

## Youth in Peace and Conflict

Currently, nearly half the total world population is under 24 years old, and about 20 percent of these fall in the adolescent age bracket of 10–19 years. The generation of adolescents alive today is the largest in recorded history, and their proportion of the world population is growing quickly. Thus, numbers alone would lead one to conclude that young people merit attention in almost any field of social inquiry, including studies of peace and conflict.

Despite constituting a substantial proportion of the population, youth often see themselves as minority outsiders.<sup>1</sup> This is not surprising since, compared to older people, youth are less likely to be able to independently access essential services or resources and more likely to be marginalized from political institutions and processes. Most countries restrict access to universal suffrage to those over 18 years of age. Hence, young people are typically characterized as lacking a political voice.

The importance of this situation should not be lost in the peacebuilding field. In post-conflict societies young people are often marginalized from formal political processes even if they helped create these processes. This does not mean young people sit idly by, or that politics exists outside their world. When young people are excluded from mainstream political processes, they often continue to take part in political activities, although these may be violent and confrontational rather than framed by cooperation and dialogue. However, this is not

the only way the involvement of young people living in societies experiencing or recovering from conflict can or should be conceptualized.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child formally recognizes that young people's involvement in peacebuilding is grounded in their right to active participation.<sup>2</sup> It suggests that across the globe young people are challenging their elders to address the root causes of conflict and engage in the peaceful resolution of differences in pursuing peace. While this indicates the need for better inclusion of young people in formal peace processes, it also suggests that young people may already be engaged in peacebuilding work. If we are to pursue peace, we might do well to follow Lederach's advice that we "[n]ever talk only to politicians and military leaders. Talk to taxi drivers. Talk to construction workers and housewives. Talk to elders, shamans, and for goodness' sake, talk to children."<sup>3</sup> Despite calls like this, what young people think about peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction has been given very little attention in the peacebuilding literature.

Some scholars, however, have recognized that youth participation in peacebuilding is important.<sup>4</sup> For example, McEvoy-Levy argues that the omission of youth from existing peacebuilding literature is problematic.<sup>5</sup> Noting that the limited scholarly research dealing with youth in peace and conflict has tended to focus more on the role of youth in instigating violence than on their peacebuilding activities, she says documenting the role of youth in advocating for human rights and against militarism is needed. Moreover, McEvoy-Levy says this will require reinterpreting understandings of peace activism, by looking not merely for youth peace campaigners, but more broadly to young people who are active in capacity building, social development, and political education for youth. Others agree that this important work needs further attention and argue that excluding youth and ignoring their concerns can impede reconciliation, since it may provoke recurring violent conflict, obscure knowledge regarding war and peace, and sustain exclusionary norms.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, scholarship suggests that youth may be the driving force in creating societies that are more inclusive and open. Hein argues that opportunities

exist for youth to potentially affect how diverse groups within a population relate to one another.<sup>7</sup> Still, how such shifts might occur remains undertheorized. Further research about how youth are dealing with and interacting across diversity is crucial, particularly given the continued presence of interethnic conflict even in societies generally considered “peaceful.”

Some scholars have referred to young people’s work in building cultures of peace, but most of this is brief and anecdotal; it is used to support points about peacebuilding more broadly, rather than offering an in-depth critical engagement of work by and/or for youth. Other scholars have focused on youth peacebuilding but do not provide in-depth considerations that include youth perspectives. Several scholars in the field have suggested that more empirical studies including engagement with youth perspectives in peacebuilding are needed, but much of this crucial work remains to be done.<sup>8</sup>

Some steps have been made in this direction, most notably by Schwartz’s work on young people in post-conflict reconstruction in Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kosovo. Based on these studies, she suggests that the impact of young people in post-conflict scenarios can be either negative or positive, and that this is dependent on the success of programmatic and policy interventions in addressing central issues. Overall, she proposes that success in appropriately integrating youth in the pursuit of peace requires attending to young people’s needs for protection, education, reintegration, and empowerment, while accounting for cultural and environmental factors in implementing policies and programs.<sup>9</sup> My work draws on her insights while analyzing music as a tool for use in related programs. Moreover, while she acknowledges that gender was a factor in the cases she presents, Schwartz also notes she has not discussed this factor at any length. Thus, the present work seeks to contribute to further understanding the role of gender in young people’s experiences around peace and security.

