

The Impact of Multi-Layered Diffusionary Processes on Musical Evolution: The Global Nature, and Hawaiian, Spanish and African Roots of Delta Blues Culture

John Byron Strait, (PhD)

Ava Rei Fujimoto-Strait (M.A..)

Sam Houston State University, United States

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Abstract

As a distinct musical form, blues music from the Mississippi Delta has been extensively studied by musicologists, ethnomusicologists, historians and folklorists. As has been the case with the larger public attracted to this intriguing musical genre, much of this academic attention has treated blues as just that - something one listens to. We argue that blues represents far more than just sound or entertainment, rather it represents a broad cultural milieu from which a distinctive musical culture evolved. Moreover, the musical evolution associated with blues did not occur in a vacuum, it was generated and facilitated by various forms of cultural exchange occurring over time and space. Further, the forms of cultural exchange responsible for the evolution of Delta blues culture were and continue to be truly global in scope. In this paper, by highlighting Hawaiian, Spanish and African influences, we discuss the geographical processes associated with the evolution of blues music and focus on the multi-layered forms of global diffusion responsible for what has been referred to as “Delta blues.” Through a discussion of this form of blues music, we focus attention on the complex inter-relationships evident between and among different people and different places, and highlight how global interactions generated a truly unique music form.

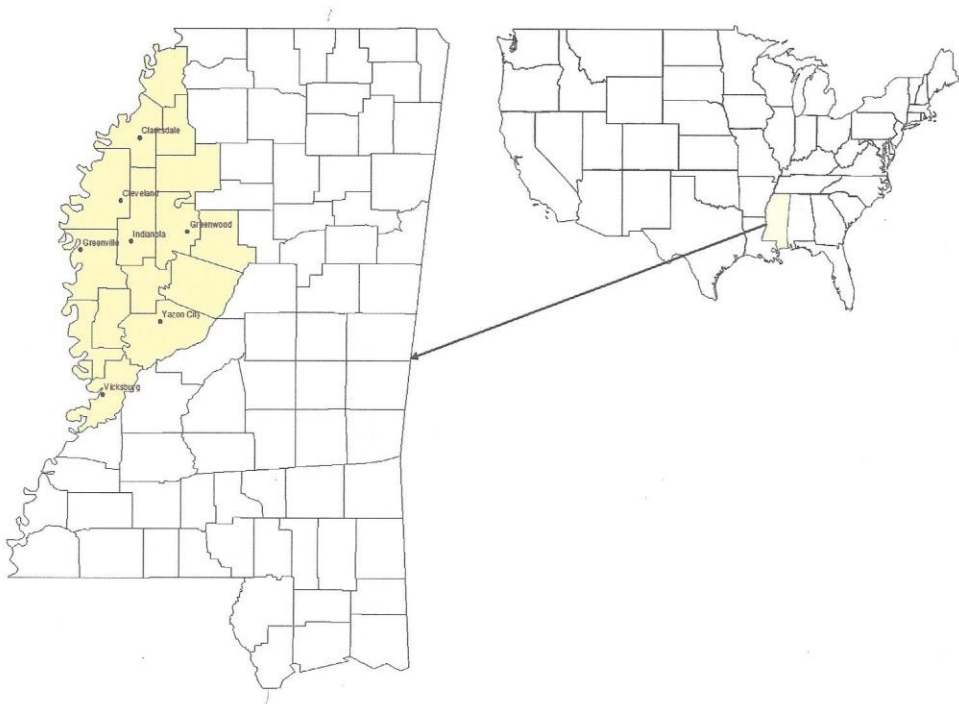
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Introduction

