Social Reform Through Music Education and the Establishment of a National Identity in Venezuela

by

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ABSTRACT

The *Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela* (FESNOJIV), also known as *El Sistema*, is an internationally recognized social phenomenon. By promoting social reform and development through music education, *El Sistema* is enriching the lives of thousands of impoverished youth in Venezuela by providing a nurturing environment for children in government-sponsored orchestras, choirs, and bands. In this thesis, I contend that the relationship between music education and social reform cultivates sociocultural ideas and expectations that are transmitted through FESNOJIV's curriculum to the participating youth and concert attendees. These ideas and *El Sistema's* live and recorded performances engage both the local Venezuelan community and the world-at-large. Ultimately, I will show that FESNOJIV has been instrumental in creating, promoting, and maintaining a national Venezuelan identity that is associated with pride and musical achievement.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The *Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela* (FESNOJIV), also known as *El Sistema*, is an internationally recognized social phenomenon. By promoting social reform and development through music education, *El Sistema* is enriching the lives of thousands of impoverished youth in Venezuela by providing a nurturing environment for children in government sponsored orchestras, choirs, and bands. As Christopher Small notes in *Music, Society, Education*:

> Art, education, and society move in a kind of loosely lockstepped three-legged race; each can change only very little without involving corresponding changes in the other two. Of the three, clearly, society as a whole exerts the most leverage but since it is ideas that shape society none is completely without influence. (Small 1996:206)

The relationship between music education and social reform cultivates social and cultural ideas and expectations that are transmitted through El *Sistema's* curriculum to the participating youth and concert attendees.

Due to the recent success of Gustavo Dudamel (1981), the newest and youngest artistic director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and product of *El Sistema*, FESNOJIV is receiving more international attention than ever. During a CBS *60 Minutes* special on Dudamel, Eduardo Marturet, a Venezuelan conductor and composer states that:

> [*El Sistema*] is an expression of Venezuelan beauty in a pure way, and most importantly, in a noble way without distinctions, with an identity - a Venezuelan identity that gives the movement and the sound of the orchestra a fingerprint impossible to erase. (Radcliffe 2008)

I believe that *El Sistema* instills pride in what it means to be Venezuelan.

My thesis is that FESNOJIV strives to establish and foster youth identities in parallel development with a national Venezuelan identity, an identity that is then transmitted and adopted by the culture.[1] In this document, after providing a brief introduction of musical nationalism, other music education systems, prior *El Sistema* research and an outline of chapters, I discuss the use of music education in social reform and detail *El Sistema's* history, philosophy, and methodology. I then provide ethnographic evidence of the ways that this program has had an impact on the creation and maintenance of a Venezuelan identity.[2]

Musical Nationalism and Identity Formation in Latin America

The notion of nationalism and nation-building enterprises has a rich and diverse history; unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this introduction or thesis to give an in-depth examination and analysis of these theories. It is, however, impossible to proceed without a brief summary of nationalism theories by prominent and recognized twentieth-century authors, such as Ernest Gellner (1925-1995), John Breuilly (b. 1946), and Benedict Anderson (b. 1936).

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[1] While it is important to note that the social and political landscape of Venezuela is highly complex, it is impossible to discuss in its entirety here.

[2] Because I contend that *El Sistema* creates and maintains a national identity, I also argue that the program contributes to the establishment of a uniquely Venezuela identity.

Ernest Gellner's 1983 text *Nations and Nationalism* and John Breuilly's 1982 text *Nationalism and the State* were among the first books to address contemporary issues of nationalism. Consequently, they are also the most famous and influential documents on the subject. Gellner contends that nationalism is the direct result of modernity. In short, he maintains that industrialism created the necessity for societal homogenization so that people may be interchangeable within the shifting social machinery. Gellner believes that nationalism occurs when political and cultural boundaries align. He did not, however, preach nationalism as a positive advancement, but rather as a mere result of modernization.

John Breuilly, a contemporary scholar, treats nationalism as a form of politics. In his text, he argues that politics are about power, and consequently, nationalism deals with power and control of the state. In brief, he maintains that one must develop and assign a typology of nationalism that should be investigated through a comparative historical method. He feels that the modern state and the modern-state system are the keys to understanding nationalism.

Lastly, Benedict Anderson, author of *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1986), maintains that nations are socially constructed communities that are "imagined" by the people within them. Imagined communities are different from real communities because the relationships within them are not based on face-to-face or everyday interactions. Anderson's perspective can be viewed as a form of social constructionism similar

to Edward Said's concept of "imagined geographies" (Said 1979). Anderson links the creation of nationalism to print-capitalism and the use of the vernacular, contending that nation-states were formed around national-print languages.

In this thesis, when referring to nationalism and nation-state building ideas, I primarily reference Anderson's constructivist approach because I largely feel that musical communities are socially constructed and maintained entities. Additionally, I believe that the transmission and reaffirmation of traditions, both new and old, occurs on a communal level that then widens into a national image.

Before delving into *El Sistema* and other nationally recognized music education systems, I would like to briefly discuss the relationship between music education, government funding, and nationalism. The transmission of cultural ideas and traditions, nationalism included, is often linked to education. Ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice notes:

> All of us who grow up in culture and acquire its traditions do so only partly as a result of direct, pedagogical intervention of the sort commonly associated with scolding by parents, teaching by teachers, or informing by informants; culture and its traditions are also acquired by observing, mimicking, and embodying shared practices (Bourdieu 1977) and by appropriating, understanding, and interpreting shared, symbolic actions (Ricoeur 1981c) without the direct intervention of parents, teachers, informants, and insiders. (Rice 2008:49)

Thus, culture is taught and absorbed through both educational and environmental influences. More often than not, nationalism and government funding are also closely linked, as many nationalistic endeavors are supported through governments. As I will discuss in detail later, elements of musical

nationalism help to generate cultural and national identities.[3] Notably, as Marie Elizabeth Labonville reports in her text, *Juan Bautista Plaza and Musical Nationalism in Venezuela*, musical nationalism in Latin America was not and is not just about the musical components produced. She states:

> Musical nationalism, in Latin American countries, was a complex movement that arose and thrived because of an interplay of social, political, economic, and artistic factors. Often it encompassed much more than what the term "musical nationalism" typically calls to mind . . . Although Latin American composers indeed wrote pieces featuring native rhythms, melodies, textures, instruments, texts, and titles, a number of them sought additional outlets for their patriotic sentiments . . . During this period, many Latin American musicians worked to modernize the musical infrastructure of their countries in order to bring local practices into line with what was happening in the more "developed" lands. (Labonville 2007 ix-x)

Thusly, music education systems that promote social reform and the development of musical traditions can also be classified as musical nationalism. Additionally, because many of these countries were striving to recreate the music of the "more developed lands" (i.e. Western Europe), we can also view Latin American musical nationalism as a form of musical internationalism. Both of these instances are particularly true in Venezuela where classical music

[3] For additional information on the study of musical nationalism specific to ethnomusicology and Latin America, I recommend the following texts: Martin Stokes's *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Constructions of* Place (1994); Imagination*, Emblems, and Expressions: Essays on Latin America, Caribbean, and Continental Culture and Identity* (1993) edited by Helen Ryan-Ranson; and Thomas Turino's 2003 article, "Nationalism and Latin American Music: Selected Case Studies and Theoretical Considerations."

ensembles regularly performed Western European art music in addition to works by Latin American and Venezuelan composers.[4]

Other National Music Education Systems: Kodály, Orff, and Suzuki

El Sistema is not the first nationally recognized music education system. The methods and concepts developed and promoted by Zoltan Kodály (1882-1967) of Hungary, Carl Orff (1895-1982) of Germany, and Shin'ichi Suzuki (1898-1998) of Japan have influenced the philosophy and methodology of FESNOJIV. The close relationship among nationalism, government, and education is evident through all of these programs, and while nationalism is not necessarily advertised in their visions, it occasionally appears as an underlying theme. Because of the profound influence of each approach on music education and the pedagogy of *El Sistema* as a whole, in this section I will briefly describe the histories, philosophies, and methodologies of Kodály, Orff, and Suzuki.

Kodály Method

Zoltán Kodály was a Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist, and educator. He is very well known for his work with Béla Bartók in collecting, classifying, analyzing, and publishing Hungarian folk music. From an early age, Kodály was interested in music and linguistics. During the 1920s, Kodály began

[4] Alejandro Enrique Planchart addressed this issue during his 2009 keynote address, "The Choral Movement in Venezuela during the 20th Century," at the Second Symposium of Latin American Music, which took place at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona.

composing for children's choirs, and in 1929, he published an article titled "Children's Choruses" in the *Hungarian Musical Review*. In it he states:

> Bad taste is infectious. While deplorable fashion may not be a serious matter, since ugly clothes do not injure the health, bad taste in the arts cauterises susceptibility . . . We have to get rid of the pedagogic superstition that some sort of diluted substitute art is good enough for teaching . . . [and regarding composers], nobody should be above writing for children: on the contrary, we should strive to become good enough to do so. (Kodály as quoted in Russell-Smith 1976:81)

The philosophy of the method may be best summarized by Kodály's slogan: "Music belongs to everybody" (Szönyi 1973:7). Kodály strongly advocated that music education should start at a young age and that it was the schools' responsibility to provide it. Reflecting an opinion that was common in his day, Kodály also believed that the development of "primitive" music to "art" music correlated to a similar progression in humans from infants to adults. For this reason, he advised to start children with simple folk melodies in their native tongue. During the 1940s, Kodály published books for young children from beginning to intermediate level, and in the 1950s, singing primary schools began to appear. After ten years of success in Hungary, the Kodály method began to receive international recognition. Today, it is practiced in various languages in Eastern and Western Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, North and South America, South Africa, and Iceland.

In the Kodály method, emphasis is placed on singing, the use of folk songs, and acquiring musical literacy (the ability to read musical notation and pitches). The methodology includes a child-developmental sequential approach

to rhythm, melody, and vocal range. Tools employed include the moveable-do system of solmization, "ta-ti" rhythm language, and John Curwen's solfège hand signs. Children begin with the interval of a minor third, and the pentatonic scale is introduced before the complete diatonic scale. Duple-meter rhythms are used first. Children learn to identify and read musical shorthand, which is a combination of note stems and solfège abbreviations. Kodály believed that teaching materials should only come from three sources. In her book *The Kodály Method*, Lois Choksy outlines these as being: "(1) authentic children's games and nursery songs, (2) authentic folk music, and (3) good composed music, i.e., music written by recognized composers" (Choksy 1988:17).