Ardizzone’s analysis of several New York City–based peace education programs for young people also makes an important contribution. She focuses on youth who sought out and joined overtly global, political, and action-oriented organizations,

rather than those centered on “recreational” or social activities and examines why youth choose to become involved in such work.<sup>10</sup> Ardizzone argues that incorporating youth voices may assist in transforming societies from cultures of violence to cultures of peace.<sup>11</sup> However, while she engages with youth peacebuilding, she does not discuss issues of gender or any particular methods that might be utilized to engage young people who are not already active. My research aims to bring something different to the field by engaging with young people who came to peacebuilding through “recreational” music-based activities. Moreover, this study lends diversity to the existing literature by broadening perspectives to include voices of young people from other cultures.

### Dominant Representations of Youth and Politics

As research considering how young people are understood in peace and conflict is quite limited, it is worth looking more broadly at how young people are constructed in public discourse. Griffin suggests that in modern Western societies, the dominant image of young people is of being prone to trouble and facing disorders based on consumption and transition.<sup>12</sup> Much of the literature noting this trend comes from the United States, where young people are regularly publicly stereotyped and treated as scapegoats by psychologists, politicians, and the media.<sup>13</sup> Youth violence is merely one aspect of the “youth problem” created by the media, but it has captured a great deal of public attention in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Young people are often demonized in the media and blamed for a wide range of social problems. Media analyses in the United States have found that teens, particularly teens of color, are usually depicted negatively.<sup>15</sup> This is not a new trend, though it is one that can have important policy effects, among other negative outcomes.<sup>16</sup> Given these representations, youth have been assigned a double, contrasting identity as powerful consumers on the one hand and an oppressed, disenfranchised minority on the other.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Clay says, youth today are a generation who see themselves as a low priority in society, with

the worst allocation of public goods from health care to education. It is not surprising then that many youth feel society views them as useless when it comes to performing as citizens, workers, students, and occasionally even as consumers.

While these examples are from the United States, similar representations of young people appear elsewhere, including in Northern Ireland and Australia, where I completed the research for this book. In Northern Ireland, a recent report by the National Youth Agency found that U.K. media depictions of young people tend to be negative. Three of the four most frequent topics when focusing on youth are crime, gangs, and social exclusion.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, there are also negative portrayals of youth in the Australian media, including some media attention to youth violence and depictions that focus on youth being lazy, apathetic, or inactive.<sup>19</sup> Such dominant images can marginalize recognition of the political work youth are doing, such as taking part in peacebuilding initiatives.

Those concerned about youth participation in politics raise the issue of disconnection from formal politics, citing a prevalent worry that youth are not taking part in formal social critique and are thereby losing out on a chance at having a voice in the public sphere.<sup>20</sup> In fact, youth are now scrutinized more than any previous generation for an apparent failure to articulate recognizable political narratives.<sup>21</sup> Young people are not politically inactive, although they are active in ways that differ from the formal political involvement that many adults and political leaders expect or prefer for them. Indeed, there is a growing trend in the United States of youth programs using popular culture to creatively participate in political life.<sup>22</sup> Stewart, for example, looks at music programs and suggests that many offer youth the chance to learn democratic practices, gain leadership skills, and develop political capital.

Harris confirms this trend for youth in Australia and the United Kingdom, proposing that new, less visible kinds of political movement and activism are occurring in locations that sit on the border of the public/private divide, resisting easy categorization.<sup>23</sup> For example, many youth *are* engaging in political action, in forums such as alternative music spheres, underground publications, and other subcultural activities. Harris

views this development as an explicit reaction against being prodded to visible participation in public discourse while the traditional public sphere is becoming less accessible. In other words, the repeated expectation that young people *ought* to engage in more traditional political activities may very well be part of the reason many choose not to. However, this engagement tends to be overlooked by most adults who only see more traditional forms of political participation.

