

---

6-5-2017

## The “Bitter Sweetness” of Hybridity: Being a Bicultural Greek Australian Musician

Renee Georgoulas  
*Monash University*

Jane E. Southcott  
*Monash University, jane.southcott@monash.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>

 Part of the [Music Performance Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), [Other Music Commons](#), [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

---

### Recommended APA Citation

Georgoulas, R., & Southcott, J. E. (2017). The “Bitter Sweetness” of Hybridity: Being a Bicultural Greek Australian Musician. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(6), 1511-1524. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2789>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

---



**Qualitative Research Graduate Certificate**  
*Indulge in Culture*  
Exclusively Online • 18 Credits

**LEARN MORE**

NSU  
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN  
UNIVERSITY

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN

## The “Bitter Sweetness” of Hybridity: Being a Bicultural Greek Australian Musician

### Abstract

“Calista” is a bilingual, bicultural Greek-Australian musician in Melbourne, Victoria who explores and enacts her bicultural identity by musicking (making music). This single case study explores the formation and development of hybridized identity which is a complex lifelong process that may generate tensions for an individual that changes across the lifespan. There are strengths and challenges for those traversing different cultures. This study focuses on a bicultural identity formed by personal, musical and cultural contexts. Calista enacts her bimusicality in different musical genres and in different modes of musical engagement. Data were collected by semi-structured interview and by reference to published materials. Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The findings are reported under three themes that reflect different stages in Calista’s life: Becoming a Greek-Australian musician; Mature musicking; and Teaching and community work.

### Keywords

Greek-Australian Identity, Bicultural Identity, Bilingual Identity, Greek-Australian Singer Songwriter, Musical Identity

### Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## The “Bitter Sweetness” of Hybridity: Being a Bicultural Greek Australian Musician

Renee Georgoulas and Jane Southcott  
Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

---

*“Calista” is a bilingual, bicultural Greek-Australian musician in Melbourne, Victoria who explores and enacts her bicultural identity by musicking (making music). This single case study explores the formation and development of hybridized identity which is a complex lifelong process that may generate tensions for an individual that changes across the lifespan. There are strengths and challenges for those traversing different cultures. This study focuses on a bicultural identity formed by personal, musical and cultural contexts. Calista enacts her bimusicality in different musical genres and in different modes of musical engagement. Data were collected by semi-structured interview and by reference to published materials. Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The findings are reported under three themes that reflect different stages in Calista’s life: Becoming a Greek-Australian musician; Mature musicking; and Teaching and community work. Keywords: Greek-Australian Identity, Bicultural Identity, Bilingual Identity, Greek-Australian Singer Songwriter, Musical Identity*

---

### Introduction: Bicultural and Musical Identity

The subject of this study is a Greek-Australian musician. Musical identities are just as “complex as identities *per se* – they are complex and are made up of cultural, musical and personal aspects formed by an individual’s life experiences” (Georgoulas & Southcott, 2014). Musical identities are formed in interactions between music, the individual and their sociocultural context. Music is a fundamental channel of communication that offers people a way to share meanings and emotions (Hargreaves, Miell, & Macdonald, 2002). Musical identities are rarely confined within a narrow musical range as most individuals frequently musick in a range of musical genres and styles. The concept of music or musicking (making music) is in itself complex and encapsulates many cultures, styles and practices. Small (1998, p. 9) argued that that the word “music” should be considered a verb as to music is “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance ... or by dancing.” Given this breadth and complexity, musical identities are, like all identities “mobile, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being, best understood as an experience of the self-in-process when the subjective and collective sides of musical identity are inseparable” (Frith, 1996, p. 110).

Bimusicality is considered to approximate linguistic code-switching which can be alternate or simultaneous (Cottrell, 2007) in which musical styles can be seen as equivalent to languages. Musickers competent in more than one music may alternate between them within a single performance to meet the ethnically diverse understandings of performer and audience for (Slobin, 1979). There can be clear separations or influences and adaptations depending on the musicker’s intent. Ethnographic discussions of bimusicality begin with the notion of a musicker with competence in one music being immersed in another music in which they seek immersion and ultimately cultural competence (Blacking, 1973; Hood, 1960). Bimusicality could be used metaphorically to connote a subject shift in which “when one acquires knowledge by figuratively stepping outside oneself to view the world with oneself in it, thereby

becoming both subject and object simultaneously” (Titon, 1995, p. 288). The inference is that being bimusical allows the questioning and understanding of identity. For individuals with bicultural personal identities, musicking is formed with two cultural backgrounds and may be enacted as singer, instrumentalist, songwriter, performer, improviser and/or teacher all of which are central to the identity of a professional musicians” (Hargreaves et al., 2002). These different facets of one complex identity alter according to the demands of culture, occasion and personal preference. This single case study explores the musicking of a bilingual, bicultural Greek-Australian musician in Melbourne, Victoria.