In terms of establishing cultural and national identities, Kodály advocated for an increased recognition of folk music, the musical literacy of his country, and the role of government in education. László Eösze, an eminent Kodály researcher, says "Kodály first took an interest in the education of the young in 1925, recognizing its importance for the preservation of his nation's artistic traditions in the face of urbanization and technological advancement" (Eösze 2009). Kodály felt that folk songs were "authentic" to their country and, as previously discussed, believed folk music served as the beginnings of all good music. According to Eösze, "Kodály was convinced that folksong was important not just as a monument of the past but also as a foundation for the future" (Eösze 2009). Kodály also placed a profound emphasis on musical literacy, and as Choksy states: "Kodály felt deeply that it must be his mission to give back to

the people of Hungary their own musical heritage and to raise the level of musical literacy, not only in academy students but also in the population as a whole" (Choksy 1988:3). Lastly, he championed for government funding, stating: "Systematic organization of teaching is one of the state's tasks; the money spent on it will be repaid by the increasing number of concert and opera-goers in years to come" (Kodály as quoted in Szönyi 1973:13). Kodály placed a high value on musical nationalism through his strong associations with Hungarian folksongs; consequently many nationalistic principles carried over into the method through the inclusion and use of this material.

Orff-Schulwerk Approach

Carl Orff was a German composer and music educator. Orff became involved in education in the 1930s when he founded the *Guentherschule* in Munich with Dorothea Guenther. The school taught gymnastics, dance, and music. Orff strongly discouraged the use of piano as accompaniment to movement and encouraged the children to improvise and compose their own music on various instruments (Horton 1976:90). These instruments included xylophone, glockenspiel, and metallophone. They were modeled more closely after Indonesian gamelan instruments than traditional orchestral percussion instruments and were manufactured by Karl Maendler, a trained piano and harpsichord maker. The bars of the instruments are completely detachable which allows children to hold only one bar and make beautiful sounds. During the 1930s, the Berlin Ministry of Culture adopted Orff's system in Berlin schools and

Orff-Schulwerk began publishing printed materials. The first publication in 1932 was "Orff-Schulwerk: Music for Children, Music by Children, Folk Songs." However, this publication was not distributed due to the Nazi regime's suppression of Orff's educational ideas, which they found too "foreign" and "creative." Subsequently, the *Guentherschule* and most of its instruments were destroyed during the Second World War.

In 1948, Orff was asked to compose music for a series for schools broadcast by the Bavarian Radio. Due to the nature of the broadcast, he realized that the music needed to be much simpler in order for the children to reproduce it themselves. Consequently, Orff placed more emphasis on spoken and sung words in these programs. With the success of the broadcasts, Klaus Becker at Studio 49 manufactured more instruments. In 1949, Orff-Schulwerk entered the Salzburg Mozarteum's curriculum for all younger music students, and in 1969, the Orff Institute opened at the Mozarteum to provide a center for Schulwerk teaching and research. During the 1950s, Orff-Schulwerk began to receive international attention, and today, Orff-Schulwerk associations exist in the United States, Germany, Australia, Korea, the United Kingdom, South Africa, France, Finland, and Canada.

The Orff-Schulwerk approach places emphasis on integrating movement, speech, singing, and instrumental playing. Wilhelm Keller summarizes the intention of this program in his book, *Orff-Schulwerk, Introduction to Music for Children: Methodology, Playing the Instruments, and Suggestions for Teachers*:

> The *Orff-Schulwerk* offers worthwhile activities for children with greater or lesser gifts, so no individual is pushed ahead too fast or held back unnecessarily. The real goal of the Schulwerk is attained in one's enjoyment of the fruitful combination of personal and interpersonal resources. Creating, reproducing, and listening to music are not separate and exclusive areas of work, but are presented as one entity in the elementary musical experience of all participants. (Keller 1974:5)

Orff methodologies include: interactive group work for all ages, improvising, and correlation of rhythm to movement and speech. Chanting and echoing provide "building block" structures and pattern principle. Similar to the Kodály method, Orff builds upon the minor third interval before incorporating the pentatonic scale. Instruments provide a strong rhythmic component and creativity is manifested through improvisation. While encouraged, emphasis on the ability to read music is not nearly as strong as in the Kodály method.

Outside of the use of the German language and traditional folk songs, the Orff-Schulwerk did not self-consciously promote German nationalism. As a whole, it is much more inclusive of other cultures' music than the Kodály method. That being said, the authors of the Orff-Schulwerk currrent website allude to promoting cultural traditions, both in Germany and other countries, with associated materials:

> The intention of the Schulwerk to utilise [sic] the anthropogenic [sic] impulses of all musical cultures has led in numerous countries to the reactivation of authentic cultural traditions. This intercultural perspective was already innate in the work undertaken by Orff and Keetman and continues to be developed in the training activities of the Orff Institute up to the present day. (Orff-Schulwerk)

The level of government funding Orff-Schulwerk has received, both past and present, is also unclear. Public programs such as the Bavarian Radio or Mozarteum may have been funded through their associations. Prior to the Second World War, the Orff-Schulwerk approach achieved its first stages of implementation in the public schools. Whether the Nazi regime physically shut the *Guentherschule* down, or simply discontinued the funding for it, is uncertain. Regardless, the Orff-Schulwerk approach is associated with German music education more than any other method.

Suzuki Concept

Shin'ichi Suzuki was a Japanese music educator and violinist. After studying in Germany, Suzuki returned to Japan in the late 1920s and founded the Suzuki String Quartet with three of his brothers. In 1930, he was appointed president of the Teikoku Music School and later founded the Tokyo String Quartet. In 1933, Suzuki began to develop his educational method when he noticed that all children were able to speak their native tongues. He strongly believed that children are born with the "talent" for music in the same way they are for language. He named his program "Talent Education" which, interestingly, does not contain the words "music" or "violin." The philosophy of his program is best described through the understanding of this Suzuki quote:

> "Talent Education" applies not only to knowledge or technical skill but also to morality, building of character, and appreciating beauty. We know that these are human attributes acquired by education and environment. Thus our movement is not concerned with raising so-called prodigies, nor does

> it intend to emphasize just "early development." We must express it as a "total human education." (Suzuki 1973:2)

Similar to *El Sistema*, Suzuki's primary goal was the development of character, not innate musical talent.

In 1950, Suzuki founded his institution in Matsumoto and began teaching violin through his method. There were ninety-six graduates in 1952, and 20 years later in 1972, over 2,300 violinists graduated. During the 1960s, Suzuki toured the United States with his students, and consequently, many universities adopted the Suzuki method for their preparatory programs. The method continued to find success in the 1970s in Europe as well, and today, the program thrives in North and South America, Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa.

The Suzuki method is an instrumental approach that places emphasis on beginning at a young age (e.g., three or four), listening, and the importance of a nurturing environment. The methodology of the concept incorporates elements of the Kodály method in its use of "ta-ti" rhythm language. Other components of the program include parental involvement, trained teachers, social interaction with other children, repetition, and a core repertoire.

The Suzuki method offers very little in terms of establishing or promoting a national or cultural identity.[5] In fact, contrary to what I originally thought, the

[5] It is interesting and important to note the Japanese music education provided in public and private schools is primarily based on the American model. For example, the Japanese Bandmaster's Association worked closely with the Florida

method very seldom uses Japanese folk songs, if at all. European folk tunes are incorporated, however, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and "Go Tell Aunt Rhody." While Shin'ichi Suzuki was not involved in Japanese nationalism and his method does not directly promote it, Suzuki does advocate for reform through education and government funding. At the end of his book, *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki writes:

> People say that I am trying to do the impossible, and expanding my energies for nothing. But I know that what I conceive *is* possible, and I believe that one day the human race will create the kind of world in which everyone will realize that children have the potential. That is why at the United Nations, after Casals had spoken on world peace, I appealed to the representatives of the nations of the world to do something. What I am trying to do now is to apply my Talent Education to all areas of life . . . It is precisely at this time that [children] must be educated with infinite care, and the state should realize what an important long-term project this is for the future of the country. (Suzuki 1969:120)

From this statement, we can infer that Suzuki believed the future was in the hands of the children. As I will discuss more in-depth later, the idea of societal reform through music is also significant to *El Sistema's* philosophy and methodology.

Prior El Sistema Research

Due to the recent international attention received by *El Sistema*, many educators, ethnomusicologists, and anthropologists are deeply involved in studying, documenting, and recording the process and results of the program at

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Bandmaster's Association and consequently modeled the FBA's structure and organization.

the time of this writing. For this reason, new materials about FESNOJIV regularly appear. Before continuing with the remainder of the thesis, it is essential to discuss the previous research that is already published and the primary sources that I use to formulate my statement of national identity formation.

Diane Marie Hollinger's dissertation "Instrument of Social Reform: A Case Study of the Venezuelan System of Youth Orchestras" (Arizona State University 2006) examines the effectiveness of the mission of the program in Venezuela to promote social reform and overturn poverty. During her visits to Venezuela, she made keen observations, and throughout the document, she includes classroom descriptions and cites interviews with local teachers, organizers and participants. Because *El Sistema* exists outside of my immediate surroundings, her work is my primary source material for information regarding the atmosphere, environment, and process of everyday procedures and rehearsals that take place in the program. Additionally, Hollinger provides a comprehensive history of *El Sistema* and a breakdown of its structural organization, which are key elements to chapter three of this document.

I complied information regarding *El Sistema's* philosophy, vision, mission statement, and methodologies from its website, FESNOJIV: National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela.[6] Because a large portion of my thesis is centered on the ways in which *El Sistema* is marketed and projected in a way to create a national identity, I believe that the vetted materials published by

[6] http://fesnojiv.gob.ve/en/home.html

the program are the best and most important sources from which to draw this information. I began my research in 2009 and have actively monitored the website for changes in wording and structure. No significant alterations occurred in their promotional materials during this time.

Because many scholars are in the process of researching *El Sistema* I also cite pre-publication research such as conference presentations and published interviews.[7] In addition, I consider information from documentaries, newspaper articles, television and Internet interviews, and other promotional video clips such as those that appear on YouTube.