### How Youth Are (Mis)Understood (or Ignored) in Peace Studies

In the peacebuilding literature young people tend to be viewed in one of two ways, as victims or perpetrators of violence. On one hand, the existing literature tends to categorize youth as innocent children, harmed by the effects of violent conflict while unable to do anything about it. At the same time, the literature has increasingly defined youth as potential perpetrators, likely to use violence when faced with conflict given their own direct experience as victims of violence. These dominant depictions are perpetuated despite the fact that all over the world young people living with conflict are also engaged in working for peace through actions such as conscious objection to conscription, nonviolent political activism, peace education programs, and organizing networks of young peacebuilders.

The tendency to stereotype youth as perpetrators or victims misses an important part of the story, as it obscures other ways young people may participate in conflict and in peace actions, including the role they may play as peace activists. There is thus a need for research that looks at why some young people decide to be peacebuilders as opposed to perpetrators of violence. Del Felice and Wisler argue that throughout their lives young people will often experience violence or conflict, participate in it, but also challenge its existence through peacebuilding work that proposes alternatives. They suggest that when it comes to youth peacebuilders, “[t]heir stories have yet to be told.”<sup>24</sup> Realizing this, in this study I aim to look at the circumstances under which young people get involved in peacebuilding and how they understand it, including recording both

obvious and less visible work by youth peacebuilders across different cultural and geographic contexts.

Thankfully, there is some evidence that a new international norm of youth participation is developing in peace processes. The UN and many agencies advocating for children's rights have recognized that young people affected by war should be included in peace processes, including in the development of programs and policies for their own education, rehabilitation, and reintegration, and also in community development. Moreover, some aid agencies, most NGOs, and UNICEF have all integrated youth consultation as standard. However, these activities have not yet led to widespread inclusion of youth in peace processes. For instance, while Sierra Leone has been touted as an example of successful UN work in peacebuilding, even there issues affecting youth were not given sufficient attention throughout the peace process; youth remained marginalized in the peacebuilding period.<sup>25</sup> To date, there remain few, if any, instances in which young people have taken part in formal peace processes.

While addressing this exclusion from formal participation in peacebuilding is crucial, youth also deserve to be acknowledged for the informal peacebuilding work they already are doing. Around the world young people are taking an active role in seeking political change, and this needs to be looked at in a broader context of peacebuilding in various locales. Yet informal peace education work, often done by or with inner-city youth, receives little notice from academia or the press in comparison to traditional government-run education efforts. Acknowledging the work youth are doing to build cultures of peace is important across a variety of contexts, in places experiencing ongoing intense conflict but also in societies generally seen as peaceful but which include some cultures of violence.

Inclusion of youth, their knowledge, culture, and ideas in peacebuilding is important. Lederach proposes that all people, their knowledge, and their perceptions are crucial resources for peacebuilding that ought to be trusted and validated. His research is then based on identifying and utilizing people's existing knowledge and understanding, even when they may not see it as a resource.<sup>26</sup> This viewpoint gives support for looking

not just at how youth are expected to be involved in peacebuilding work, but taking into account how they might be engaged in peacebuilding through skills and interests they already possess. The peacebuilding work youth are doing in local settings may seem limited. However, it can be very important in a global context of conflict, given that young people and their commodities traverse national borders with ease. Moreover, in doing so, they shape and are shaped by a myriad of meanings and structures.

A number of scholars have begun to explore the links between top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding and the prospects for each in various contexts. For example, Aliyev, in his research in the North Caucasus region, concluded that bottom-up approaches have more potential for successfully addressing conflict and reducing violence, as credible counterparts on the insurgent side are not apparent and available for top-down negotiations.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, he argues, such approaches, when applied with diverse participants, including youth, may be useful in addressing root causes of violence. Civil society cannot bring peace in isolation, but it can play an important and integral role in the complex aim of engaging people for peaceful change using multidimensional strategies.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, focusing solely on international actors or other top-down efforts and failing to incorporate approaches that include civil society can lead to a sense of alienation and the unwanted perpetuation of conflicts,<sup>29</sup> so it is especially crucial to support and learn more about grassroots engagement and change when considering prospects for youth involvement in peacebuilding.

In short, the informal work youth are doing in their communities is a form of political engagement and should be recognized as such. Politics is about power, and by participating in peacebuilding across difference, young people may take part in contesting powerful discourses of violence and segregation in their communities. This work might be considered peripheral when looked at through the lens of formal political involvement in peacebuilding, but continuing to ignore these efforts risks missing out on the chance to support youth who wish to contribute to peaceful change, or even worse, marginalizing



their work as somehow unimportant or far less important than “adult” direct formal engagement. While youth rarely have a seat in such formal initiatives, the so-called informal work they are doing draws on their expertise through experience in youth culture to facilitate cultural change on their own terms.

