among street children. Although they constitute a small sample of

the national population, street children organically express the mixing of ethnicities and religions, and embody the image of nationalism through their unity.

While this proposition sounds idealistic, more attention, as noted throughout the dissertation, should be given to Abidjanese street children as one of the most diverse, organically created communities in the city. Because they have endured so much, street children realize the necessity of community for survival. Therefore, “contrary to common views, children are far from being naïve, ignorant, and indifferent to the world around them,” as some previous studies would lead us to believe (Lemish and Gotz 2007:7). In fact, their acceptance of diversity demonstrates the fact that children (in general) have great curiosity about the events taking place in the wider world. Scholars working with children in war-torn nations have found that children are not only highly motivated to be better informed, they are eager for their views to be heard and considered (Lemish and Gotz 2007). As Abidjanese street children provide a model of Ivorian identity that has yet to be articulated by the government, perhaps we should ask them about suggestions on how to achieve national peace.

## Conclusion

“I remember hungry boys pouncing on car windows. . . And I remember looking away. . .”  
Somi (2014).

Through Somi’s beautiful and nuanced description of the urban sprawl of Lagos, Nigeria, a common sentiment is presented about street children: “I remember hungry boys pouncing on car windows and I remember looking away.” Her words express a common posture on street children—invisibility.<sup>110</sup> My dissertation presents just the opposite. I offer an opportunity to make visible these “hungry boys pouncing on car windows.” My work provides a glimpse of the culture of street children, evaluating how they use music as a tool to reify their individual identities, their identity in communities, and their future ambitions and identities. Throughout the work, I include their narratives, memories, experiences, and spaces to discuss their culture and address the questions posited at the beginning of this work.<sup>111</sup>

In answering my first question about whether street children need saving, I discovered that such a stance is channeled by the biases that we as Western scholars have used when working with non-Western children. The diversity of cultures is an accepted notion, yet children are often thought to not possess that same diversity. Furthermore, in realizing these biases, I have been led to reconsider my (mis)conceptions of children and childhood. My participants have shown me first hand that they are a prime example of children doing what Western mores consider unexpected, at least for children—living on the streets. In addition, they do not just live on the streets suffering through a bleak existence, but in many cases have forged communities,

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<sup>110</sup> The notion of invisibility reminds me of a statement by Ralph Ellison, “I am an invisible man. . . I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me” (Ellison 1952:prologue).

<sup>111</sup> Questions posed in the introduction: Do street children need to be saved? Do street children want to be saved? How do street children conceptualize community or family? What is the function/role of music in their lives? What might music and performance tell us about the lives of street children? What do these communities of street children, if they exist, say about greater Ivorian society, if anything?

such as the community of street performers or the group of children at Sococé, where they are thriving and their essential needs are met. This alone is progress given that the lack of sustenance was a major reason that many children left their homes for the streets in the first place.

In examining the role and function of music in the lives of my participants, I have found that music serves a variety of functions. While they perform primarily for entertainment, the remembering of certain songs reifies their self-identity (e.g., religious, ethnic, and indigenous songs). In those moments of performance, the children quite often remember family members, an experience, or their beliefs. With popular genres, such as coupé décalé, my participants recollect an ideal self-identity, one formulated through the lyrics and culture surrounding the genre. Similarly, this connects to my question of what might music and performance tell us about the lives of street children? Through performance (singing and dancing), they manifest an imagined future identity, seeing themselves as successful and wealthy. Whether this ideal, imagined self comes into fruition is unclear. However, it is significant in knowing that such a notion or ideal offers hope, which is the primary factor that established coupé décalé as the leading genre in the nation—the songs inspired hope and allowed the listeners to escape from the banal present.

Finally, in addressing whether street children offer any input on the future of the greater Ivorian society, I believe there is something interesting in how and why street children communities are created. Intriguingly, in spite of the contestation and divisions within the nation, children in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, can assemble together and survive on its streets. Although this deserves further study, I do find it intriguing that the nation's street children have managed to forge a concept of interreligious and interethnic unity that the administration has attempted to remedy for over a decade.

To many, this work may appear to be idealistic or a romanticized image of street children. However, it was not my goal to romanticize their conditions, but to use their words to talk about their life. My kids, numbering over fifty children and youth based in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, offered me a glance of their lives, thoughts, and communities. Their stories are unique to them, and when compared to street children in surrounding African nations (e.g. Talibés in Senegal), the stories differ greatly. But, as previously stated, that is the nature of culture—some structures prevail, while specificity within those cultures differs from society to society.