In order to supplement the published-material information, I provide ethnographic accounts from Maria Fernanda Castillo, Alcides Rodriguez, and Jorge Montilla, who are past participants and teachers within FESNOJIV. I also include interviews cited in Hollinger's dissertation and those with students of programs modeled on *El Sistema* in Mexico and Colombia primarily because the latter they have strong opinions about the program as it exists in Venezuela. This ethnographic material comes from structured and unstructured interviews.

The organization and purpose of this document differs from previously published accounts of *El Sistema* in that I argue for the establishment and

[7] I am referencing Gisela Flanigan's College Music Society presentation, Dr. Fernando Guerrero's Week of Venezuelan Harp and Joropo, and T.M. Scruggs's interview on Venezuelan Afro-Pop, respectively (see references for full citations).

celebration of a national identity.[8] Many of the books that have been published on the subject focus on the effectiveness of music education as a positive outreach tool within impoverished communities, the history and significance of the program in Venezuela, or the ability of the program to produce musical stars like Gustavo Dudamel. It is my hope that this thesis contributes to a body of research on identity formation through music education and highlights the ways in which youth identities are projected as national identities.

Outline of Chapters

In the remaining chapters of the thesis, I provide arguments for the ways in which *El Sistema* contributes to a national identity. In chapter two I discuss the need for and significance of social reform in Venezuela and highlight other geographic areas that have employed *El Sistema's* philosophy and methodologies. I ask and answer the following questions: why does social reform exist, why is music education considered an appropriate way to address it, and what are the significance of location and place in regards to *El Sistema*. Chapter three highlights *El Sistema's* pedagogical approaches. After providing an overview of FESNOJIV's history, philosophy, and environment, I provide evidence

[8] The inspiration for this approach was partly inspired by Marie McCarthy's dissertation "Music Education and the Quest for Cultural Identity in Ireland, 1831-1989" (1990). The ways that Ireland constructed a cultural identity through music education provide an interesting model of how music education, as it is utilized in public schools, not-for-profit organizations, and government-sponsored programs, can contribute to identity formation, especially on the national level.

for the ways that the methodology influences the identity formation of the youth. Lastly, in chapter four, I offer ethnographic evidence in support of my assertion that *El Sistema* has created a uniquely Venezuelan identity that many identify as a national identity. This chapter also demonstrates how Venezuelans and others have marketed this national identity through documentaries, articles, and books. In the concluding chapter I synthesize the information and pose additional questions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL REFORM THROUGH MUSIC EDUCATION

Introduction

Before delving into the specifics of *El Sistema*, it is important to discuss the role of arts integration in social reform and social justice projects. Moreover, it is paramount that we define these terms and highlight the reasons that make reformation necessary in Venezuela and abroad.

As defined by the *Social Work Dictionary*, "social reform" is:

> Activity designed to rearrange social institutions or the way they are managed to achieve great social justice or other desired change. The term is most often applied to efforts to eliminate corruption in government or structural inequities such as institutional racism. (Barker 2003:406)

In order to better understand this definition, I also provide the corresponding entry for "social justice," which states:

> An ideal condition in which all members of a society have the same basic rights, protection, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits. Implicit in this concept is the notion that historical inequalities should be acknowledged and remedied through specific measures. A key social work value, social justice entails advocacy to confront discrimination, oppression, and institutional inequities (Barker 2003:405).

One may notice that both terms, which are essential to any discussion of *El Sistema* or other music education systems based on *El Sistema*, highlight the word "inequities." I believe that this is central to *El Sistema's* approach to social reform through music education. They strive to balance the inequalities in access to music, education, and after-school activities that many of the disadvantaged youth in Venezuela face.

The social and economic landscape of Venezuela is shifting; however, a large gap in income distribution between the upper-middle class and the impoverished low class still exists. José Antonio Abréu founded *El Sistema* in 1975 after a period of increasing regional and personal income inequalities (Jones 1982:386). Richard Jones, in his 1982 article "Regional Income Inequalities and Government Investment in Venezuela," maintains that the decentralization of the government led to drastic shifts in income during the 1960s into the 1970s. His evidence demonstrates that despite government efforts to decrease the income gap, inequalities increased and that these regional discrepancies also suggested personal income disparities, which were ranked "high." This high ranking designates situations when 40% of the population earns less than 12 percent of the total national income (Barker 2003:389). Additionally, in recent years, the national poverty level has been as high as 54.5% (1997), 62.1% (2003), and 36.3% (2006); it measured 31.9% in 2011 (World Book). Venezuela's current distribution of family income as measured by the GINI index[1] is 39, which is much improved from their 1998 rating of 49.5 (World Factbook).

[1] "This index measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country. The index is calculated from the Lorenz curve, in which cumulative family income is plotted against the number of families arranged from the poorest to the richest. The index is the ratio of (a) the area between a country's Lorenz curve and the 45 degree helping line to (b) the entire triangular area under the 45 degree line. The more nearly equal a country's income distribution, the closer its Lorenz curve to the 45 degree line and the lower its Gini index, e.g., a Scandinavian country with an index of 25. The more unequal a

These inequalities in income distribution directly affect the youth of the country. Many of the households that fall below the poverty line reside in *barrios*, shantytown neighborhoods that are considered extremely dangerous and are overpopulated. The children of the *barrios* are exposed to drugs, violence, and extreme criminal activity. It is the hope of *El Sistema* that these children actively choose a better life than the ones that have been presented to them in their neighborhoods. Part of FESNOJIV's mission statement reads (italics added): "to help children and young people in achieving *their* full potential and acquiring values that favor *their* growth and have a positive impact on *their* lives in society" (FESNOJIV). This child-centered statement demonstrates the desire and need to improve the experiences of the Venezuelan youth through music.

Music Education as an Agent for Social Change

It seems as though we have recognized music for its transformative powers since the beginning of philosophical time. Plato and Aristotle both exalted the ability of music to affect a person's *ethos*, or character.[2] In ancient Greece, music was viewed as a form of moral indoctrination. During the 1700s, Johann

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country's income distribution, the farther its Lorenz curve from the 45 degree line and the higher its Gini index, e.g., a Sub-Saharan country with an index of 50. If income were distributed with perfect equality, the Lorenz curve would coincide with the 45 degree line and the index would be zero; if income were distributed with perfect inequality, the Lorenz curve would coincide with the horizontal axis and the right vertical axis and the index would be 100" (World Factbook).

[2] Plato wrote about ethos in the *Republic* and Aristotle addressed it in *Politics*.

Mattheson, a Baroque German composer known for applying Cartesian psychology to systematic musical theories, stated: "For it is the true purpose of music to be, above all else, a moral lesson" (as quoted in Taruskin 1984:218). Most recently, medical research has highlighted the positive effects recreational music-making produces and its ability to influence and alter the well being of participants and their emotional states.[3] Additionally, other music education reformists, such as Shin'ichi Suzuki (see above), have recognized and employed music education as "total human education" that places an emphasis on creating a better person rather than a prodigious musician (Suzuki 1973:2).

In Landon Bayer's book *The Arts, Popular Culture, and Social Change* (2000), he notes:

> The arts can, through the imaginative rendering of people, events, values, places, feelings, and ideas, help disclose worlds that are not yet in place, and thus serve as a force to bring about their creation. This is the political and moral promise of art, a promise to be fulfilled not through narrow instrumentalism, but through its efficacy in helping us reflect on and transform our ways of life, our experiences, and our personal and social being. (85)

This is exactly what José Antonio Abréu and other *El Sistema*-like founders are trying to do. By engaging the youth in the arts through music they aim to create a better society by creating better people.

[3] See Ho, et al. (2010); Koyama, et al. (2009); Wachi, et al. (2007); Bittman, et al. (2005, 2004, 2003, 2001).

El Sistema Models

Over 25 countries have established *El Sistema* models including: Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, England, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Korea, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, The Dominican Republic, Scotland, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay (FESNOJIV). Additionally, *El Sistema* has an official USA branch, *El Sistema USA*, which serves as a networking organization to support the growth of the program throughout the United States and to help facilitate the collaboration with other programs around the world.

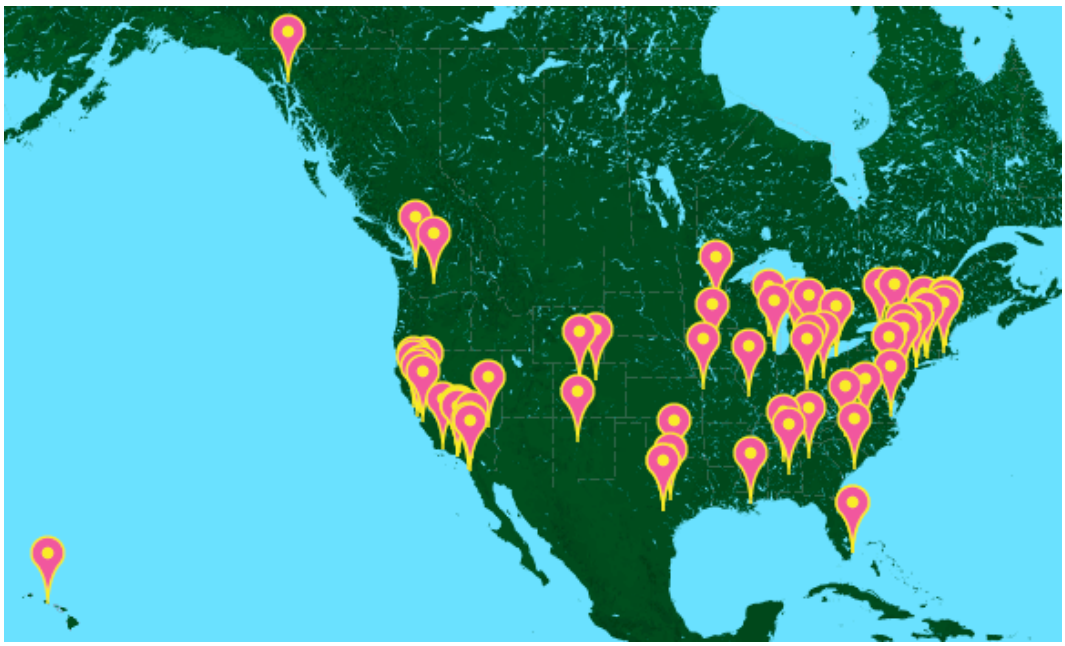

Figure 1 from http://elsistemausa.org/

This Google map (see fig. 1) depicts the programs affiliated with El Sistema USA (El Sistema USA). Each program on the map adheres to El Sistema's core values:

> • Every human being has the right to a life of dignity and contribution.
> • Every child can learn to experience and express music and art deeply and receive its many benefits.
> • Overcoming poverty and adversity is best done by first strengthening the spirit, creating, as Dr. Abréu puts it: "an affluence of the spirit."
> • Effective education is based on love, approval, joy and experience within a high-functioning, aspiring, nurturing community. Every child has limitless possibilities and the ability to strive for excellence. "Trust the young" informs every aspect of the work.
> • Learning organizations never arrive but are always becoming—striving to include more students, greater musical excellence, better teaching. Thus, flexibility, experimentation, and risk-taking are inherent and desirable aspects of every program. (El Sistema USA)

Furthermore, the programs also follow El Sistema's nine-point list of fundamental elements: mission of social change, access and excellence, *nucleo* environment, intensity, use of ensemble, CATS (citizen/artist/teacher/student) teacher model, multi-year continuum, family and community inclusion, and connections and network (El Sistema USA). I will elaborate on this nine-point list in the succeeding chapter. *El Sistema's* success in Venezuela and abroad continues to inspire new programs around the world.