### Young People’s Potential Role in Building Peace through Cultural Work

Young people around the world have often used culture in advocating for peace, from Otpor’s use of graffiti in Serbia as a tool of nonviolent activism, to the NGO-run youth projects in many locations using music, dance, and drama in their peace-building programs. This kind of youth cultural work for peace is important to consider, as youth cultures and youth cultural production can offer a valuable means for getting concepts across in a way that does not require people to learn a whole new way of communicating.<sup>30</sup> By using existing understandings and awareness in addressing conflict, people can see the skills or ideas as simply applying what they already know in a new way rather than having to learn something entirely new and different.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, looking at youth cultural work can be complex and difficult, as speaking about youth culture necessitates engaging with issues of resistance and power.

Thus, it is important not to make sweeping claims, as youth cultures and creativity make up the locations and methods youth use for political critique and engagement, yet these sites are being continually eroded through private-sector attempts at colonization and depoliticization.<sup>32</sup> These efforts to commercialize youth activities can also constitute a barrier to young people taking part in informal political participation. Nonetheless, young people participate in and are shaped by narratives that they also have a role in creating, including songs and other aspects of music culture. Through these narratives they may aid the reproduction of conflict or support peace, so it is important to look at how it may be possible to use young people’s knowledge, their potential as peer educators, and their capacity for norm-building as tools for building peace.

Likewise, our understandings of peacebuilding need to be expanded to include alternative methods, such as cultural work, which may be more inclusive of diverse parties to conflict, including young people. For example, Schirch proposes using symbolic actions through ritual, which communicates “a forming or transforming message in a unique social space,”<sup>33</sup> where people learn through doing and may at the same time confirm or transform their identities, views on the world, and connections with others.<sup>34</sup> In her framework, “ritual” can be used to explain both formal and informal acts, including activities like dancing. She thus highlights an area in which young people can contribute, regardless of their access to more “official” channels of involvement. Schirch does not argue that more conventional forms of peacebuilding should be discarded in favor of those that feature ritual, but rather that these can be effective supplements used alongside other tools.

This kind of work is an important addition to the peacebuilding toolbox. Indeed, relying solely on processes that seek to rationalize conflicts is insufficient, since in many cultures the notion of dealing with conflict in rational, analytical ways is problematic.<sup>35</sup> Even in the West, people are both emotional and sensual creatures, so peacebuilding processes should include various ways of learning and knowing. After all, peacebuilding necessitates seeing the world in new ways. Ritual then may be utilized for communication in communities in which different values, beliefs, and worldviews play a role in conflict. This book draws on these theoretical insights in exploring the potential of using music and dance in grassroots peacebuilding work.

It also finds inspiration in work by leading peacebuilding scholar and practitioner John Paul Lederach, who supports the use of art in peacebuilding as a creative means for developing innovative responses to conflict.<sup>36</sup> He explains the need for what he calls the “moral imagination” in peacebuilding, which he says is most clearly expressed through creativity, since creativity goes past the existing and reaches for the novel and unexpected, all the while emerging from and communicating with the everyday. He likens this to the role of artists, as they often live at the edge of communities and in doing so push

the boundaries of what we consider achievable and true. This lends support for looking at art, including music, given its presence across cultures. By engaging in such creative processes, he says, great insight can arise unexpectedly.<sup>37</sup>

However, in considering prospects for using creativity in peacebuilding, critical attention is still needed to ensure that these processes are inclusive. Research thus needs to question any exclusion, including gender-based exclusion that may remain or be reified through work using art and culture. Keeping this in mind, this book employs a feminist perspective throughout, analyzing these issues using a gendered lens.