This research project has been partially motivated by our experiences directing a series of field courses that are interdisciplinary in nature. These courses focus on distinct geographical contexts – Hawaii, Spain, and/or the Mississippi Delta region of the U.S. - yet are similar in that they utilize

musical expressions as lenses to address the geographical dimensions of a broad array of social, cultural, economic and environmental processes (Strait 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014; Strait, Jackson, and Marcus 2011; Strait and Fujimoto-Strait 2017). By incorporating pedagogical themes around the concepts of migration, diffusion, and transculturation, and by placing particular attention on how these concepts pertain to music evolution, these courses encourage participants to consider how geographic distinctiveness can result from the complex ways in which different places interact with one another over space and time. The primary aim of this paper is to shed light on the complex geographical processes responsible for the evolution of blues music, specifically the blues forms that evolved in the Mississippi Delta (Figure 1).¹ We pursue this aim by exploring the complex cultural connections that exist between this region of the United States and both Spain and the Hawaiian Islands.

Figure 1: The Mississippi Delta (IN YELLOW)



Hawaii, Spain and the Mississippi Delta are certainly distinct places possessing exceptionally different cultural histories. Likewise, these three regions have been subject to very different arrays of external cultural influences, musically and otherwise. However, we demonstrate in this paper that these three regions possess two inter-related commonalities. First, they are similar in that their uniqueness directly stems from the fact that each region

has functioned as "cultural cross-roads" of sorts – i.e., the cultural uniqueness of each place is the result of having been impacted and influenced by diverse collections of other places. Second, in terms of musical culture, these three regions are linked to one another via an extensive and complex network of cultural exchange, one that has been responsible for the distinctive evolution of what we refer to as "Delta blues culture."

We do not endeavor to provide a complete historical and geographical dissection of the diverse cultural influences responsible for blues as a distinct musical genre. For example, a summary of the geographical and cultural roots of the variety of other regional sub-genres of blues lies beyond the scope of this work. Our main purpose here is to offer evidence that blues music itself, and the culture responsible for its evolution, is the result of multiple forms of cultural exchange and spatial interaction, some of which have been ignored in the literature. Accordingly, the same geographical and cultural processes discussed here would indeed be relevant to all forms of blues to some degree. The regional style referred to as Delta blues is given particular focus in this paper for two reasons. First, most musicologists agree that Delta blues had far more of a significant influence on subsequent development of a number of blues-influenced musical forms, such as Rock'N'Roll, than did other regional blues styles (Farris 1978; Palmer 1981; Gioia 2008). Second, we maintain that the uniqueness of "Delta blues", and its evolutionary significance, stems from its excessive trans-cultural nature. We argue that the very reason Delta blues has been so influential lies in the fact that its formation resulted from the convergence of diverse cultural influences from a variety of geographical sources, including places as far away from Mississippi as both Spain and Hawaii.

The remainder of this paper is divided into three main sections. The first section describes a series of commonly identified diffusionary mechanisms, the progression of which were collectively responsible for the evolution of North American blues, particularly Delta blues. Discreet subsections summarize each mode of diffusion separately in turn, yet we offer them as a collective network of cultural exchange. A second section includes two additional subsections that summarize more recently identified impacts that music from Spain and Hawaii had, respectively, on the Delta blues. The last section of the paper offers final remarks and conclusions.

The geographic evolution of delta blues

Delta blues music itself has been widely studied by scholars possessing a variety of backgrounds, including historians, musicologists, sociologists and folklorists. This regional style of blues is considered to be among the earliest forms of blues music. This probably explains why much of the previous research focused on this musical form has commonly relied on historical myth

and overly romanticized notions, particularly when it comes to identifying its geographic roots (Lomax 1993; Miller 2002; Wald 2004). For example, one blues scholar eloquently described the origins of Delta blues thusly, “the origins of the blues in the Mississippi Delta are as deep, wide, and muddy as the river that gives the area its name” (Miller 2002). The point here is not to overly criticize such scholarly works. In fact, in the sense that the origins of this musical expression are neither straight forward, nor clear, its origins are indeed “muddy.” Rather, in this this paper we are simply arguing that a significant re-evaluation of the geographic origins of Delta blues is badly needed.