### **Greek Migration to Australia**

Migrants have always enriched the social and economic fabric of Australia. This includes a strong Greek heritage and a thriving Greek community. Since the nineteenth century, immigrant Greeks have played an integral part of the history of Australia (Kanarakis, 2011). In 1829 the first Greek migrants to Australia were a small group of young sailors convicted of piracy, two of who became permanent Australian residents. During the gold rush in the mid-nineteenth century more Greeks arrived and by 1910 there were about 900 Greek immigrants in Australia (Georgiades, 2014). Modern Australia is a nation formed by immigrants and diasporic migration has always been a part of the Greek way of life. In recent times Greeks have emigrated for socio-economic and political reasons because “Greece with so many trials and tribulations was not in a position to provide for them and their families” (Kanarakis, p. 1). Greek and Cypriot immigrants are one of the oldest and largest immigrant groups that arrived in Australia after World War 2 (Brockhall & Liu, 2011). After 1952 tens of thousands of Greeks took advantage of the Australian Government’s offer of assisted passage (Georgiades, 2014) and Australia began a period of supported migration to rebuild the population and provide a workforce for post-war building programs which brought great cultural diversity. In the immediate post-war years most Greek-Australians were engaged in family-owned business, many in the food industry. These shopkeepers “followed a pattern: arduous initial toil; a degree of social alienation; strenuous saving and careful investment; in most cases, modest commercial success; and great efforts to advance their children through higher education” (Gilchrist, 2004, p. 343). By 1961 there were 77,333 Greek-born Australians and in the next five years 140,000 more Greeks migrated, many of who settled in Melbourne (Doumanis, 1999). Greek migration to Australia declined somewhat in the 1970s, although a large number of Greek Cypriots migrated following the Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus (Georgiades, 2014).

In 2006 there were approximately 54,000 Greek-born Victorians and many more who, although born in Australia claim Greek heritage. Recently there has been an increase in the number of Greeks migrating to Australia due to the financial problems in Greece (Georgiades, 2014). The 2011 Australian Census recorded that there were 99,938 Greek-born people in Australia and a further 378,267 people who claimed Greek ancestry. Nearly half of them live in Melbourne which is an important overseas center of Hellenism and often described as having the largest Greek population in the world after Athens and Thessaloniki (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016). There is a significant Greek presence in Australia. Of those who carry Greek citizenship, ninety-seven per cent have chosen to become Australian citizens, the highest proportion of any migrant group. While being fully committed to Australian society and its legal structures, democratic values and institutions, Greeks have also sought to preserve their own cultural heritage. They have established churches, schools, local clubs, scout groups, newspapers, cultural and voluntary associations and regional brotherhoods, community care and residential care services. Greek immigrants who have relocated from their home country to Australia have always “brought with them significant attachments to their home culture”

(Brockhall & Liu, 2011, p. 17) and may “try to re-create for their children elements of their original lifestyle” (Blacking, 1986).

### **Greek Society and Culture in Melbourne, Australia**

Greek migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s found a country dominated by an assimilation policy that expected new arrivals to adopt mainstream Anglo-Australian culture (Brockhall & Liu, 2011; Georgiades, 2014). While immigrants were aware of the need to adapt to their new social environment, many did not want to abandon the traditions of their homelands. As a result, immigrants of this generation created a dual identity in which “they performed Australian in public while being Greek in private” (Brockhall & Liu, 2011, p. 19). Despite pressure to assimilate Greek migrants largely maintained their culture via formal and informal community groups such as the Greek Orthodox church, Greek schools, Greek language newspapers and music and theatre performances (Georgiades, 2014). With the introduction of multiculturalism in the 1970s, emphasis was placed on the maintenance of cultural traditions and it became possible to develop a hybridized cultural identity in which the Greek private persona could be performed in public. There remained an ongoing sense of negotiation between Greek and Australian identities for long-term settlers, new arrivals and subsequent generations.

The culture of Melbourne reflects its diverse, multi-layered culture and society, and the city has gained a reputation as the cultural capital of Australia. Greeks are known for their large extended families “that strongly maintain their culture and traditions” (Brockhall & Liu, 2011, p. 17). According to Graber (2013) Melbourne “celebrates a wide variety of major annual cultural events, including local, national and international events particularly for the Greek community of Melbourne.” Melbourne is recognised as having one of the largest Greek communities in the world although it is difficult to confirm this fact given the different methods countries use to conceptualise and measure people of different nationalities. In 2006, 149,195 persons in the Melbourne Statistical District claimed Greek Nationality, either alone or in combination with another nationality (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Amongst the large number of Greek-Australians living in Melbourne there are a variety of different music, dance and cultural events that take place that feature Greek traditional folk musics and modern Greek popular music. Greek-Australians also maintain a strong cultural and religious identity whilst playing a prominent part in Australian mainstream society in areas including politics, the arts, education, business and sport. A public example of this is the presence of Hellenic music programs on community FM radio which presents contemporary Greek music as an alternative to the commercial Greek music more readily available and seeks to educate listeners of all backgrounds (Papas, 2012, p. 1). Amongst the many Greek events is the annual Antipodes Festival that is “a celebration of Greek culture that attracts thousands of people to the two-day street party in the heart of Melbourne. Local artists perform at the event, and popular musicians from Greece are also brought in each year to perform” (Graber, 2013, p. 1). The Greek music scene in Melbourne offers a range of options that addresses the varied interests of the Greek (and Australian) community in Melbourne.