In addition to constructing a space for Abidjanese street children to be heard, this work also raises issues that hopefully will trigger further investigation, such as music in the quotidian; sound studies for those who dwell in spaces where the cacophony of the space are their walls; and the physiological impact of music for the supposed “disenfranchised.” Does musicking increase their longevity on the streets? However, as the youth population on the African continent is nearly 40%, I believe that we can no longer afford to “look away.” Further investigation of the activities of youth in Africa is essential as their numbers continue to grow exponentially. Perhaps this work helps us to realize the importance of musicking in all lives, not just adults.

## Appendix A

### **Article 35 of Côte d'Ivoire's Constitution**

The President of the Republic is elected for five years by universal direct suffrage. He is only re-eligible one time. The candidate to the presidential election must be forty years of age at least and sixty-five years at most. He must be Ivorian by birth, *born of a father and of a mother themselves Ivorian by birth*. He must never have renounced the Ivorian nationality. He must never have had [prévaloir] another nationality. He must have resided in Cote d'Ivoire continuously during the five years preceding the date of the elections and have totaled ten years of effective presence. The obligation of residence indicated in this article is not applicable to the members of diplomatic and consular representations and to the persons designated by the State to occupy a post or accomplish a mission abroad, to international functionaries and to political exiles. The candidate to the Presidency of the Republic must present a complete statement of his physical and mental wellbeing duly determined by a college of three physicians appointed by the Constitutional Council from a list proposed by the Council of the Order of Physicians. These three physicians must take an oath before the Constitutional Council. He must be of good morals and of grand probity. He must declare his assets and substantiate [en justifier] the origin of them (Ivorian Constitution 2015) (Emphasis by author)

Appendix B

**Chart of Participants**

<b>Child's Name</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Ethno-Linguistic Group</b>
Ahmed	Akwaba	Unknown	Dioula	Gur
Aicha	Hypermarché Sococé	13	Mali/Dioula-born in Côte d'Ivoire	Gur
Adjara	BICE	5?	Unknown	Unknown
Atu	BICE/Akwaba	7	Arrah	Kwa
Awa	BICE	12	Senufo (speaks Dioula)	Gur
Awa	BICE	12	Unknown	Unknown
Aziz	Akwaba	14	Senufo-Volta Burkina Faso	Gur
Aziz	Akwaba BICE	9	Burkinabé	Gur
Cheik	Akwaba	10	Attié/ Ghana/Dioula (Muslim)	Kwa/Gur
Cheikh	Hypermarché Sococé	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Claudia	BICE	14	Bété	Kru
Colette	BICE	10	Attié	Kwa
Daniel	BICE	13	Baoulé	Kwa
Emmanuel	Akwaba	12	Burkinabee (Mooré language)	Gur
Franklin Tanoh	Marcory	Unknown	Baoulé/Mixed heritage	Kwa
Jean François	II Plateaux	17	Adjoukrou	Kwa
Jean Marie	Hypermarché Sococé	14	Lobbie	Kwa
Jean Tanoh	Marcory	Unknown	Aladjan/Baoulé	Kwa
Junior	Hypermarché Sococé	12	Attié (Mother)/Gouro	Kwa/Mandé

			(Father)	
Kadi	BICE	12	Dioula	Gur
Marie	BICE	13	Agni/Baoulé	Kwa
Maria	BICE	7	Unknown	Unknown
Mariam	BICE	13	Selfo (Senufo)	Gur
Marceline	Marcory	11	Hausa (Father)/Togolese (Mother)	Mixed
Moise/Moses	Soccoce/Akwaba	10	Baoulé	Kwa
N'goran/aka Nikola	Hypermarché Sococé	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Rachel	BICE	10	Benin	Benin
Rebecca	BICE	17	Agni	Kwa
Rodrigues	Le Pitch	13	Unknown	Unknown
Sadou (non street kid)	Hypermarché Sococé	15	Daloa/Dioula	Gur
Samuel Ogu	Marcory	Unknown	Bété/Senufo	Kru/Gur
Sango Winfred Romeard	Akwaba	12	Yacouba	Mandé
Sonya	BICE	10	Benin	Benin
Stéphane	Hypermarché Sococé/Akwaba <sup>1</sup>	11	Baoulé	Kwa
Willie	Akwaba/BICE	8	Bété	Kru