It is widely known and undeniable that the deepest roots of blues music lead back to the African continent. It is equally well-known that the African musical culture that informed the blues diffused to North America via the forced relocation of millions of slaves during the 300-years of the Atlantic slave trade (Chernoff 1981; Roberts 1998; Kubic 2008).). For instance, scholars focusing on blues from the Delta have traditionally paid overwhelming attention to the music’s African roots, presuming that its distinctiveness is a direct result of the African-dominated folk culture that evolved within the region (Evans 1970, 1978; Palmer 1981; Cogdell DjeDje 1998). Yet, this simple one-step movement of culture from Africa-to-the-Delta is only part of a much more expansive story in need of further amplification. Figure 2, originally conceptualized by geographer and blues guitarist Alan Marcus, demonstrates a series of diffusionary pathways responsible for the evolution of “blues culture.”² The map, while overgeneralized, is used here to demonstrate a one-way flow of musical culture over time and space. For example, it conceptually demonstrates how African-rooted musical culture diffused back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean via the guise of related, yet slightly different musical forms. It should be acknowledged, however, that these identified pathways in reality functioned as avenues for cultural exchange between and among the geographic regions they connect. Moreover, as the musical culture in question progressed along these pathways, it both transformed and was transformed by the various geographical regions through which it circulated, the Delta included. In effect, we could consider this collection of diffusionary paths as the primary circulatory network through which a truly syncretic blues-influenced and exceptionally dynamic musical form evolved. Each of the diffusionary pathways identified on Figure 2 are summarized on Table 1, and are discussed in turn in the following sections.

Figure 2: Pathways Of Diffusion, Movement And Migration Associated With The Evolution Of Delta Blues

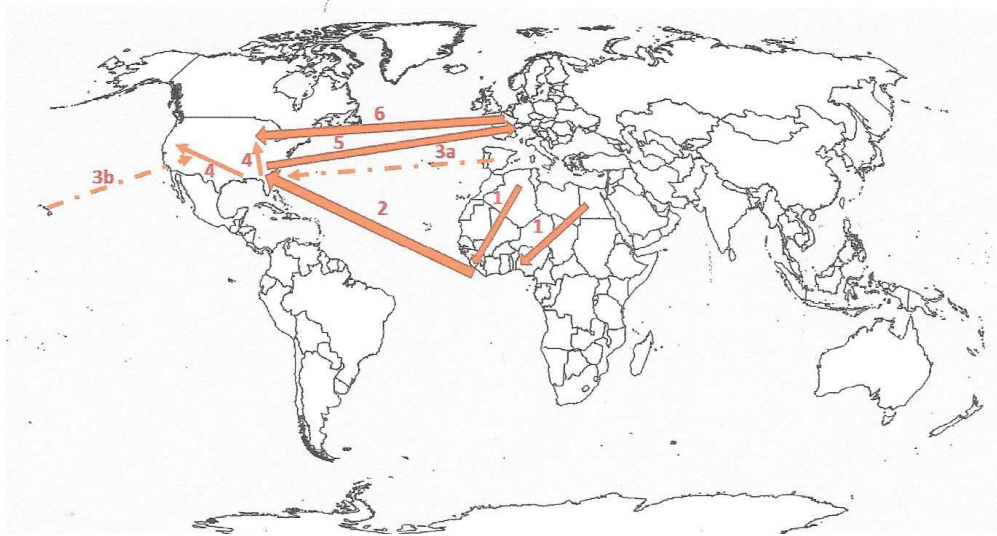


Table 1: Pathways Of Diffusion, Movement And Migration Associated With The Evolution Of Delta Blues (Pathways Correspond To Those Identified On Figure 2 Above)

<i>Pathway 1</i>	North African/Middle East/West Africa Musical Exchange
<i>Pathway 2</i>	Atlantic Slave Trade/Middle Passage
<i>Pathway 3a</i>	Influence of Spanish Fandango and Open Tuning
<i>Pathway 3b</i>	Hawaiian Influence via the Slide Guitar
<i>Pathway 4</i>	The Southern Diaspora/Great Migration
<i>Pathway 5</i>	TransAtlantic Musical Diffusion
<i>Pathway 6</i>	The British Invasion Brings the Blues Home