### **Greek Music in Melbourne**

Greek music in Melbourne encompasses a large part of the Greek community in Melbourne. It includes a large amount of diversity due to the creative Greek assimilation of different influences of the Eastern and Western cultures of Asia and Europe. Since ancient times poetry, dancing and music were inseparable and were important components of everyday life in Greece (Graber, 2013). In Greek society, music has been an expression of cultural

identity, humanity and culture, and this continues to be the case in Melbourne. It is not possible to really know a musical culture, until it reacts to the experience of migration where people may experience disregard, disrespect, hostility, and discrimination. By the very act of migrating, people find that their traditional forms of behaviour can be challenged by a new environment. When this occurs, migrants have the choice to abandon traditional cultural activities or to adapt them. In other words, “musical behaviour can be looked at as an indicator of social adjustment, integration or, on the contrary, of marginality or malaise” (Graber, 2013, p. 1).

### **The Participant: Calista**

Calista performs with bands and other solo artists representing different parts of Greece in Melbourne. On her website, Calista describes herself as a daughter of the Australian Greek diaspora. She describes her musical background in the 1960s and 1970s as formed by the music of Greek social and cultural movement known as the New Wave that represented cultural rediscovery of Greek identity in Greece and in Australia. These influences have shaped her musical journey. Calista is a diverse vocalist/performer with a national and international reputation. She has collaborated with many significant performers and composers and performed in Australia and abroad. Further details concerning the participant will be revealed in the presentation of data but we are careful not to reveal too much as we remain mindful that we wish to preserve her anonymity.

### **The Researchers**

Renee Georgoulas is a Greek-Australian musician who shares the cultural influences of Calista. Both are fluent Greek speakers and expert musicians. Renee has explored her own bicultural, bimusical hybridity in an autoethnography. Renee is a classically trained pianist and secondary school music educator. She is also very familiar with traditional Greek music. Further Renee is a jazz musician who has performed in both Australia and Greece. Renee’s identity is understood as existing and shifting within three polarities: Greek language and culture/Australian English language and culture; classical western music/traditional Greek music; and Greek jazz/western popular musics. Jane Southcott is an Anglo-Celtic-Australian. She is a very experienced researcher and phenomenologist who has undertaken many studies into biculturality and arts engagement. Jane has worked with Renee on a series of papers exploring this phenomenon. By sharing our respective insider and outsider views, we have created a deep understanding of the tensions experienced by those with hybrid identities which is the norm in contemporary Australian society.

### **Methodology**

This single phenomenological case study focuses on a Greek-Australian musician in Melbourne, Victoria. The phenomenological approach attempts to discover how people understand their experiences. Phenomenology concerns the “ways in which human beings gain knowledge of the world around them” (Willig, 2001, p. 49). Although some researchers may perceive qualitative, phenomenological research as “more suspect on the issue of reliability than those associated with quantitative procedures” (Orum, Feagan, & Sjoberg, 1991, p. 17), the use of careful data collection strategies and data analysis can counteract such charges. This phenomenological research explores the participant’s lived experiences so a lengthy semi-structured interview is most appropriate as it allows flexibility and “facilitates rapport, empathy, allows greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel areas

and it tends to produce richer data” (Orum et al., 1991, p. 19). Although a set of questions may be written, they are used more as a guide during the interview that tries to establish a rapport with the participant (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The ordering of the questions is not particularly important and the interviewer is free to probe interesting responses to explore respondents’ interests or concerns. The disadvantages could include that this form of interviewing “reduces the control of the investigator has over the situation, takes longer to carry out and is harder to analyze” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 59). Questions posed should be open ended and non-directive (Willig, 2001). In this case study, the semi-structured interview questions sought the opinions, understanding, and feelings of the participant in regards traditional and popular Greek music in Melbourne.

We applied for and received Ethical Permission to interview Calista who signed a consent form agreeing to be interviewed by Renee Georgoulas and allowing the interview to be audio recorded. The interview was conversational and fairly informal. The participant was provided with the topics for discussion prior to the interview. Renee is a cultural insider (Georgoulas & Southcott, 2014) who was already knew Calista. For mutual comfort the interview was held at a local café. Such familiar settings encouraged the conversational nature of a semi-structured interview. Both Renee and Calista speak fluent Greek and English, and the interview employed both languages. The interviewee is identified by a pseudonym (Calista) and although cited, her website is not identified to maintain her privacy. Although repeated interviews are suggested in the collection of deep, rich qualitative data, in this study there was only one interview. There was no need for an initial interview that seeks contextualising data as both Renee and Calista are Greek-Australian musicians and cultural insiders (Seidman, 2006). The interview was extended and lasted over two hours in accord with Calista’s wishes. We decided that this single, lengthy, deep interview maximised the data collection (Merriam, 2009).