Politics of Place

Not surprisingly, given the diversity of locations and environments in which *El Sistema* and its models exist, each program achieves success in its own ways. While I contend that the FESNOJIV curriculum and implementation are establishing a national identity in Venezuela, I do not asserting that programs modeled on *El Sistema* achieve the same cultural work in their respective locations. I strongly believe that a large portion of *El Sistema's* success and

identity can be attributed to the conditions of Venezuela in the late 1900s and the circumstances of the system's origins. In the next chapter, I detail the history, philosophy, and methodologies of the Venezuelan program and begin to provide evidence of identity formation.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORY, PHILOSOPHIES, AND METHODOLOGIES OF EL SISTEMA

Brief History and Summary of the Organization[1]

Economist and conductor, José Antonio Abréu founded FESNOJIV (*Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela*) on February 12, 1975. As recounted in FESNOJIV documents, Abréu strove for music education reform:

> Beginning in 1975, eight young persons gathered around the figure of Maestro José Antonio Abréu in the old National Conservatory "Juan Jose Landaete." Apart from the wish to make music, they reunited due to the necessity of confronting the problem of reformation of the Venezuelan music education with original pedagogic characteristics of their own, with the capability of adapting teaching techniques from other countries to our reality. (Hollinger 2006:78)

The orchestra started small but grew very quickly. Hollinger noted that during her interview with Abréu he offered "there were eleven musicians at the first rehearsal, twenty-five at the second, forty-six at the third, and seventy-five at the fourth" more as an example of the rapid growth than the exact numbers (Hollinger 2006:78). The premiere performance of *La Orquesta Nacional Juvenil de Venezuela* occurred on April 30, 1975, and the program included works by Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Vivaldi. The 83-member ensemble was comprised of both young, amateur students and professional musicians. In a tradition that still carries on today, the older

[1] For a more detailed narrative about the history and origins of *El Sistema* please see Hollinger's dissertation: *Instrument of Social Reform: A Case Study of the Venezuelan System of Youth Orchestras* (Arizona State University, 2006), pages 78-89.

musicians assisted in training the younger students.

Hollinger's in-depth study of *El Sistema* and its origins notes that while this performance marked the beginning of FESNOJIV, the roots of the organization began earlier in 1971 with a group of young, professional musicians, who helped establish the *Orquesta de Fesitval Bach*, an orchestra led by Abréu that performed together regularly. It was primarily these players, assisted by young students from Caracas music schools, who made up the first *La Orquesta Nacional Juvenil de Venezuela* group. At the time, the professional orchestras in Venezuela primarily comprised European players, and as Hollinger asserts, "Dr. Abréu believed that Venezuelan musicians were talented and should be playing in their own orchestras" (Hollinger 2006:80). By employing these up-and-coming Venezuelan musicians as performers and teachers, the orchestra improved quickly and received recognition of its success. Soon, other Venezuelan states wanted to establish youth orchestras, and the Caracas *El Sistema* provided an archetype and guidance in order to do so. The program saw expeditious growth during the 1980s and 1990s until each Venezuelan state had an orchestra. The FESNOJIV Foundation, *El Sistema* as it is now recognized, was officially established in 1994 and has continued to grow and develop.

Each state has at least one community-based center - or *núcleo* - that offers educational, artistic, and cultural activities. Each *núcleo*

provides orchestras (professional, youth, and children's), choirs, music theory classes, and lessons (group and private) for the community five days a week. As of 2009, 180 *núcleos* throughout the country provided various musical programs (FESNOJIV 2009).

Federal and local governments, private donors, and international loan money provide funding for the FESNOJIV centers (Hollinger 2006:88). While a 2005 *Boston Globe* article estimated *El Sistema's* annual budget at $29 million (Lakshmanan), locating an exact budget number from FESNOJIV is almost impossible. Hollinger gives more information regarding funding sources in her dissertation, but also notes the difficultly in pinning down an exact amount (2006:88). Regardless of the account, no doubt exists that *El Sistema* is a supremely well-funded endeavor.

The Philosophy in Action

FESNOJIV's philosophy rests on two key principles: that music is the "reflection of the soul of the peoples and . . . it is a key element to educating and allowing people to integrate successfully into society" (FESNOJIV 2009). Additionally, it proclaims, "those Venezuelan youngsters who go through *El Sistema* fulfill their dreams of personal and professional realization through music" (FESNOJIV 2013). Both of these statements reflect José Antonio Abréu's personal vision for FESNOJIV, which he has discussed in numerous interviews, documentaries, and TEDTalks in recent

years (see Arvelo 2006, Radcliffe 2008, McManus 2009, Smaczny 2009, and TedTalk 2009). In short, Abréu believes that music is and should be a transformative art that has the potential to lead to a better society through youth involvement.

Both the mission and vision statement of the organization reflect FESNOJIV's philosophy:

> Mission: To systematize music education and to promote the collective practice of music through symphony orchestras and choruses in order to help children and young people in achieving their full potential and acquiring values that favor their growth and have a positive impact on their lives in society.
>
> Vision: The State Foundation for the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela (FESNOJIV - Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela) is an organization committed to social development through an innovative and hope-instilling music education program, distinguished by its excellence and for having a positive impact on the communities where it is implemented. (FESNOJIV 2009)

Those involved with the program frequently cite the positive impact and hope that *El Sistema* has instilled in the immediate community and even the world-at-large (see chapter four for direct quotes). Outside researchers also share similar feelings; Hollinger noticed these qualities during her investigative visits to various *núcleos* in the country. She states:

> Everywhere I encountered a feeling of ownership, pride, and community, a sense that the difficult and maybe even the impossible can be achieved. Consequently, one aspect of the typical in *El Sistema* appears to be that each place is exceptional in its own way. (Hollinger 2006:89).

While in its earliest stages, the goal for *El Sistema* may have been to reform the Venezuelan music education system, José Antonio Abréu ultimately created something much greater through the establishment of FESNOJIV.

I believe that part of the reason Hollinger found the centers "exceptional" was that despite the socioeconomic differences among the different states she studied, the everyday practices of the centers were consistently productive and congruent with the mission statement. In Caracas, the capital, the program has new buildings, world-class teachers, and seemingly endless resources; in Mérida, on the other hand, a city located in the Andes, the program coordinators essentially obtained their rehearsal and organizational space by taking over and squatting in an abandoned car dealership for over a month until the government donated it to them. In Puerto La Cruz, a Caribbean coastal town and gateway to Isla de Margarita (a very popular tourist destination), the program is so overwhelmed with children that they do not have enough instruments, and as an illustration of the local danger, one of Hollinger's informants pointed to an intersection, saying, "The youth orchestra made a benefit concert there in the street. A few days later, there was a murder on the same spot" (Hollinger 2006:114). The Los Chorros orchestra, located in Caracas, which serves homeless and neglected children, offers an additional example of the diversity within the system. Teaching in this center is particularly difficult; Hollinger details that "some children cry so much it is impossible to teach them; others are violent. Many are street children, are abused, have been arrested for drug

offenses or [are] involved in gang warfare" and that one instructor was stabbed with a pencil (Hollinger 2006:123). Despite these operational difficulties and differences, each program is successful in its mission to promote positive social change, which they achieve through safe and nurturing environments, enthusiastic teachers, and a consistent structure. The program at Los Chorros, for instance, gives a short performance every Friday as part of their studies. During these weekly events, "the orchestra plays pieces they have learned, young musicians are featured on short solos, and children receive applause and encouragement" (Hollinger 2006:123). The physical spaces in which *El Sistema* programs operate are very similar to American music classrooms. Hollinger describes them as "music rooms [that] are brightly painted and decorated with musical posters like any other music classroom in any other school" (Hollinger 2006:121). Additionally, the program functions very similarly to most music schools; they offer individual lessons, theory classes, and orchestral rehearsals. The everyday structure of *El Sistema* is not what makes it unique; it is the program's outreach that sets it apart.

The most profound aspect of the atmosphere and environment that Hollinger details throughout her dissertation is the overwhelming feeling of hope that FESNOJIV instills in the youth and parents. While I will discuss the significance of pride and the sense of belonging in the next chapter, it is important to note that feelings of hope and ownership contribute to an individual's pride, patriotism, and community involvement. Ultimately, I contend

that these shared emotional components lead to the establishment of a national identity.

Methodology and Identity Formation

El Sistema methodology includes: a learning sequence with an emphasis on body movement, instruction on high-quality sound production and music notation, giving frequent formal and informal performances, a safe and encouraging learning environment, former students as teachers, standardized national curriculum featuring simple arrangements of masterworks, the inclusion of Latin American composers and Venezuelan folk musicians, and working with parents to promote the value of music making (FESNOJIV 2009). I believe that many of these pedagogical tools directly correlate to the creation and maintenance of the young participants' identities and that these identities are projected to others through performance practices and marketing.