Diffusion Stream 1: North Africa/West Africa musical exchange

A major challenge encountered when tracing the roots of blues music back to its original African sources is the fact that the African continent exhibits considerable cultural diversity. The sub-regions that served as the primary sources for slaves brought to North America, a geographic milieu that only represents a subset of a vast, culturally complex continent, are themselves highly fragmented and culturally pluralistic. For example, these source regions have always been the home of multiple religions, languages, dialects and customs. Accordingly, they have also always exhibited considerable

diversity when it comes to song and dance, instrumentation, performance styles, and musically-related social practices and rituals (Gioia 2008). One key then to understanding the African roots of blues is to acknowledge the syncretic process responsible for their formation prior to their arrival in North America. Diffusion stream 1 on Figure 2 graphically illustrates the cultural exchange that occurred as early as the 7th and 8th century between North Africa, the Middle East and portions of West Africa. This exchange was responsible for the syncretic merge of West African animistic traditions with Arab and Berber musical traditions, many of which were intimately tied to practices of Islam. For example, Diouf (2013) and Kubic (2008) have demonstrated direct connections between the practice of melisma, a style of singing common to blues-influenced music involving the use of multiple notes in a single syllable, to Islamic calls to prayer practiced throughout the Maghreb region of North Africa. In time this style of singing, and the instrumentation associated with it, merged with musical traditions that mirrored the timbre and rhythm-based linguistic heritage of West Africa. West African percussion instrumentation essentially simulated these dialects and languages, and in combination with the practice of melisma, was responsible for infusing rhythmic and timbre subtleties into the blues tradition that evolved across the Atlantic (Palmer 1981, Scaruffi 2007).

Diffusion Stream 2: Atlantic Slave Trade

The relocation of African musical traditions into North America via the Atlantic slave trade is demonstrated by diffusion stream 2. The disproportionately large numbers of slaves relocated to the southern portions of the continent were ultimately responsible for the formation of a host of musical forms, including the genre that we now refer to as blues. Yet as influential as these African musical influences may have been in the region, it would be false to simply consider southern blues music a transplanted form of African folk culture. The experience of forceful relocation from home dramatically transformed the overall cultural heritage of the slave community, with the impacts of this process having significant influences on African musical traditions. Pioneering blues writer Samuel Charters, after decades of searching for the roots of American blues in Africa, came to the realization that blues could not solely be defined by African customs and traditions alone. His years of field work culminated in his seminal book *The Roots of Blues: An African Search*, within which he verified a host of African influences, yet he ultimately concluded that blues was essentially a "new" cultural product of the American South (Charters 1981).

The melding of the varied and previously distinct African cultures that had merged following relocation would undoubtedly explain this "new" music to a degree, yet a host of scholars have identified a variety of European musical

influences within blues (Djedje 1998, Scaruffi 2007, Gioia 2008). These influences were partially related to the need for African slaves to adapt their music to European instrumentation, but also stemmed from slaves adapting the harmonic and compositional structures common within Western music. For example, even the most traditional and oldest of American blues is centered around strong harmonic progressions that come directly from traditional European counterpoint. Overtime African and European musical traditions merged even further as slaves began performing European folk song styles, Christian spirituals and hymns, all of which had some influence on the development of blues.

The precise manner and circumstances in which African and European music traditions merged varied considerably throughout the South based on numerous factors, such as the exact source of slaves, the ethnic mix of European populations, and the cultural, social and economic context within which African slaves were assimilated into their "new world." Coincidentally, the blues music that evolved in North America exhibited considerable regional diversity. A number of regional styles have been identified, including at least two in Mississippi alone, yet the three most commonly referenced regional blues styles include Piedmont blues, Texas blues and blues from the Mississippi Delta (Bastin 1986, 1993; Evans 2008). The distinct genre of blues that developed in the Mississippi Delta certainly demonstrates European influences, yet its distinctiveness is characterized by the very strong presence of African influences, including syncretic instrumentation, and singing styles that incorporate melisma, referred to as field hollers and/or moans (Wald 2004, 2010).