Once transcribed, the data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is defined as “an interpretative endeavour and is therefore informed by hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 3). This approach allows the participant to answer the questions and tell their own story in their own words from their own perspectives. The transcription of the data was jointly analysed thematically with the researchers identifying emergent themes that are then hierarchically organised. The researcher prioritizes the emergent themes that emerge from the data and then construct the case based on her in depth analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Direct quotations from the participant are included into the text, presenting the voice of the participant. Thematic analysis and the presentation of the research are informed by the Renee’s emic and Jane’s etic respective positions (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

## **Findings**

The data will be discussed in three themes: Becoming a Greek-Australian musician; Mature musicking (singer, songwriter and performer); and Teaching and community work.

### **Becoming a Greek Australian Musician**

Calista is a Greek-Australian musician, performer and singer songwriter. She was born in Australia but her parents emigrated from Greece in the 1950’s. They became public figures in Melbourne. Her father was a member of the State Parliament for over a decade and her mother was the first Greek speaking hairdresser in Melbourne and much in demand in the community. She now considers her bilingualism and biculturalism a blessing. Calista spoke about being a bicultural hybrid. She understood a difference between those Greeks who were

born in Greece and migrated to Australia and those (like herself) who were born here who she termed “hybrids.” She explained that “We are not Greeks, [although] a thousand people would revolt in hearing me say that because they’re so invested in the concept that you are what your lineage says and not where you were born or your current environment.” She continued that “in Greece we’re foreigners as well and there’s a stigma.” Specifically, Calista states, I’m not a Greek singer *per se* as I’m not from Greece. I am a Greek-Australian singer.” For Calista “growing up in Australia has been bitter sweet.” At home Greece was idealised as wonderful like a “tired out record” but that is not what she thinks Greece is like today. She described that as a younger Greek-Australian musician “the minute I used to walk out the door after hearing that Greece is so nice, I was faced with the Australian side of me and that is different.” Calista early encountered racism, which saddened and hurt her. As her father was a public figure, people would call her home. She recalled,

I was 12 years old when the phone rang and some guy on the other end asked me where I was from and I said “Abbotsford” – which was the suburb we lived in – he said where are your parents from – and I said Greece – and then I was told to go back to my country, which confused me as I was born in Australia and told him “but I am in my country.”

Despite early experiences of racism in Australia, Calista is now “proud of who I am and I can walk the streets proudly because I have been supported and instilled to be proud of my Greek-ness and my Australian-ness.”

Calista described that she “was brought up in Greek music ... and heavily exposed to Mikis Theodorakis,” but was not encouraged to learn this music and so did not embrace it when young. She stated that, “I didn’t wear my culture well at all growing up ... none of us did at that time... it was not acceptable nor popular to be a Greek or other than mainstream Anglo typecast person.” When her parents came to Australia in the 1950’s the perception of Greek culture was very conservative which for Calista meant, “girls were seen and not heard.” After a neighbour recognised her musical abilities she started learning piano at the age of six from a highly regarded Australian piano teacher and performer. Calista described her teacher as “just wonderful ... [and she] was my teacher until the age of 12 it was a good six years and I excelled in that and also learned music theory and so that was my formalization.” In her high school years Calista continued piano and was part of the music curriculum at her local community education center where she also learned guitar. Calista’s parents were hard working and were not encouraging of their daughter’s desire to be a musician. When she was sixteen, she won a scholarship for a year of singing lessons. Calista was delighted but when she told her mother, the response was “No, I didn’t have you to become a theatre singer.” Calista was upset and out of revenge started to play the saxophone that “drove my mom crazy.” After finishing school Calista pursued music. She attended a music Conservatorium for a year where she studied voice with another “brilliant” teacher. However, Calista “lost interest because I really wanted to learn blues and pop music.” Calista found voice teachers who would further her soul, blues and jazz singing, one of whom had worked with Aretha Franklin. She also pursued jazz and now feels that the only vocal music she has not yet “done is opera [but] before I die I want to.”

Calista did not wish to break away from her parents as a few other young Greek women were doing at the time. She spoke of one who just “up and left,” breaking the chains of family and cultural expectation, and another woman who “pushed the boundaries.” Calista felt that she could not do that – her family situation was a bit different because her “dad was in politics and he was quite a public figure.” But Calista was still drawn to rebellion. She chose rock music “because it had that rebellious nature.” In retrospect, she understands that “I was really rebelling at not being able to fly ... in what I wanted to do. I was born to be a musician and

didn't fight hard enough to formalize that." As a young woman in the 1970s and 1980s Calista described her musical influences as "blues, jazz and rock artists" from America, Australia and Greece, thus she was familiar with lyrics in both English and Greek. She was working in cover bands playing the music of Tina Turner, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Janis Joplin, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday. She was inspired by these singers and also "loved to listen to Marcia Hines and Rene Geyer" both Australian singers, the former a pop, rock and jazz vocalist and the latter has long been regarded as a fine exponent of jazz, soul and R&B. Looking back Calista reflects that at that time she and other musicians of Greek background did not follow Greek music because "they got work in the Australian music industry." Calista became proud of her heritage later on in life and is passionate about the performance of Greek and Greek-Australian music and about the transmission of Greek linguistic and cultural heritage. She reflects on her formative Greek influences. Her favorite Greek singers are Marinella, Haris Alexiou, and Maria Farantouri. She also became familiar with the work of pioneering Greek musicians such as Mikis Theodorakis, Manos Loizos, Kostas Hatzi, and Manos Hatzidakis.