Musical psychologist Alexandra Lamont notes that children's identities develop during the parallel progression of "self-understanding" and "self-other understanding" (see below). Additionally, personal and social identities play an important role. In her article "Musical Identities and the School Environment," she states (italics added):

> How does a child's identity develop? Two important topics need to be considered when thinking about identity: first, *self-understanding*, or how we understand and define ourselves as individuals; and secondly, *self-other understanding*, or how we understand, define and relate to others. Children's development of self-understanding and of self-other

> understanding seems to progress in parallel . . . We can also separate out the influence of *personal identity*, or our individual and idiosyncratic characteristics, and of *social identity*, which is based on social and particularly group characteristics. The development of identity will thus be crucially shaped by the circumstances the children grow up in. (Lamont 2002:41-42)

Thus, this development occurs during the stages in which children are defining themselves in opposition to others and is greatly influenced by their environment. *El Sistema's* programs purposely meet after school five days a week in order to provide the children with a safe space. This schedule dictates that each week, some of the children may spend more time at a *núcleo* than they do in their homes. Literally replacing troubled or dangerous home situations with the atmosphere and environment established at the FESNOJIV centers has a profound impact on their identity formation.

Additionally, *El Sistema* promotes both self-understanding and self-other understanding through their methodologies:

- The learning sequence encourages children to become self-aware by embodying the experience of music through movement at a young age.
- Organic learning and learning through performance emphasize the process of music making over the final product of the music. In this way, children learn to read music over many years while developing keen ear training skills.
- The teachers, who are very familiar and comfortable with the program, surround the students with a positive and nurturing environment. By

working with the same young musicians during ensemble and private lesson instruction, they encourage the personal growth of the individual student and group.

- Both Western European art music and national Venezuelan folk music become a part of their individual and collective identities as they learn to play music and grow as an ensemble.
- Finally, by establishing a value for music making in the form of scholarships, *El Sistema* educates both child and parent about the possible opportunities that exist outside of the *barrios*.

Abréu acknowledges this positive atmosphere and notes, "There is not a culture of criticism. It is a culture of encouragement" (Arvelo 2006). The FESNOJIV curriculum encourages a unique sense of community, and this sense of community fosters individual identities, pride, and ultimately, as I argue, nationalism.

What is the significance of *El Sistema's* methodologies? As noted in the above outline, FESNOJIV employs various tools such as teaching embodying music through movement, the emphasis of process over product, and the education of both child and parent. Michelle Kisliuk notes, in her article about teaching African dance and ethnomusicology ensembles to college students in *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles*, that a

> [F]irst-hand, embodied experience that students have with music and dance can facilitate an understanding, or at least an awareness, of both macro- and micropolitics. In learning to dance and sing in new ways, one becomes vitally aware of issues of self and other . . . Direct involvement in a process of musical creation engenders a kind of self-awareness that leads to activity instead of abstraction. (Kisliuk and Gross 2004:250)

This is an extremely important element in *El Sistema's* practice because this self-awareness occurs during the youth's formative years. Through embodied experience, the children realize and create their individual and collective identities. Furthermore, the emphasis on process over product encourages a unique sense of community. Kisliuk discusses the effects of this methodology, stating "When we reach a multilayered freedom in our sociomusical interaction, inviting singing and dancing among ensemble members and audiences alike, we become a dynamic community" (Kisliuk and Gross 2004:251). Lastly, by educating parents and children about future opportunities with music, El Sistema is broadening its participants. While the children actively participate in the program, the parents who attend their child's concerts and support them participate in FESNOJIV as well. Furthermore, the orchestra's identity merges with that of each individual: a collective identity is the result. As the children learn and grow together, they create their own musical community. Abréu states:

> An orchestra is a community where the essential and exclusive feature is that it is the only community that comes together with the fundamental objective of agreeing with itself. Therefore, the person who plays in an orchestra begins to live the experience of agreement (Arvelo 2006).

What is the significance of living "the experience of agreement?" It is the recognition and understanding that a lifestyle alternative to the one presented in the *barrios* exists and that individuals can control certain aspects of their lives. *El Sistema's* methodologies foster this unique community and a sense of belonging that is distinctly Venezuelan.

Concluding Remarks:

As discussed in the introductory chapter, just as Christopher Small believes that art, society, and education influence one another, ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice contends that formal and informal education are also linked to the transmission of cultural traditions. Furthermore and in extension of Rice's statement, ethnomusicologist Anne Rasmussen argues that individuals' musical identities are the result of their combined experiences:

> Whether or not one is born and bred in a musical tradition, one's musicality is the result of a patchwork of experience. A culturally specific sense of musicality may certainly be developed through the process of being native to that culture, but musicians' musicalities are also collections of encounters and choices: pastiches of performances they have experienced, the lessons they have taken, the people with whom they have played, the other musicians they admire, other musics that they play or enjoy, and the technical and cognitive limitations of their own musicianship. (Rasmussen 2004:225)

Each person is a sum of his or her environmental experiences. By educating the youth, *El Sistema* incorporates culturally specific components into the identities that the children are in the process of constructing.

As evidenced in its history, philosophy, and methodology, FESNOJIV is creating and maintaining the identities of their youth. These identities are a product of the environment, education, and experiences surrounding the children. By incorporating teaching tools such as embodied experience, process over product, and educating both parent and child, *El Sistema* creates a nurturing environment and an escape from many of their students' harsh realities. Through their work with the impoverished communities of Venezuela, FESNOJIV is instilling pride in what it means to be Venezuelan. In the next chapter, I discuss the ways in which the youth identity is adopted as a national identity, which is then marketed across the globe. I provide ethnographic evidence of this assertion through interviews with former *El Sistema* participants and Venezuelan nationals.

CHAPTER FOUR: CREATION, MAINTENANCE, AND MARKETING OF A NATIONAL IDENTITY

Introduction

As I argued in the previous chapter, the methodologies employed by *El Sistema* aid in the creation of identity for its participants. Because identity formation is the result of a multitude of factors (including environment, experience, and education), the identity formed by FESNOJIV's youth is distinctly Venezuelan and develops through the formation of the "culture of encouragement" that Dr. Abréu references in the 2006 documentary, *Tocar y Luchar: To Play and to Fight* (Arvelo). Ultimately, youth display this FESNOJIV-informed identity at local, regional, national, and international levels as an expression of Venezuelan national pride, where it transforms into an expression of Venezuelan national identity. What began as a specialized musical opportunity, through participation and display, has become a symbol of national identity. In this chapter, I briefly explain the relationship between social identity and national attachment. I then elaborate on the ways that *El Sistema* and Venezuela reinterpret the youth identity as a national identity through the maintenance of Venezuelan symbols and markers, the creation and transmission of cultural elements, and the marketing endeavors of Venezuelan nationals and global supporters. Lastly, I give ethnographic evidence of patriotism and pride directly associated with the establishment and reinforcement of a national identity.

Social Identity and National Attachment

In the introduction, when reviewing and defining the concept of nationalism, I stated that:

> [I]n this thesis, when referring to nationalism and nation-state building ideas, I am primarily referencing Anderson's constructivist approach because I largely feel that musical communities are socially constructed and maintained entities. Additionally, I believe that the transmission and reaffirmation of traditions, both new and old, occurs on a communal level that then translates into a national image. (4)

I would like to build on this statement by adding that it is impossible to discount political and social movements that promote nationalist agendas when discussing the establishment of a national identity.[2] Additionally, I believe that it is important to recognize symbols and markers of the nation as a form of nationalism because they are cultural constructions. For this reason, I contend that proclamations of patriotism and pride are reflections of positive national associations and identities.[3] In their 2007 article, "American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement," Leonie Hubby and Nadia Khatib draw close parallels between social identity theory and national identity. They state:

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[2] For the purpose of this thesis, I mean to address the political movements and decisions that have had a direct impact on the development of national markers or emblems in Venezuela regardless of party affiliations.

[3] I do not intend to discuss political patriotism in relationship to nationalism in Venezuela. Rather, I prefer to align with Leonie Hubby and Nadia Khatib's definitions of patriotism from their 2007 article, "American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement." They state:

> There is a broad agreement on the meaning of patriotism as "a deeply felt affective attachment to the nation" (Conover and Feldman 1987) or the "degree of love for and pride in one's nation" (Kosterman and Fesbach 1989). (Hubby and Khatib 2007:63)

> A social identity is typically defined as an awareness of one's objective membership in the group *and* a psychological sense of group attachment (Tajfel 1981). Consistent with this definition, we define *national identity* as a subjective or internalized sense of belonging to the nation and measure it with questions that typically assess social identities. (Hubby and Khatib 2007:65)

Because I have previously established that *El Sistema* promotes the individual and collective identities of the youth that participate in the program as distinctly Venezuelan, I argue that we can ascertain that the youth also align their identities with the nation of Venezuela, thus creating a national identity. Additionally, I assert that society then aligns with and embraces this youth construction as a symbol for hope and pride.

Maintaining Venezuelan Symbols

Like other countries, Venezuela has a collective interest in maintaining a unique national identity. Many countries, including the United States, have made a point to catalogue and archive cultural traditions that represent the nation. Both social and government-sponsored endeavors aid in the preservation of customs and symbols.

The unique musical nationalism of Latin America and Venezuela that I discussed in the introductory chapter is evident through the government-mandated prevalence of traditional music in the country (4-5). In a 2007 interview, "Venezuela: The Rise of Afro-Venezuelan Music to the Present Day Hugo Chávez Era," T.M. Scruggs discusses, amongst other things, the *Ley de*

Responsabilidad Social en Radio y Televisión (Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television) of 2004. This law, which decreed that radio stations must play a certain amount of music that is affiliated with Venezuela, coincided with an explosion of community radio stations. Scruggs states:

> The law tried to even the musical playing field a bit by requiring that half of what stations play have at least some connection with Venezuela, be it artists, composer, style of music, or even just references in the lyrics . . . These [community] stations get some money from federal, state, and local sources as well as from private advertising, and they are free to play anything they want. And one of the things that they play is music from all over Venezuela, just jumbled together in an amazing eclectic way. (Scruggs 2007)

When I asked Venezuelan informants about the importance and prevalence of Venezuelan folk music and compositions by Venezuelan composers to society and culture, they responded that they were integral. Maria Fernanda Castillo, a full-time flute professor with *El Sistema* who teaches in Caracas, Valencia, and Barquisimeto replied:

> Venezuelan music has taken a huge twist in the past few years. Due to a law created by President Hugo Chávez, every radio station in the country must play a certain percentage of Venezuelan music on its daily programming. The implementation of this law helped musicians be heard and many music groups started to arise that focused on the performance of Venezuelan music. Nowadays, there is a group of groups specializing in and promoting Venezuelan music called the *Movida Acústica Urbana*. Venezuelan music is a very important part of the everyday life of Venezuelans. (Fernanda Castillo 2012)

Additionally, Alcides Rodriguez, a product of *El Sistema* and the bass clarinetist of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, stated:

> Most Venezuelans love and embrace folk music. Most young kids start learning music by playing traditional instruments like the *cuatro*.