Diffusion Stream 4: The Southern Diaspora/Great Migration

Diffusion stream 4 evident on Figure 2 is indicative of a geographical process that has been referred to as the Great Migration, or the Southern Diaspora (Grossman 1989; Leeman 1991; Holley 2000; Gregory 2005; Berlin 2010). This process unfolded during the first part of the 20th century, a time period when millions of southerners, both African-American and white, relocated from the rural south to the urban north and west. Labelling this migration the Southern Diaspora, and noting the widespread economic, political, social and cultural impacts it had on the United States, Gregory (2005) has considered this process to be "the most momentous internal population movement of the twentieth century." Perhaps most importantly for this paper, Gregory highlights how musical changes functioned as a lens from which to understand the broader transformations that were the outcome of this process. This migration witnessed the transformation of blues from a rural-based, acoustic musical form to one that was electrified and urban. The technological revolution that saw the electric guitar replace the piano as the

foundation of rhythm sections ultimately led to evolution of what became referred to as "urban" blues (Gioia 2008).

The raw and overly stark sound of the Delta blues was sonically situated such that it served as the perfect musical ingredient for the electronically enhanced blues that evolved as this diaspora unfolded. Urban blues styles emerged in a number of larger northern and western cities, such as Detroit, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York. However, it was in Chicago, the primary urban destination of untold thousands of migrants from the Mississippi Delta, where a particularly gritty and distinctly raw form of urban blues was born. This process is best exemplified by the life and music of blues great Muddy Waters, a migrant from the Mississippi Delta who relocated to Chicago in the early 1940s, where he was responsible for the evolution of a sonically and emotionally expansive-style of electric blues, one that became known simply as "Chicago" blues (Gordon 2002).³ The broader social, political and cultural outcome of the Southern Diaspora was profound in several ways. Musically speaking, it was the diffusion of Delta culture from Mississippi to the urban north and west that provided the mechanism that enabled Delta blues to break away from its regional and racial confines and enter America's cultural DNA, and by doing so it reshaped the sound of popular music worldwide.

Diffusion Stream 5: Transatlantic Musical Diffusion

Diffusion stream 5 refers to a geographic process involving the diffusion of both rural and urban blues from the United States to Europe. These forms of diffusion occurred in two main ways. First, American music itself diffused rapidly and most immediately via radio and record sales during the on-set of World War II, a time period that coincided with the initial stages of the age of electronically mass distributed music. By 1940 a very large majority of Americans had regular access to radio and such high adoption rates of mass distributed music were mirrored in Europe (Fauser 2013; Winkler 2013). As the war progressed, radio listeners in Great Britain were increasingly exposed to American blues when the BBC broadcasted blues records as a means to soothe nerves rattled by Nazi bombing raids (Obrecht 2010). Moreover, both during and after the war American servicemen disembarking in port cities, such as Liverpool, brought blues recordings that quite often found their way into the hands of British record aficionados and radio programmers. The post-war economic boom experienced on both sides of the Atlantic, and the demographic booms that resulted from it, greatly increased the rate and volume of musical diffusion and exchange that occurred as the 1950s transitioned into the 1960s.

Beyond record sales and post-war radio, American blues musicians themselves eventually brought live music directly to European audiences via

concerts and festivals held throughout the continent during the post-war period, many of which featured such blues artists as headline acts. This music was highly received and became very popular among youth in the United Kingdom, especially within London, Liverpool and Newcastle, and this was particularly true when they were directly exposed to blues artists with Delta roots. For example, Muddy Waters' shockingly loud and amplified performance at the 1958 Leeds Festival has been widely identified as the primary motivating factor for the formation a number of British bands that ultimately forged their own raucous blues-based musical expressions, including the Animals, the Yardbirds, and the Rolling Stones (Gordon 2002; Gioia 2008; Denning 2017).