### **Mature Musicking**

Initially Calista played keyboards and sang backing vocals in rock and popular cover bands. Her mother was not happy about this, saying, "I didn't have a daughter to be a singer." This became embedded in Calista's sense of musical self until one night the drummer in the band said, "you don't need this" and threw away her lyrics book. He told her that she had to do the gig (performance) on her own, "I had to do 'Love Child' by the Supremes, I turned to him and ... [asked] what is the line of the first verse, you've got to tell me ... he told me and from then on, it was great." With reflection Calista recognises that without that push she would never have had the confidence to step up. She adds that being bicultural also gave her "double confidence" which relates to the "bitter sweetness" of her experiences as a hybrid. Calista feels that it is essential to "accentuate the positive ... that gives you the confidence to move on and do what you want to do. I am blessed to be cultured, I could not say that 20 years ago, I could not." Calista's first instrument is her voice. She sings in many languages such as Greek, Turkish, Italian, Chinese and English. She also plays keyboards, guitar and a little saxophone. She performed at the Melbourne Fringe festival three times.

At the age of nine Calista wrote her first poem which was about feeling isolated from mainstream Australian society because of her Greek name. Five years later she wrote about her parents struggle with migration and this has become a theme in her work. Her song writing has been enthusiastically reviewed. One of her songs pays homage to first generation Greek migrants. This song has struck a chord with the Greek Australian community. The song is sung bilingually to reflect the intermingling and co-reliance between her two cultural traditions. The chorus of the song "could be an ideology of an entire generation" (website). Calista considers herself a singer-song writer. Her songs have never been pop songs about unrequited love such as "I am sorry he doesn't love me anymore" but were very much about human rights and injustice. Calista was very influenced by Bob Dylan and Joan Baez in the 1960s and 1970s in the USA and by "songs penned of human rights" by Greek musicians "Hatzis, with singer Marinella, Hatzithakis with singer Merlina Mercouri and Theodorakis with singer Farantouri." Calista wrote songs about "the environment and what was moving me inside, in my heart of hearts." She described being aware of "what was happening around the world or on television or movies" and her understandings were informed by her cultural background. All this influenced the music that she performed and wrote from what she described her as her subliminal sense of "Greek Australian Greek" self.

Calista explained that a lot of her music is about human rights. As an advocate, she considers music to be the cohesive element, "the glue." Through songs Calista feels that she

can connect with her true culture and touch the hearts of her audiences. She expounds that music is subtle – “you can’t touch it; music is not tactile.” Calista has been a student of spiritualism and metaphysics for a long time and finds that through song and spiritualism she can connect her two cultures. She recognises that culture is complex and comments that “not all Greeks are Greek Orthodox. There’s Muslim Greeks, and there’s Buddhist Greeks that do yoga, there’s evangelists, there’s you know, atheist and agnostics in Greece.” Calista enacts and embodies her culture as a singer songwriter. Her cultures are inseparable from her identity as musician and performer. She believes that “we can communicate our culture to each other and create understanding and so, establish a common ground through food, music and culture therefore dispelling fear which is what wars are made of.” Calista explores her identity via her song writing. She constructs thematically related, narrative performances that explore her personal experiences “from being a migrant’s daughter, a politician migrant’s daughter to cancer survivor to a struggling singer-song writer” who manages her own career.

Calista performs in a range of musical genres as a solo artist and in different bands. Her performances range from original one-woman shows to playing with larger ensembles. Calista is a well-known performer in a wide range of public and private events. Public events include large community festivals such as International Women’s Day, Australia Day, Harmony Day (celebrating Australia’s diversity), Moomba (a large Melbourne community celebration), the Antipodes Festival (one of the biggest and most prestigious events for the local Greek community) and concerts. Private events include weddings, baptisms, and parties in clubs and various restaurants. Calista values her ability to perform in both Greek and English. Her musical genres are also diverse. When working with a band she is the lead singer and when she is performing Greek Australian music she works with musicians that have just arrived from Greece and second and third generation Greek-Australians.