### Gender, Youth, and Peace

Most scholarly work focused on responses to violence and conflict, including the peacebuilding literature, pays little or no attention to matters of gender. However, feminist scholars, advocacy groups, and the UN have all formally recognized that gender is a key concept for consideration in peacebuilding, so creating more peaceful societies will require participation by both men and women.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, while gendered aspects of positive peace are rarely mentioned, achieving sexual equality is a necessary facet of positive peace.<sup>39</sup> Pankhurst, for example, points out the ongoing problem of women being stereotyped as peaceful while at the same time being left out of formal peace processes.<sup>40</sup> Given this, she says, women's concerns tend to go unheard and unaddressed during formal peace processes. Likewise, Porter argues that the barriers to women's participation in peacebuilding include these stereotypical attitudes as well as family and work responsibilities, lack of education and training, and the reluctance of men to share power.<sup>41</sup>

Despite these barriers, women actually participate in conflict in various ways, including as agents of peacebuilding. Such work may include actions like publicly protesting violence, campaigning for peaceful responses to conflict, organizing to address inequalities and injustices, and using creativity to advance messages of peace. Porter suggests that women's participation widens the boundaries of peacebuilding beyond conventional

methods to include all actions aimed at pursuing peace. She thus calls for acknowledging and supporting this work while also including women in formal peace processes to create significant gender equality as part of peace. De la Rey and McKay also provide important insights with their South African case study report, which found that the women leaders they met reported gender-specific understandings of conflict.<sup>42</sup> Given these understandings, a gender-aware approach requires asking whether policies affect men and women in different ways, and if so, considering ways to redress women's disadvantage.

The existing research on gender and peacebuilding clearly makes an important contribution to the field. However, it mostly does not engage with how gender might impact youth peacebuilding. This is an important omission, because building peace requires not just including men and women, but also boys and girls. Therefore, scholars concerned with youth and peace need to pay more attention to how gender informs young people's identities, experience, and participation, particularly as they relate to issues of peace and conflict. Pankhurst has noted that the experiences of girls, while often terrible and gender-specific, have been given even less attention than those of boys.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, she says that girls who have experienced sexual violence frequently receive less support than women and bear the burden of reporting the violent acts that have been perpetrated against them. These are important points. Gender-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding thus need to include an in-depth engagement of the way girls might be actively involved in peacebuilding.

The UN takes the view that pursuing greater gender equality for youth is especially important, because changes at the onset of puberty generally result in significantly different opportunities for boys and girls due to gender. Furthermore, restrictive gender norms may be particularly impactful and harmful for young women, who may face limitations on their movement, education, personal development, security, and life choices.<sup>44</sup> However, in citing these views, I find it important to point out that gender differences begin long before the onset of puberty, and gender is not only about reproductive roles.

Several feminist scholars of international relations also make an important contribution to this discussion by arguing for the need to deconstruct gender norms in attempts to reduce conflict and build peace. Tickner, for example, suggests that a dichotomy of “masculine” as opposed to “feminine” has been constructed, wherein men are expected to exhibit masculine traits while women should likewise display feminine characteristics. Many attributes are commonly deemed masculine, such as aggressiveness, reason, rationality, and protection; while corresponding feminine-associated attributes include peacefulness, caring, emotion, and vulnerability.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, sites of knowledge production have tended to privilege “masculine” attributes and beliefs over those seen as “feminine.” Thus, she argues, it is important to challenge the ways in which these dominant discourses encourage war and violence through a culture of militarism, the construction of which is dependent upon the presence of a devalued femininity. These notions are related to prevailing notions of women as victims requiring protection. In other words, Tickner highlights the dominant assumption that the greatest danger to a man is being like a woman, since women are assumed to be afraid, dependent, ir-resolute, and weak.

In fact, Tickner proposes that the derogation of feminine ideas and attributes has become a key component of militarizing men and boys. Their willingness to fight, she says, is goaded by casting their sexual identity into question. In basic military training, for example, the harshest insult for a soldier is to be called a girl or a lady. Tickner therefore suggests that the association between masculinity and violence is not dependent upon men’s innate aggressiveness, but rather on the creation of a gendered identity that heavily pressures soldiers to “prove themselves as men.”<sup>46</sup> Likewise, young men who may not be able to “prove their manhood” on the battlefield are still expected to display their “natural” masculinity through language and actions that meet the same criteria. Different forms of masculinized violence, such as domestic violence and rape, also occur outside of military environments or obvious zones of conflict.