Diffusion Stream 6: The British Invasion brings the blues home

Diffusion stream 6 began occurring in earnest in the mid-1960s when the music associated with large numbers of the aforementioned British rock bands became increasingly popular in the United States. This process has been affectionately labeled the British Invasion and is one that is considered a primary social and cultural mechanism responsible for the for the eventual rise of the "counter-culture" on both sides of the Atlantic (Perrone 2004; Miles 2009; Whiticker 2015). The Beatles are often the first group mentioned in the public discourse concerning the British Invasion, yet the Rolling Stones perhaps best exemplify how this process pertains to the back-and-forth flow of Delta musical culture. For example, the latter group actually took their name from one of Muddy Water's signature songs (Rolling Stone), and eventually precisely reversed diffusionary pathway 4 when they trekked from London to the same South Side Chicago studio in order to record exactly where Muddy himself had recorded his early hits.⁴

The Rolling Stones, the Animals, the Beatles, and the Kinks were at the forefront of this invasion, but throughout the decade these acts were followed by a large variety of other blues-influenced bands, such as the Yardbirds, Led Zeppelin, and the Who. These particular groups, and more, were directly informed by blues musicians with links to the Mississippi Delta, thus it is accurate to state that they were largely responsible for re-exposing America to the Delta blues. For example, the career of Delta-born Muddy Waters had leveled off considerably by the late 1950s, largely due to the increased popularity of that era's Rock'n'Roll, best represented by the music of Elvis Presley. Yet his music, and his career, experienced a massive resurgence after it fully diffused across the Atlantic and returned from Europe in a modified form. The musical outcome of this diffusionary exchange was most accurately and pointedly summarized by Waters himself; "blues had a baby, and they called it rock 'n' roll" (Gordon 2002).

Missing diffusionary links from other cultural crossroads

The diffusionary processes identified in Figure 2 by numbers 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 have indeed been treated in the literature, but are typically addressed individually, rather than being viewed as collective elements within a more extensive network of cultural exchange. Further, strict reliance on these processes alone, be they viewed separately or collectively, reinforces the persistent myth that Delta blues represents an art form nurtured in isolation from the modern world. Case in point, a simple interpretation of Figure 2 may lead to the conclusion that blues neatly transitioned from a folk idiom to a popular musical form only after progressing through the later stages of the circulation (e.g., diffusionary pathways 4, 5 and 6). In reality, Delta blues musicians were heavily influenced and informed by the sounds and trends of the mainstream music industry long before their art became popular outside the region (Wald 2004, 2010; Gioia 2008). The historical record actually suggests that early influences from two additional diffusionary streams, both intimately linked to the popular music industry, were necessary ingredients responsible for the full cultural circulation evident on Figure 2. These two external diffusionary influences were manifested within Delta music prior to its diffusion to the urban north and west (prior to diffusionary pathways 4 on the Figure 2).

The two additional cultural influences discussed here – musical influences from Spain via the Spanish Fandango (note Spanish), and from Hawaii via the slide guitar, respectively – have largely been ignored in the academic literature, and deserve amplification here for two main reasons. First, the precise musical ingredients contributed by these influences are themselves products of syncretic cultural exchanges and cultural diffusion that impacted their own respective cultural hearths or "birthplaces." Second, these musical influences both diffused globally, yet it was within the Delta where their impact were most significantly magnified. Upon diffusing to the region, and converging with one another, these musical elements contributed to critical signatures that came to define the very distinctiveness of Delta blues.