> Composers that use folk music as a source for their compositions usually have success in getting their music performed as well. (Rodriguez 2012)

The efforts to promote traditional Venezuelan music and works by Venezuelan composers are a reflection of musical nationalism that has had a direct impact on the community-at-large and the *El Sistema* curriculum as well, which incorporates Venezuelan music. People expect to hear Venezuelan music on their radios, and they also hear the children learning to play these styles of music. Both Rodriguez and Fernanda Castillo confirmed *El Sistema's* inclusion of folk music; Rodriguez stated:

> The various ensembles that are part of the system around the country often perform the music of Venezuelan composers, and a large percentage of students are very connected with folk music and instruments as well. (Rodriguez 2012)

Such processes reaffirm and strengthen Venezuelan musical traditions and promote musical nationalism.

Thomas Turino discusses musical nationalism in relation to Latin America in his 2003 article, "Nationalism and Latin American Music: Selected Case Studies and Theoretical Considerations." He assigns two types: (1) state-generated and elite-associated forms and (2) "reformist-popular" or "folkloric" styles and asserts that "both [are] historically layered in relation to elite and inclusive or populist nationalist periods in Latin America" (Turino 2007:170). The case studies for the paper are centered on movements that took place in Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, and Mexico. The musical nationalism promoted by *El Sistema* falls under the first category (state-generated and elite-associated), but the musical nationalism of

the community radio stations, which affects *El Sistema's* curriculum, falls under the second category ("folkloric" styles). Additionally, FESNOJIV's semi-recent inclusion of non-orchestral or Western European based ensembles (i.e. Afro-Caribbean bands and Venezuelan popular/folkloric ensembles) contributes to the second classification (Montilla 2013). I believe this is a unique feature of FESNOJIV that greatly contributes to its success and the promotion of an inclusive national identity.

When I posed the same questions regarding the prevalence of Venezuelan folk music within both the culture and *El Sistema* curriculum to Jorge Montilla, a former participant and teacher within the system, he took a different approach and cited the impact that *El Sistema* has had on the culture of traditional music. He states:

> Folk music is prevalent in Venezuela like it is in Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, or any other country. Venezuela is a highly musical country and most people play at least a little bit of our folkloric instruments. *El Sistema* has given Venezuelan technical tools to be better at folkloric music, but this music is so ingrained in our roots that it would exist with or without *El Sistema*; it would be equally important as a manifestation of our culture by our people. The diffusion of the Venezuelan folkloric music now is bigger since more Venezuelan performers have the opportunity to play abroad and to show our folkloric music to new audiences. (Montilla 2013)

This lengthy statement demonstrates the circularity of music within Venezuela and also speaks directly about the impact that FESNOJIV has had on folk music and its propagation. When I originally developed these two questions, I assumed that the pervasiveness of folk music in the culture was the most significant evidence that *El Sistema* aligned itself with some level of musical nationalism;

however, after receiving Montilla's responses, I now believe that the best evidence of FESNOJIV's relationship to national music is the creation and re-creation of traditional music by trained musicians. These musicians often learn the melodies by rote and then notate them for others. This is not something that we typically see in the United States; most classically trained musicians are terrified to play folk music (or jazz) because it involves releasing themselves from carefully notated scores.[4]

Many Venezuelan musicians straddle the dividing line between traditional music and classical music. Alcides Rodriguez (clarinet) and Marco Granados (flute) are both excellent examples of this positioning. Rodriguez, as noted earlier, is the bass clarinetist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (and a product of *El Sistema*); he also regularly performs *joropo* music on clarinet and is a fine Venezuelan maracas player. In 2010, he released an album titled *The Venezuelan Clarinet*, featuring traditional music with a traditional ensemble: *cuatro*, maracas, and bass. In his acknowledgement section of his liner notes, he discusses the importance of Venezuelan songs to him:

> The day of my first lesson I started warming up with Venezuelan songs (something I still do regularly). Mr. [Russell] Dagon came into the room and asked what kind of music I was playing. Immediately after, I replied, "It is music from Venezuela," he simply stated, "at some point you need

[4] For more information regarding music students, musical insecurities, and the challenges of teaching world music, I recommend *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles* edited by Ted Solís. In his authored chapter, he references his "dismay at the widespread total dependence of classically trained American musicians upon notation" (Solís 2004:239).

> to record that stuff." Since then, those words have been present with me every time I play Venezuelan music. (Rodriguez 2010)

Marco Granados, a virtuoso flutist from Venezuela currently teaching at the Longy School of Music in Boston, frequently features both classical and traditional music from Venezuela in his numerous concert and recital appearances. A simple YouTube search of his name results in many videos and audio recordings of traditional works with a few classical pieces as well. It is also interesting to note that both Jorge Montilla and Marco Granados are currently teaching at Longy, and in fall of 2012, they performed an entire recital of Venezuelan music together with both classical and traditional works.

In addition to championing folk music, *El Sistema* promotes the maintenance of national symbols in other ways. For example, when touring, the children are often dressed in the colors of the Venezuelan flag or otherwise reflect their nationality through dress. Additionally, FESNOJIV programs works that feature traditional *joropo* ensembles with a full orchestra.[5] In this way, the children and audiences are exposed to folk instruments in conjunction with traditional melodies and rhythms. In the next section, I discuss the ways in which this fusion of styles assists in the creation of cultural traditions.

[5] Specifically, "Fuga con Pajarillo" by Aldemaro Romero.

Creating the Culture

In addition to maintaining certain cultural elements, *El Sistema* also actively creates new traditions within Venezuela with which people identify. The best example of this culture-generation is the inclusion of Western European art music and the use of the orchestra as a model for community. During his 2009 keynote address, "The Choral Movement in Venezuela in the 20th Century," at the Second Symposium of Latin American Music at the University of Arizona, Alejandro Enrique Planchart detailed the rich history of choral music in the country from colonial times to present, discussed the nationalistic trends of classical music, and provided evidence that orchestras struggled to survive during most of the twentieth century in Venezuela. Interestingly, he also briefly spoke about *El Sistema*, stating:

> The rise of the Venezuelan orchestral program known today as *El Sistema* began with José Antonio Abréu . . . Wisely Abréu conceived of the program not just as an educational program but as one of social rehabilitation and empowerment . . . One should note that Abréu and his colleagues were not planting such seed in barren or wild terrain. At that point more than four decades of a choral movement without a name or a central organization but with a relatively coherent vision had prepared its path in a number of different ways. First of all, it had succeeded in identifying music making per se with the concept of *venezolanidad*, to the point that, to this day, one of the commonplaces of popular thinking is that Venezuela is a country with an innate musicality, and being a musically gifted is part of being a Venezuelan. This might be a myth in purely scientific terms, but it is both a powerful and useful myth . . . In addition the nature of the Venezuelan choral repertory between 1930 and 1980 was such that it served to blur the boundaries between folk, popular, and concert music, so that very often the musicians and the audience are quite catholic in their taste. (Planchart 2009)

Planchart asserts that *El Sistema* was able to succeed, in part, because it had the foundation of the choral movement to rest upon, which acclimated society to various styles of music. It is also equally important to note, however, that the program achieved success despite the fact that Venezuela did not have a rich history of instrumental ensembles to serve as models or guides for the youth. Dr. Abréu created *El Sistema* and consequently, initiated a tradition of orchestral ensembles in Venezuela. While FESNOJIV has branched out to include other ensembles, the orchestra is its primary musical vehicle. Montilla explains that while "the word 'inclusive' seems to have penetrated all aspects of Venezuelan life, the truth is that *El Sistema* is a system of 'orchestras' and the place where the values of the community are best imparted" (Montilla 2013). Orchestras are the expected custom. In addition, Abréu advocated the inclusion of Venezuelan composers' compositions and promoted musical nationalism through the curriculum and concert programming. As noted in the previous chapter, FESNOJIV also educates even the youngest players with many of the pieces in the Western art music canon. Jorge Montilla discussed the significance of the inclusion of Western classical music via an email interview. He wrote:

> *El Sistema*, at the beginning, used traditional European classical music for several reasons: to obtain validation, to acquire a background in this music that is the most important tradition in our hemisphere, and to not to be confused with another low quality ensemble of popular music, which in Venezuela lacks seriousness and is associated with gigging. Once *El Sistema* achieved national and international recognition, it then had the moral obligation to open itself up to other kinds of music and ensembles. (Montilla 2013)

With the strong ties and associations to Western European art music traditions, the program has encouraged an entire generation of Venezuelan musicians that self-identify with both traditional music and Western European art music. As Gustavo Dudamel proclaimed, "We have lived our whole lives in these pieces" (FESNOJIV 2009). Gisela Flanigan, a Venezuelan pianist and music educator who resides in the States, concurred: "We grow up with Beethoven; we know it [classical music]" (Flanigan 2012b).[6] Furthermore, as the youth begin to identify with both genres, so do the concert attendees. This level of outreach leads to the next crucial cultural creation: parental engagement.

As discussed in chapter three, a portion of *El Sistema's* methodology centers on parental involvement, which states:

> Work with parents: *El Sistema* takes considerable time working with the parents of students. For a child of 2 or 3, teachers make home visits to ensure that the family understands the level of commitment required of them. As the students begin to learn their instruments, teachers instruct parents on how best to support their child's practice schedule at home, giving feedback, and encouragement. If a student gets into a youth or city orchestra, they will receive a stipend; this not only honors his/her accomplishments but places real value on the music making for the family, so they don't need to pull the child out of *El Sistema* to work. (FESNOJIV 2009)

[6] Flanigan hopes to open a branch of *El Sistema* in Grand Junction, CO and has family in Venezuela that is associated with the organization. Her brother, Leonardo Mendez, is the Executive Director of the Venezuelan Brass Ensemble and Vice President of *El Sistema's* performing arts complex in Caracas. She presented a paper titled "Maestro Abréu and El Sistema: An Intimate Look at the Journey of a Pioneering Social Entrepreneur" at the College Music Society National Conference in San Diego, CA in November 2012. I conducted an in-person unstructured interview with her during the weekend proceedings.