Being Greek was not a determinant for who she plays with – she described a bouzouki player “who also performs in the Chinese Symphony Orchestra because his dad was Chinese, but his dad knew better Greek than my dad and his dad could dance the Greek zeibekiko dance [a solo male dance] like no other Greek could.” Calista considers that having this freedom is a “beautiful part of living in Australia.” Calista produces events and collaborates with many other well-established Greek-Australian musicians. She stated that, “It is a privilege not a curse to be an Australian-Greek and to actually perform with people that want to play Greek music.” Calista explained how she balances the Greek and mainstream cultural and linguistic influences in her performances: “I go from one to the other, that is really bizarre; unconsciously, all my performances are unconscious.” Despite her musical training and her years of experience Calista considers herself hindered by her “lack of formality as a musician.” When an impressively eulogistic review was published about her that announced her to be worthy of the status of the muse of song, she admits that she does not see that in her work. Calista does note that as a self-managed performer she occasionally finds that it has been “difficult financially to get some of these events going.” This has been exacerbated by periods of serious illness that have meant that she has had quite long gaps in her career as a result of which she has had “launches and re-launches.”

### **Teacher and Community Worker**

Teaching and community work have been important throughout Calista’s career and are inextricably linked. She has taught privately over the years and has worked with many young people identified as “at risk” by youth services. When she worked for a local council as an administrator in their family service and youth department and as a youth officer she created stories through music, produced CDs and art work with clients as what she considered measures of wellbeing. She is self-deprecating about this work and pointed out that she is not credentialed

to work in this area. Rather she draws her principles and practices from her own experiences being bicultural. Calista fought hard in her “formative years to walk out the door as an independent woman and now I go into the communities and I am faced with the same problem that I grew up with.” Calista explained that she could relate to “these kids ... I had to be so understanding, patient, tolerant and I try to understand as I have first-hand experience of being judged.” She hopes that her teaching and work with youth services has meant that she has been able to influence others for the better.

Calista’s community work is not limited to any particular sector. Different councils have invited her to work in youth services and age services. She has worked Alzheimer’s Australia Victoria, through its Dementia and Memory Community Centre program. For example, Calista ran a special participatory event designed for Greek carers of people with dementia that focused on old songs that can “unlock memories and feelings.” She presented songs and stories linked to a range of Greek musical genres including *rebetika* (blues), *entekna* (“artistic”/folk music) and *cantathes* (popular pre-war songs). Calista argued for the use of songs and music with people with dementia as reminiscence can be stimulated by a particular piece from their childhood. Calista described working with clients who have not spoken for many years. She felt that she could clearly see the impact of music on patient’s lives. In events like this Calista combines her teaching, community work, hybridity and passion for social justice. Calista has always considered herself a social activist. She described formative experiences as a child in an inner-city suburb. In an interview reported in the media she recalled as a child being exposed to the “horrible ways some people treated human beings.” She ascribed this to “their colour [and] because they were poor.” Calista gave a particular example of a schoolmate whose parents were so poor that the family lived in a shelter. One day she visited her friend’s home and discovered that the walls were made of paper. When she went home she asked her father why they had solid walls and her friend did not. Such memories have remained vivid and add to her drive for social justice.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This article has explored how being bilingual and bicultural has influenced one Greek Australian musician. Calista explores, defines and enacts her bicultural and bilingual identity through musicking. She is a singer, songwriter, performer, music teacher and community music worker. The formation of her bilingual, bicultural and bi-musical Greek-Australian identity has been lifelong and has been a process that has allowed her to explore her musical and cultural competencies and her ongoing and changing sense of identity between and within her cultures. Calista asserts that as a “Greek-Australian musical artist, I’m proud now, [this] is who I am, I’m proud and I could walk the streets proudly and without fear because I have been supported and instilled to be proud of my Greek-ness and my Australian-ness.” As discussed this was not always the case. Growing up in a more racist time, Calista felt that “before we could not do that, we were afraid for our wellbeing, for our parents’ wellbeing, for siblings’ well-being, my godchildren ... whoever is closest to you.” With hindsight, Calista referred to a “very bitter-sweet element of growing up.”

Calista’s story continues to be relevant and illustrative of generations of Australians with diverse hybrid identities. Issues of ethnicity, migration and identity continue to be enacted in Australian political, cultural and social engagement. Very recently in the popular Australian press, criticism was made about the behaviour of a second generation migrant and it was suggested that he return to “where he comes from” (Udabage, 2015, p. 19). The commentator explained that:

We slip easily between our cultures, sometimes easily, sometimes not. We are open-minded and passionate because we straddle two worlds, morphing between the two ... We have chosen Australia as our home and ... we contribute a great deal. Choosing Australia does not disregard our heritage. My heritage is a source of huge pride ... You do not see our roots driving deeper into Australian soil and our hand reaching further afield, a web of connections binding us to a shared identity. (Udabage, 2015, p. 190)

For a hybrid Australian who wears her biculturalism with pride, the suggestion that Calista was somehow less than Australian was hurtful. For her Australia is home, there is nowhere to go back to.