Diffusionary Stream 3a: Influence of the Spanish Fandango and Open Tuning

The European influences described earlier in this paper manifested within blues in various ways, but perhaps no aspect of European music impacted the evolution of Delta blues more than the form and sound of the Spanish Fandango. The Spanish Fandango originally referred to an up-tempo musical form that accompanied a lively couples folkdance style that emerged within Andalucía in the early 1700s. Its precise origins are unclear, although musicologists have identified a diverse array of Moorish, African, Gitano, Afro-Latin, and even Amerindian influences (Goldberg and Piza 2016). Thus,

it is undeniable that this cultural phenomena reflects the fact that Spain, particularly the region of Andalucía, historically occupied several crucial crossroads, providing cultural connections between Europe and Africa, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and Europe and the Atlantic World.

By 1800 the term "Fandango" was used to refer to the music itself, as opposed to the dance, and the popularity of this musical form led it to widely influence European classical compositions. After diffusing to the U.S. the Fandango was introduced to the nation's burgeoning popular music industry in 1860 after Liverpool-born musician Henry Worrall filed copyrights for two instrumental guitar songs that directly incorporated its sound and form; "Worrall's Original Spanish Fandango" and "Sebastopol" (Obrecht 2017) Both songs transformed the popular musical form to the guitar by requiring the strings to be tuned to open chords, specifically the Open G and D, while playing simple arpeggios. In time these popular songs became staples among formal middle class parlor music, a trend that accelerated after mass-produced guitars became widely available via mail order (Obrecht 2015, 2016, 2017; Wald 2016). The combination of their widespread appeal, and the fact that they were relatively simple to perform, led them to be regularly included in tutoring books packaged with newly purchased instruments. Accordingly, the use of open-tunings became the starting point for numerous rural guitarists at the turn of the 19th century. A large number of seminal blues artists in the Delta widely utilized this technique in a variety of ways, including Muddy Waters, who had purchased his first guitar via mail-order from Sears and Roebuck. For instance, in a 1941 interview with musicologist Alan Lomax, immediately after recording his first songs for the Library of Congress, the future Father of Electric Blues was recorded vividly describing the effectiveness of what he and his contemporaries in the Delta simply referred to as "Spanish tuning" (Gordon 2002).

Diffusion Stream 3b: Hawaii Influence via the Slide Guitar

The widespread adaption of open-tuning within the Delta partially stems from the fact that their use significantly enhanced the sound generated by another guitar technique popular within the region – the use of the slide guitar. Guitarists incorporating this latter technique, rather than altering the pitch of the strings in the conventional manner, place an object, such as a knife, metal bar or a bottleneck upon the strings to vary their vibrating length, thereby altering the pitch. "Sliding," or moving, the object along the neck of the guitar, enables a musician to generate smoother transitions in pitch. When combined with open-tuning, this technique facilitated the creation of especially expressive accents, harmonics and vibratos (van der Merwe 1989; Payne 2014).

The mainstream academic and popular music communities have generally maintained that the slide guitar technique is an element of blues whose cultural lineage traces back to Africa. For example, most literature on the subject links the use of slide guitars to the variously identified single-stringed instruments commonly found across the rural Delta, such as "diddley bows" and/or "jitterbugs." These instruments, assumed to be archetypal elements of African-American folk culture, are in turn thought to have been inspired by the monochord zithers found throughout West and Central Africa (Evans 1970, 1978; Ferris 1978; Lomax 1993). Troutman, after thoroughly inspecting the historical record, has recently presented compelling evidence suggesting that its far more likely that the slide guitar tradition actually originated in Hawaii (Troutman 2013, 2016). According to his theory, the slide guitar entered the Delta blues milieu only after it was brought to the mainland via traveling Hawaiian musicians during the early years of the twentieth century.