This degree of family engagement is essential in order for the youth identities to be adapted and transformed into a national identity. Not only do the children have a positive experience with *El Sistema*, but the parents do as well. Hollinger was able to interview numerous parents, primarily mothers, while conducting her research in Venezuela. A mother, Hollinger references as a "woman sporting a red cap," explained the impact the program has had on the children and community to her. She said:

> Music has made a change in the very best way. Not only are the children better with their friends and family, but they are doing something they enjoy, and that their friends and family enjoy as well. Everyone gets involved. They come to the concerts. Everyone wants to be around the students who are playing music. (Hollinger 2006:113)

Hollinger also describes a father who was actively involved with the program: "He gestures and smiles as he extols the virtues of The System while he drives me to the school. Several other fathers do odd jobs at the orchestra building [as well] while I am there" (Hollinger 2006:117). Not only are the parents participants by way of concert attendance, they also take pride in helping maintain the structural and organizational components of their *núcleo.* Additionally, by establishing a monetary value for a family's time and dedication, FESNOJIV strengthens their visibility and credibility within the community. Ultimately, this leads to the community-at-large associating with the program, regardless of direct affiliation. Hollinger discusses this, and other emergent themes, in the reflection chapter of her dissertation. She states:

> Families and communities become involved and energized because they view the program as successful. Participants value their involvement in something they perceive as worthwhile and communicate this to friends and neighbors, which spurs further growth and excitement . . . FESNOJIV participants have found that the success and excitement of the children has a contagious quality, drawing more people to the program and causing continued growth. (Hollinger 2009:146-147)

I contend that the social and national identities of the children are "contagious" as well, and that by creating and maintaining Venezuelan traditions, *El Sistema* has shifted national perceptions inside and outside of the country. This shift has established a positive self-image for the nation of Venezuela that directly correlates to a national identity.

In the next section of this chapter, I offer a brief survey of selected published materials about *El Sistema* that have contributed to this image and discuss the shift of perceptions.

Marketing the Identity: Documentaries, Articles, and Books

Before Gustavo Dudamel was appointed the artistic director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2007, *El Sistema's* notoriety was not nearly as extensive as it is today.[7] Many organizations, such as the Berlin Philharmonic and New England Conservatory (Boston, MA), added to the 'buzz' around *El Sistema* by publishing materials that feature testimonials of the program's positive aspects. The 2006 documentary, *Tocar y Luchar: To Play and to Fight*, directed by Alberto

[7] The Los Angeles Philharmonic announced Dudamel's appointment in 2007. His five-year contract began in 2009.

Arvelo, features stories of selected children who have benefited from FESNOJIV; it includes video footage of world-class musicians such as Placido Domingo, Claudio Abbado, and Simon Rattle visiting rehearsals and performances. The film shows some of them reduced to tears, extolling the amazing musicianship of the young orchestras. Simon Rattle, for example, said that "If anyone asked me where is there something really important going on now for the future of classical music, I would simply have to say here in Venezuela," and "These days, I say I have seen the future of music in Venezuela. I wish Mahler were here to see this as well. And maybe he will be" (Arvelo 2006). Such statements showcase the strength of the orchestral tradition that *El Sistema* and Abréu created. Furthermore, they demonstrate that even the best musicians in the world are identifying Venezuela with orchestral music. Placido Domingo stated, "The truth is, I have never felt so moved, not only because of the emotion of the moment, but I must say, because of the quality" (Arvelo 2006).

In his narration, Abréu pinpoints many of the more unique aspects of the system and explains its philosophy in detail. Both of these statements by Abréu emphasize the themes of identity formation and nationalism:

> It is that young person . . . penetrated by music, challenged by the musical impulse and the tasks of the orchestra, that begins a psychological transformation. We must let ourselves be invaded by that art that brings us together through music . . . and begin to recognize ourselves in our essence, in our identity through art which is the only world where we can find the true revelation of our being. The authentic being is revealed through art as a bearer of beauty, which is being, is goodness, is truth. (Arvelo 2006)

Additionally, he says:

> This is not an artistic development plan with the goal of offering a few concerts. The orchestra not only transforms the public that hears it. Before transforming the public that is listening, it has already transformed itself. Originally, art was by the minority for the minority, then it became art by the minority of the majority, and we are beginning a new era where art is an enterprise by the majority for the majority. (Arvelo 2006)

The first of these statements alludes to the "psychological transformation" or the identity formation of the children involved in the program, who ultimately define themselves through music. The second statement demonstrates how the community and public begin to identify with FESNOJIV and the youth as well. By creating a program that represents art as "an enterprise by the majority for the majority," Abréu and *El Sistema* have also constructed a unique facet of Venezuelan identity.

Other recent documentaries and television segments that have contributed to the marketing of a Venezuelan national identity include: *El Sistema: Music to Change Life*, directed by Paul Smaczny and Maria Stodtmeier (2009); *Gustavo Dudamel: The Promise of Music* (2008), directed by Enrique Sanchez Lansch; and a CBS *60 Minutes* Interview conducted by Bob Simon and produced by Harry Radliffe titled "Gustavo the Great" (2008). All of these DVDs feature the Venezuelan children playing concerts dressed either in a blazer sporting colors of the Venezuelan flag or a thick lanyard in those colors. Both of these are direct markers and symbols demonstrating the orchestra's national association and identity. The 2008 CD cover of *Fiesta!*: *Gustavo Dudamel and the*

Simón Bolivar Youth Orchestra pictures the orchestra and Dudamel in that same jacket; the album contains works by Latin American composers and includes "Fuga con Pajarillo" by Aldemaro Romero, a well-known Venezuelan composer. This piece features two ensembles, the orchestra and a traditional *joropo* ensemble, that alternate sections. In the album's linear notes, Shirley Apthrop states that "for Gustavo Dudamel the distance between Beethoven and the Venezuelan composer [Theresa] Carreño [1857-1917] is only as great as a dance step" (Anthrop 2008:4). She also includes a quote from an observer who stated that Dudamel's "joyful identification with the piece elicited some of the orchestra's best playing of the weekend" (Anthrop 2008:4). Clearly, Dudamel feels equally comfortable with works from the Western classical music canon and Venezuelan folk music. Additionally, during his *60 Minutes* interview, when questioned about his role as an ambassador for *El Sistema*, Dudamel agrees but says, "It is not Gustavo Dudamel; it is the system" (Radliffe 2008), apparently meaning that *El Sistema* represents who he is even better than his own name does. In the *El Sistema: Music to Change Life* documentary, he states, "*El Sistema* has become a national emblem of Venezuela" (Smaczny and Stodtmeier 2009). Gustavo Dudamel makes it clear in these media that he represents both Venezuela and *El Sistema*, and that his identity is used as a marketing tool for the program and nation.[8]

[8] It is also plausible to note that the Los Angeles Philharmonic benefits from this marketed image and association.

Studies featuring *El Sistema* are underway. Recently Tricia Tunstall, a music educator, wrote and published *Changing Lives: Gustavo Dudamel, El Sistema, and the Transformative Power of Music* (2012), which details the history of Dudamel and *El Sistema*, discusses models of the program in the United States, and gives evidence of the power of music to elicit social change. Newspaper articles are frequently published that cite the positive musical and social aspects of *El Sistema*. While they are too numerous to list here, two examples are Daniel Wakin's article "Fighting Poverty, Armed with Violins" that appeared in the *New York Times* on February 16, 2012 and Indira Lakshmanan's 2005 article, "For Venezuela's Poor, Classical Music Opens Doors," from the *Boston Globe*. Because *El Sistema* is now a "hot topic" within music education and ethnomusicology circles and it represents a positive government-funded organization (GFO), many scholars and researchers are interested in investigating its claims. In his article, Wakin alludes to *El Sistema's* popularity with the media and researchers alike, saying:

> The program has become the envy of the music world, inspiring similar programs in many countries and attracting influential proponents. It has prompted a number of books and documentaries, countless news reports and a steady flow of musicians and educators tramping through showcase *núcleos*. (Wakin 2012)

T.M. Scruggs, an ethnomusicologist currently exploring *El Sistema's* claims, also notes that the program is "practically the only positive reporting major news outlets have offered on Venezuela in this century" (Scruggs 2013). These

materials and publications have led to a shift in the perception of Venezuela by foreigners.

While I do not want to discuss the political situation in Venezuela, it is important to note that many people's negative associations with Venezuela revolve around the government. I, for one, can say that prior to my research about *El Sistema*, I only knew about the negative aspects of Venezuela.[9] After learning about FESNOJIV, I have a much more positive view of the country. When I asked Javier Ocampo, a saxophonist who participated in the Colombian version of *El Sistema*, if *El Sistema* changed the way non-Venezuelas view Venezuela, he replied, "I would say yes. And more than that, it has changed the view of government" (Ocampo 2012). When I asked Antonio Villanueva, a trumpeter and former member of the Mexican *El Sistema*, the same question, he was reluctant to agree; he did say that "Venezuelans are very proud of their *Sistema*," and that "Venezuela cannot be judged by this alone" (Villanueva 2012). While this does not denote a change in his individual perception, it alludes to that fact that he feels *El Sistema* in Venezuela gives the country a more positive image amongst others than he thinks it deserves. When I asked Venezuelan nationals Alcides Rodriguez and Maria Fernanda Castillo if they thought that the perception was changing, they both agreed. Rodriguez attributed this shift to the touring schedule of the Simón Bolivar Youth Orchestra:

[9] I attribute this to the U.S. media's negative portrayals of the Hugo Chávez's government and politics.

"The orchestra's tours in the last few years around the United States and Europe have had an amazing impact and have totally changed the way the world sees Venezuela" (Rodriguez 2012). In this section of the chapter, I show that the ways in which the people associated with the program and the general media portray and market *El Sistema* have led to a more positive national image for the country, an image that is associated with youth, classical music, and favorable social change.

In Their Own Words: Statements of Pride and National Associations

It is interesting to note that across my research and interviews with informants about *El Sistema* the theme of pride has consistently recurred, but when I asked specifically about or research nationalism and FESNOJIV, I receive blank stares and empty responses. I learned early on that while informants were reluctant to definitively state that *El Sistema* contributed to the establishment of a national identity in Venezuela, they were eager to tell me about and explain the program's positive aspects. Additionally, they were quick to assert ownership *El Sistema*.