Other feminist authors further explain how the gendered way we speak about conflict can influence our prospects for peace. Cohn, for example, argues that common gendered assumptions about conflict make it exceedingly difficult for both men and women—and I would add boys and girls—to put forth “feminine” ideas or concerns, including peace, and still maintain their legitimacy.<sup>47</sup> In short, if certain ideas are deemed to be feminine and therefore devalued, they can become at once very difficult to speak, hear, or seriously consider, even if someone is brave enough to speak them. Cohn suggests that excluding these ideas impedes our capacities for thinking fully and well. While young women’s voices may be silenced, so may the utterances of any young man seeking to talk about peace, since it is often associated with the passivity of women. Thus, challenging gender norms is an integral step toward undermining the world’s current war culture, where all members of society have their ways of thinking militarized to some extent.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, Mazali says these presumptions and exclusions are stipulated and delineated by an intensely militarized socialization, which is largely founded upon discourses of a hierarchical gender system that presupposes the superiority of masculinity. This can limit the tactics available for building positive peace. These feminist theoretical insights provide sound justifications for applying a gendered lens when looking at conflict and efforts at peace, and also highlight the need for paying special attention to what gender means for youth experiencing conflict or seeking to build peace.

### What About the Girls?

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for gender equality in peace processes. However, girls are often neglected both in UN peace processes as well as in the peacebuilding literature. Scholars and practitioners thus need to ask questions about where girls are in their work and to acknowledge that girls are not merely victims but can also be peacebuilders. Consequently, Anderson counsels that researchers need to be asking urgent questions about how peace movements might propose

alternatives for girls, empowering them and listening to them in order to work collaboratively and create a better world for all.

Although Resolution 1325 offers a framework for women's involvement in peacebuilding, girls' participation has remained limited. In large part this is because the implementation strategies have concentrated mostly on older women, who have generally been more engaged in using the Resolution as a device for raising awareness, advocating, and organizing. Despite this, the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC) counsels that by working cooperatively girls also have the chance for taking some possession of the resolution.<sup>49</sup> The CPCC advocates involvement through gaining knowledge of the ways conflict impacts girls' lives and asking what groups dealing with gender, peace, and security issues are doing to work with girls. In this book I seek to contribute to these goals by paying special attention to gender, including impacts on girls.

Prevailing research assumes that youth, especially girls, are apathetic and apolitical; it focuses on what they do not do.<sup>50</sup> Much attention is thus given to how girls are not participating in various ways, rather than looking at how they are participating. Indeed, for some time girls have been seen as a "problem" in studies of politics because of their perceived detachment from formal political engagement, although this in itself is a contested point among scholars.<sup>51</sup> Instead of accepting these limiting discourses, when doing research that includes girls, scholars ought to seek to learn more about what they are doing, what they can do, and/or how they might be engaged.

Enhancing inclusivity in youth peacebuilding is an important concern, and should include reducing gender-based barriers to participation. While some scholars have acknowledged this in theory, there has been little to no research on how that might be achieved. Thus, more research is needed on what gender inclusiveness would look like in peacebuilding practice. However, Stuart, a peacebuilding practitioner, has examined youth nonviolence workshops in Australia. He explained how, where possible, program leaders could model equality and respect in gender relationships by having a minimum of

two facilitators and including leaders of different ages and gender.<sup>52</sup> It is also important to look at whether there are differences in participation or involvement based on the gender of facilitators. Overall, this work exploring gender in youth peacebuilding needs to be carried out with the support of all peacebuilders, regardless of gender, as changes in the gender regime will require support from men and boys.<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion

Young people are a politically significant social group both locally and globally and should be recognized as such and engaged in the peace studies field. One important challenge for the next generation is to incorporate youth peace activists appropriately into the development of peace. Yet this is a regularly neglected area in the discipline, and youth are often viewed negatively. Young people are currently engaged in several means of peacebuilding, including efforts at building a culture of peace, and this needs to be acknowledged and better understood for progress to occur. At the same time, understanding and supporting young people's participation in peacebuilding will also require attention to the impact of gender. Failing to acknowledge explicitly and take into account the impact of gender on youth peacebuilding can hinder prospects for promoting understandings and frameworks that are more inclusive and thus more likely to contribute to lasting positive peace. Therefore, in this study of youth musical peacebuilding efforts I have incorporated a gendered analysis as an essential part of the overall research framework.