## Appendix C

### Lyrics to “Sagacité” by Douk Saga (Saga 2011)

Hé hé Stéphane Doucouré Doug saga dila Sagacité Le créateur du coupé décalé L’ennemie de l’homme c’est l’homme ! Les gens n’aiment pas les gens Affaire de prodada Seul le travail paie Silence ici on travaille Le feu sans le feu Celui qui n’a pas peur n’a pas le courage David gai Fatigua de Milano Linon Versase Chacoulé Donc OFF ! le champion Hé hé	Travailleur Travailleur Travailleru: Sagacité  Hé hé Lago bailli Le molarte Mimi Versace Joe papy On est ou la Héhé La sisi la jet 7 hé hé  A solo mama solo : solo A solo papa solo : solo A solo mama solo : solo A solo papa solo : solo a crier a crier : crier a décalé a décalé : décalé a Boro sanguï a montré : montré a saga cité a crée Hé mama a dancer a solobéton a braisé a coupéo a coupé, a décaléo a décalé Tala london : coupé Tala Bruxelles Tala new york : coupé dans la genève : décalé Tala abidjan : coupé Tala yakro : décalé : Tala bouaké : coupé Tala daloua : décalé Coupé a coupé décalé a décalé (x3)	ils ont trop les foutaises Ce que je vais te Couman la sinon j vais les verrouillé pour déverrouillé appuyer Diez longtemps !  Lasisi saliou Don Mc le Gorou Hassan de bouc Boukolo bango Fabrice Tiako Thierry Koffi Daouda Fraya Big Maradjah  Douk Saga le créateur de la sagacité David Monsoh tu es ou là  Allez Dj Polio On y vas ! Décalé moi Décalé moi s’envolement s’envolement s’envolement fouetter fouetter fouetter équilibré petit vélo petit vélo pédalé pédalé en décalé décalé décollé décalé fouetter (x9) décalé s’envolé s’envolé s’envolé équilibré (x4) décalé Donc off on est ou la sagacité héhé Décalé coupé Hé hé Sagacité Hé hé Décalé coupé On est ou la Chacoulé (x3)
Y’a une danse qui à été créé là : décalé coupé Celui qui la crée s’appelle : Sagacité Y’a une danse qui à crée la ho ho : décalé coupé Celui qui la crée s’appelle : Sagacité		
On l’appelle douk saga ce mon vieux père Le créateur du décalé coupé ‘’’’oooooo décalé coupé Floko 1 appel Floko 2 ya Foye hé hé décalé coupé Décalé moi Décalé moi Décalé m oi: Sagacité Coupé coupé coupé: décalé coupé	Hé ma copine on dit la jet 7 il sont boîte il sont dans la boîte ooh... Eh princesse sans trop me frôler hein Parce que ya jet set hein la	

molaré Chacoulé molaré  
Versace versace...  
à Lino Bamba on est ou là?  
Fouetter (x5) s'envolé

s'envolé pédalé pédalé  
pédalé petit vélo pédalé  
pédalé  
Hé hé

Joe papy  
Décalé coupé  
Sagacité...

## Appendix D

### Lyrics to “Ça va faire mal” by Tiken Jah Fakoly (Fakoly 2004)

Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme les Etats-Unis, ça va faire mal !  
Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme le royaume-unis, ça va faire mal!

On pourra contrôler, on sera respectés  
nous pourrions dialoguer, on pourra  
s'imposer  
ça va les étonner de nous voir évoluer!

Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme les Etats-Unis, ça va faire mal!  
Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme le royaume-unis, ça va faire mal!

On pourra s'opposer à ceux qui veulent  
s'imposer,  
on pourra résister aux pays développés,  
on pourra bien lutter contre la pauvreté!

Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme les Etats-Unis, ça va faire mal!  
Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme le royaume-unis, ça va faire mal!

Faisons donc attention à toutes ces  
oppressions,  
évitons l'ascension de toutes les exactions,  
faut qu'on nous rassemble car c'est  
l'unique solution!  
Attention attention à toutes ces divisions,  
et surtout évitons d'être leurs moutons!

Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme les Etats-Unis, ça va faire mal!  
Quand nous serons unis, ça va faire mal  
comme le royaume-unis, ça va faire mal!

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