As a bicultural second generation Greek-Australian, Calista manages her identity between the pulls of her Greek cultural heritage and Australia's mainstream culture. She has experienced the tensions between her cultures as she negotiates her daily life within a landscape bordered by political and economic circumstances (Brockhall & Liu, 2011; Liu, 2015). These boundaries can expand and contract, and individuals need to reconstruct and re-negotiate identity across their lifespan. For example, following World War II a policy of Anglo-conformity demanded that immigrants renounce their heritage culture and become "New Australians." When this policy was replaced by multiculturalism in the 1970s, new migrants and second generation hyphenated Australians were encouraged to maintain their own cultural practices as well as adopt those of mainstream society. With social change comes tension. Calista experienced racism growing up. Her culture was undervalued by mainstream Anglo-Australian society which may explain her early rejection of her Greek musical heritage. Ultimately Calista has found balance between her two cultures and created a hyphenated identity in which her cultures coexist. She lives in two cultural homes each of which holds assumptions, values, history, social expectations and conventions, and emotional attachments (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005; Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

At the core of the acculturation and adaptation of immigrants is their sense of identity which can be difficult to define (Buckingham, 2008; Schilling-Estes, 2004). Identity is a fluid, multifaceted, dynamic ongoing construction, that involves the negotiation and re-construction of both the personal and collective sense of self that is shaped by social interaction (Pavlenko, 2001; Kakava, 2003). Identity concerns how an individual manages her self-image and meets the expectations of others in everyday life within cultural contexts (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Hargreaves et al., 2002). This social constructionist understanding suggests that the individual and her society are inseparable and that her identity is the product of social interaction that includes meeting or refusing the expectations of others. In this ongoing negotiation, the boundaries between individual and collective identity are constantly shifting. This process may be influenced by both a desire for individuality and for a sense of belonging to a culture or community (Baumann, 2004). Identity is not straightforward – it is a journey not a destination (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

For bicultural individuals, there may be no contradiction between their two identities. It is possible for an individual to understand two different cultures and be able to modify her behavior to fit different social contexts. To achieve this, she needs to develop bicultural competence and the confidence that she can live effectively in both groups without a loss of cultural identity (LaFromboise, Hardin, & Gerton, 1993). Although identity formation is a life-long process, late adolescence is a key point in identity development (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Interaction with family, peers and school are the main agencies of adolescent socialization (Berry & Sabatier, 2010). Adolescence is a time of exploration and identity construction in which the individual may seek greater autonomy. The children of migrants may acquire better language proficiency, accept new cultural values and practices more readily than

their parents and seek to adopt mainstream values and lifestyles. This may lead to conflict in the family. Within Western cultures, disagreements between adolescents and their parents are considered a common element of adolescent development that diminishes over time (Stuart, Ward, Jose, & Narayanan, 2010). In migrant families, parents may adhere to heritage cultural values while their children adopt those of the mainstream culture (Ward, 2008). For those transitioning between two different cultures, this stage of identity formation and the development of cultural competence can be challenging as bicultural individuals may perceive both strengths and incompatibilities between their two cultures (Hanek, Lee, & Brannen, 2014). Despite a common assumption that being bicultural may result in identity confusion, seminal theorist Park (1928) suggested that starting with the Greeks, human progress has occurred when cultures intermingle and considered that biculturalism had long-term benefits for society.

Most recent Australian statistics confirm the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the population (ABS, 2013). Bicultural and multicultural identities are becoming the norm and this is reflected in our cultural explorations enacted via musicking. Hybridized identities are similarly becoming the norm in formal and informal teaching and learning both in schools and in the community. There are many insights to be gained from exploring the rich, complex lives of bicultural musickers such as Calista who consider their hybridity a “not a curse but a privilege.” Being Greek-Australian has shaped the type of person, musicker, and educator that she has become. This has changed as she has evolved, matured, and explored her cultures. Calista now finds it a blessing “to actually perform with people that want to play Greek music” that she can then share with others. In an aspirationally multicultural nation where biculturalism is the norm, the exploration of one unique hybrid identity can illuminate the experiences of the many and raise implications for education, musicking and the provision of community services.

### Limitations of the Study

In this study, we purposively selected Calista as she is a well-known Greek-Australian performer who, like Renee, traverses popular Greek and Australian music. We sought a subject who experienced similar cultural tensions to Renee albeit a generation earlier. This was to extend the research we began with Renee’s autoethnography (Georgoulas & Southcott, 2014). A single participant case study offers researchers the opportunity to undertake deep, fine-grained examinations of the lived experience of a single person (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In this study, we have explored through conversational interviews the connections between experience, sense-making and emotional response to experiences. Calista is a unique individual and her experiences and understandings are her own but much of what she spoke about resonated with Renee and could offer insight into the complexity of identity construction by those with hybrid bicultural identities. In co-constructing our analysis, Renee and Jane were able to have robust discussions about meanings and interpretations, which strengthened our understandings of both Calista and others who inhabit hybrid cultures.