In 2010, the University of Arizona hosted a Week of Venezuelan Harp and Joropo Music in Tucson, Arizona. One of the Venezuelan harpists, Dr. Fernando Guerrero, was affiliated with *El Sistema*, and for this reason, part of the proceedings included a video conversation titled "Venezuelan Children and Youth Orchestra System." Only a handful of participants attended this meeting, so after

a short viewing of the documentary *Tocar y Luchar: To Play and to Fight*, Dr. Guerrero fielded questions from the audience, primarily about funding and government involvement. At one point, I asked a loaded question about nationalism, identity, and *El Sistema*. He looked me, shook his head "no" in response to my question, and seemed not to think twice about it.[10] In the next instant, however, a Venezuelan gentleman who was traveling with the group of musicians for the conference, chimed in with "We're proud of *El Sistema*. Look, all we have in our country is baseball, Miss Universe, gas, and this program, *El Sistema*. It's a wonderful thing and an extension of us." Everyone laughed, and the questions proceeded. While Dr. Guerrero choose not to respond to my question, I believe that the anonymous gentleman's response articulated a sense of national pride and identity.

Other informants have been equally skeptical about my claim that *El Sistema* has established a national identity in Venezuela. Gisela Flanigan preferred that I used the phrase "celebrating national identity" rather than establishing, but she also spoke extensively about pride and patriotism in Venezuela in association with FESNOJIV. At one point, she stated, "the only thing we have is what we do" (Flanigan 2012b). This comment is similar to the one previously discussed; Venezuelans identify with *El Sistema* and are proud of its

[10] My question may have been received poorly because it was far too complex for the short session. National identity and affiliation are highly complex subjects that are not always easy to articulate, especially when taken out of context.

success, which I believe can be attributed to the program's national associations and identity.

When I asked Maria Fernanda Castillo and Alcides Rodriguez if they felt that *El Sistema* was contributing to a national identity and changing the ways that non-Venezuelans viewed the country, they had similar responses:

> Fernanda Castillo: I believe that many people that didn't even know of Venezuela now know about it, not only the country, but of the orchestras and of Gustavo Dudamel. As I have mentioned, Venezuelans feel extremely proud of *El Sistema*, and even though many things in the country are not ideal, *El Sistema* is one of the things that gives us hope. (Fernanda Castillo 2012).

> Rodriguez: *El Sistema* has had an amazing impact on projecting a positive image of Venezuela . . . Stories such as the success of the conductor Gustavo Dudamel (named music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the age of 26) and double bassist Edicson Ruiz (appointed member of the Berlin Philharmonic at the age of 18) are remarkable proof of what is possible through the system in Venezuela. (Rodriguez 2012)

Even the mass media, when marketing *El Sistema*, highlights the unique Venezuelan identity that the program produces. Let us review what Eduardo Marturet, a Venezuelan conductor and composer stated during the *60 Minutes* special on Dudamel:

> [El Sistema] is an expression of Venezuelan beauty in a pure way, and most importantly, in a noble way without distinctions, with an identity - a Venezuelan identity that gives the movement and the sound of the orchestra a fingerprint impossible to erase. (Radcliffe 2008)

Additionally, let me reiterate Abréu's words from in *Tocar y Luchar: To Play and to Fight*:

> [We] begin to recognize ourselves in our essence, in our identity through art, which is the only world where we can find the true revelation of our being; the authentic being is revealed through art as a bearer of beauty, which *is* being, *is* goodness, *is* truth. (Arvelo 2006)

Both Martuet's and Abréu's statements display the unique identity that *El Sistema* has created, nurtured, and established in Venezuela through its curriculum and methodologies.

Concluding Remarks

In summary, *El Sistema* maintains cultural traditions through its inclusion of traditional Venezuelan folk music and by utilizing the Venezuelan flag and its colors as a national marker; the program creates new cultural traditions through the model of the orchestra, prevalent use of Western European art music, and parental/community involvement; and Venezuelan nationals and global supporters market *El Sistema* with a uniquely Venezuelan identity that promotes a positive image of the country. Perhaps most importantly, the program instills pride in what it means to be Venezuelan, and consequently establishes and reinforces a national identity for the society as a whole.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Significance of El Sistema

When I questioned informants about what they felt was the most significant aspect of *El Sistema* many of them spoke about the power of the program to elicit social change and provide high-quality music education. Gisela Flanigan addressed the system's ability to serve as an excellent model of social change for others to follow.[1] Alcides Rodriguez, Maria Fernanada Castillo, and Jorge Montilla highlighted the improvements FESNOJIV has made within Venezuelan society:

> Jorge Montilla: Social development followed by the excellence in music. (Montilla 2013)
>
> Maria Fernanada Castillo: The fact that kids from low-income families, living in extremely dangerous neighborhoods, kids that are exposed to violence and drugs in their daily lives, are now healthy kids with dreams. These kids dedicate their lives to music, to learning the instrument, and to being part of their new family of children and teachers in *El Sistema*. (Castillo 2012)
>
> Alcides Rodriguez: It encourages students to become better individuals, regardless of whether or not they pursue music as a career. Ultimately, the system contributes greatly to the improvement of the society in Venezuela. (Rodriguez 2012)

Both Javier Ocampo and Antonio Villanueva spoke about the importance that music has had on elevating the impoverished class:

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[1] The New England Conservatory now offers a certificate in *El Sistema*. Only open to ten participants each year, the *El Sistema* Fellows learn about the program, travel to Venezuela to observe it in action, and are then charged with creating their own non-profit music education model. While still in its early stages, the number of applicants has drastically increased over the years; this year alone, seventy-five people applied.

> Antonio Villanueva: *El Sistema* has helped a lot of poor children get close to music. Now, there is a new generation of musicians that has benefited both [Mexican and Venezuelan] societies. (Villanueva 2012)
>
> Javier Ocampo: The opportunity that poor people and kids without money have to experience the power of music, culture, and education. (Ocampo 2012)

Additionally, others, especially within the media, have addressed the impact that *El Sistema* has had on the culture of classical music. In an article on the *Venezuelan Analysis* website, "In Defense of El Sistema: The Case For Radical Public Arts," Alexander Billet highlights the significance of educating the youth about classical music in relation to the recent struggles of American symphony orchestras to exist. He makes a good point when he says, "If kids are imbued with no sense of classical music's importance, if no attempt is made to place the great composers in some kind of context, can we really be surprised that young people are shrugging their shoulders [at classical music]?" (Billet 2012). Simon Rattle's quote in chapter four declared his belief that FESNOJIV is keeping classical music alive and well.[2] Lastly, *El Sistema* demonstrates the need and desire for arts education in society, and the amazing results that music education can produce. Currently, many U.S. schools are facing increased budget cuts, and arts programs are disappearing. Showcasing the achievements of programs like *El Sistema* makes a case for keeping music education a vital part of the K-12 curriculum.

[2] "If anyone asked me where is there something really important going on now for the future of classical music, I would simply have to say here in Venezuela" (Arvelo 2012).

Summary of Information

Utilizing music education as a means for social change has greater implications than producing musicians. Youth social programs that engage children in recreational music making elevate the self-esteem and self-confidence of their participants. In his article, "Why the Arts Matter: Six Good Reasons for Advocating the Importance of Arts in School," Jerome Kagan maintains that arts education impacts the whole community. He states that "The problems facing the contemporary world demand some subversion of self interest in order to lift the interests of the larger community into a position of ascendance," and also that "the arts and music provide an opportunity to persuade children that investing effort to create an object of beauty is an ideal worthy of celebration" (Kagan 2009:4). As I have affirmed throughout this document, in the case of FESNOJIV (*Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela*), the employment of music education through an orchestral model has proven to be an effective tool for assisting Venezuelan youth in identity formation during their crucial developmental years. Because identity formation is the result of environment and experiences, the identities developed within FESNOJIV are distinctly Venezuelan. These youth identities are ultimately adopted by the society and represent pride and hope for the future for Venezuelans. *El Sistema* has established a unique national identity through its maintenance of Venezuelan traditions and creation of new cultural practices, and this national identity is marketed both by Venezuelans involved with the program

and international supporters to the world-at-large. This national identity has shifted the perception of Venezuela and created a more positive image for the country. Ultimately, this positive association with music education as an agent for change demonstrates to the world the capabilities and importance of arts education in the lives of youth.

Questions for Additional Research

This research has uncovered many potentially fruitful directions of inquiry. Most of the data for this thesis came from marketed and published materials that were produced in connection or association with *El Sistema.* The field would benefit from the production of objective materials by people not closely aligned with the program. Scholars like T.M. Scruggs are currently posing questions such as "what exactly are the claims made for the program, and to what extent have these been historically substantiated in Venezuela?" (Scruggs 2013). In short, it appears that he is interested in investigating the viability of the materials that the program produces and interrogating its claims. Additionally, it would be useful for a scholar to trace the history of *El Sistema* in a way that highlights the program's shift from advocacy for music education to social reform.

Personally, I am interested in the success rates of the models of *El Sistema*, particularly those in the United States. I feel strongly that part of the reason FESNOJIV flourished in Venezuela can be attributed to the unique cultural identity that was already in place. I believe, on the other hand, that a national *El*

Sistema-like program would not be as effective in the United States because our cultural landscape is too diverse. For this reason, regional programs are favorable; this is essentially how *El Sistema USA* operates. I also believe that more research should take place regarding music education in youth and identity development. Research exists on youth identities and popular music, but we lack analogous research on ways music education directly contributes to identity formation. I hope in the future to remedy this lacuna.

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APPENDIX

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPT APPROVAL

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Theodore Solis MUSIC BUIL
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	09/14/2012
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	09/14/2012
IRB Protocol #:	1208008185
Study Title:	Social Reform Through Music Education and the Establishment of a National Identity in Venezuela

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) (2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Katherine Palmer is a doctoral candidate at the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts School of Music at Arizona State University in clarinet performance. Additionally, she is pursuing a Master of Arts in ethnomusicology. An active performing musician in the Phoenix area, Katherine has also performed with many ensembles in South Florida. She holds degrees from the University of Miami (B.M.) and Arizona State University (M.M.). Katherine is an adjunct faculty member at Maricopa Community Colleges where she teaches Rock Music and Culture, American Jazz and Popular Music, and Music and Culture courses. Katherine also teaches early childhood music and movement classes, works with the Musical Instrument Museum's education department, and maintains a private woodwind studio. Her research interests include contemporary Latin American compositions, traditional Latin American musics and instruments, music education, and national identity studies.