### References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2007). *2006 Census of Population and Housing Melbourne (Statistical Division) Victoria*. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/about?opendocument&navpos=100>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *Australia’s Population by Country of Birth*. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3412.0Chapter12011-12%20and%202012-13>
- Berry, J. W., & Sabatier, C. (2010). Acculturation, discrimination, and adaptation among

- second generation immigrant youth in Montreal and Paris. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 191-207.
- Blacking, J. (1973). *How musical is man?* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Blacking, J. (1986). *Culture and the arts* (Series No. 4). London, UK: National Association for Education and the Arts.
- Brockhall, F. J., & Liu, S. (2011). Performing new Australians: Identity (re)construction of long-term Greek and Cypriot immigrants in Australia. *China Media Research*, 7(1), 16-24.
- Cottrell, S. (2007). Local bimusicality among London's freelance musicians. *Ethnomusicology*, 51(5), 85-107.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government. (2016). *Greece Country Brief*. Retrieved from [http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/greece/greece\\_country\\_brief.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/greece/greece_country_brief.html)
- Doumanis, N. (1999). The Greeks in Australia. In R. Clogg (Ed.), *The Greek diaspora in the twentieth century* (pp. 58-86). London, UK: Macmillan Press.
- Frith, S. (1996). *Performance rites, evaluating popular music*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Georgiades, S. D. (2014). Greek immigrants in Australia: Implications for culturally sensitive practice. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 17(5), 1537-1547.
- Georgoulas, R., & Southcott, J. (2014). Multiple musical identities: An autoethnographic study of a Greek-Australian popular and traditional musician and teacher. *International Journal of Humanities Education*, 11(4), 49-60.
- Gilchrist, H. (2004). *Australians and Greeks: The later years*. Broadway, NSW: Halstead Press.
- Graber, J. (2013). *Growing up Greek in Melbourne, Australia*. Retrieved from <http://www.goworldtravel.com/travel-growing-up-greek-in-melbourne-australia>
- Hanek, K. J., Lee, F., & Brannen, M. Y. (2014). Individual differences among global/multicultural individuals: Cultural experiences, identity, and adaptation. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 44(2), 75-89.
- Hargreaves, D. J., Miell, D., & Macdonald, R. A. R. (2002). What are musical identities, and why are they important? In R. A. R. Macdonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (pp. 1-20). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hecht, M. L., Warren, J. R., Jung, E., & Krieger, J. L. (2005). A communication theory of identity. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 257-278). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hood, M. (1960). The challenge of bi-musicality. *Ethnomusicology*, 4(2), 55-59.
- Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(4), 405-414.
- Kanarakis, G. (2011). *Greek voices in Australia. A tradition of prose, poetry and drama*. Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Pergamon Press Australia.
- LaFromboise, T., Hardin, L. K. C., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 114(3), 395-412.
- Lin, E.-Y. (2008). Family and social influences on identity conflict in overseas Chinese. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32, 130-141.
- Liu, S. (2015). Searching for a sense of place: Identity negotiation of Chinese immigrants. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 46, 26-35.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954-969.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Orum, M. A., Feagin J. R., & Sjoberg, G. (1991). Introduction: The nature of case study. In J. Feagin, A. Orum, & G. Sjoberg (Eds.), *A case for the case study* (pp. 1-26). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

- Papas, P. (2012). Bringing contemporary Greek music to Australia. *Neos Kosmos*. Retrieved from <http://neoskopos.com/news/en/bridging-contemporary-greek-music-to-australia>
- Park, R. E. (1928). Human migration and the marginal man. *American Journal of Sociology*, 23(6), 881-893.
- Schilling-Estes, N. (2004). Constructing ethnicity in interaction. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 8(2), 163-195.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Slobin, M. (1979). Code switching and code superimposition in music. *Working Papers in Sociolinguistics*, 63, 1-14.
- Small, C. (1998). *Musicking*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 51–80). London, UK: Sage.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis. Theory, method and research*. London, UK: Sage.
- Stuart, J., Ward, C., Jose, P. E., & Naryanan, P. (2010). Working with and for communities: A collaborative study of harmony and conflict in well-functioning, acculturating families. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 114-126.
- Titon, J. T. (1995). Bi-musicality as metaphor. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 108(429), 287-297.
- Udabage, M. (2015, July 9). We're home: Immigrants, proud Australians. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/we-might-be-immigrants-but-we-still-call-australia-home-20150708-gi7jph.html>
- Vivero, V. N., & Jenkins, S. R. (1999). Existential hazards of the multicultural individual: Defining and understanding “cultural homelessness.” *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 5(1), 6-26.
- Walters, K. A., & Auton-Cuff, F. P. (2009). A story to tell: The identity development of women growing up as third culture kids. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 12(7), 755-772.
- Ward, C. (2008). Thinking outside the Berry boxes: New perspectives on identity, acculturation and intercultural relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(2), 105-114.
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

### Author Note

Dr. Renee Georgoulas is a Greek-Australian musician and music educator.

Dr. Jane Southcott is an Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia. Jane researches community engagement with music and cultural identity. Jane supervises many postgraduate research students. She is President of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Research in Music Education and on the editorial boards of international refereed journals. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: [jane.southcott@monash.edu](mailto:jane.southcott@monash.edu).

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright 2017: Renee Georgoulas, Jane Southcott, and Nova Southeastern University.

**Article Citation**

Georgoulas, R., & Southcott, J. (2017). The “bitter sweetness” of hybridity: Being a bicultural Greek Australian musician. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(6), 1510-1524. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss6/2>

---