The influence that the Hawaiian Islands had on the blues guitar, and on popular music in general, stems primarily from the role the islands served as one of the world's most significant crossroads during the 19th century. Hawaii has historically functioned as the *most* significant cultural crossroads in the Pacific realm, a site-and-situation attribute that led it be the birthplace of a variety of syncretic cultural forms, including diverse musical forms (Carr 2014). The islands location along Pacific trading routes brought sailors, merchants, laborers, entrepreneurs and missionaries from a wide variety of source regions, including the mainland U.S., Japan, Portugal, Spain, and Mexico, all of which significantly influenced Hawaiian musical traditions. Spanish guitars first arrived to Hawaii from Mexico in the early 1800s, and by 1890 a local guitarist by the name of Joseph Kekuku'upenakana'iaupuniokamehameha Apuakehau (or simply Joseph Kekuku) had perfected a new style of playing that Troutman (2013, 2016) argues precluded the slide technique later utilized so commonly within the blues tradition. Kekuku would essentially lay the guitar on his lap and slid a piece a metal along the strings to produce multiple chords. This new technique was quickly incorporated across a variety of musical genres on the island, and within a few decades Hawaiian guitarists became extremely popular across the mainland U.S., especially in the South where they appeared in vaudeville, Lyceum and minstrel shows. Kekuku himself toured North America and Europe for thirty years between 1904 and 1934, and by 1916 Hawaiian guitar music outsold every other genre of music in the United States (Troutman 2013).

The staggering popularity of Hawaiian guitar music on the U.S. continent during the exact time period when Delta blues was maturing into a distinct sub-genre lend credible support for Troutman's arguments. Beyond

such historical probabilities, Troutman also offers a comprehensive list of similarities between blues slide guitarists and Native Hawaiian musicians, including parallels based on actual technique, terminology, repertoires, song titles, and inferences in interviews (Troutman 2013). The most compelling evidence supporting a link between Hawaii and the Delta blues is that African-American Delta musicians themselves understood and acknowledged their musical styles as that of playing "Hawaiian guitar." For instance, W.C. Handy, acknowledged for providing distinctive form to American blues, and therefore known as the "Father of the Blues," upon hearing blues slide guitar for the first time in the Delta near the turn of the 19th century described it as ".....in the manner popularized by Hawaiian guitarists who used steel bars....." (Handy 1969). Eddie "Son" House, commonly described as the single most important blues figure linking pre-war Delta musical traditions to more contemporary mainstream popular music (Palmer 1981; Davis 2003; Gioia 2008), and therefore critical to the diffusionary network identified on Figure 2, also emphatically acknowledged an Hawaiian influence.⁵

Conclusion and final remarks

The intent of this paper was threefold. First, we offer a conceptual framework emphasizing geographical movement, in the forms of migration and diffusion, as a key mechanism responsible for the evolution of Delta blues music. Second, by conceptualizing the variety of influences responsible for the music's creation as geographically linked components operating within a unified network of cultural exchange, we demonstrate the true global nature of this musical form. Third, we build upon and contribute to a growing literature that uproots and challenges some long-maintained myths concerning the geographical, cultural, and historical origins of blues music.

In this paper we outline an approach that investigates the geographical roots of blues, yet acknowledge that many of the ideas presented in this paper warrant further investigation. For instance, the diffusionary pathways highlighted on Figure 2 represent a mere subset of the complete set of influences that impacted Delta blues. Further, even the limited collection of influences we discuss here merged over time and space in exceptionally complex ways. For example, the Spanish influence on blues, manifested via the Spanish Fandango, came from a musician born in Liverpool, England (birthplace of the Beatles), yet only manifested after he relocated to North America and contributed to the popular music industry. The nature of the Hawaiian influences on blues via the slide guitar, while vividly and sonically palpable on the surface, are equally complex. The precise temporal progressions of the two respective influences remain particularly vague. Henry Worrall published his version of the Spanish Fandango in 1860, at least thirty years prior to the known arrival of Hawaiian music on the U.S. mainland

(Troutman 2015). Yet it is conceivable that the practice of utilizing open-chords may not have become commonplace within the Delta until after Hawaiian slide-guitar techniques diffused to the region. It is also possible that the two guitar techniques, used in combination with one another, diffused to the Delta together at the same time. The precise nature of these influences are muddled even further when we one considers that Hawaiian slide-techniques were implemented via an instrument that originated in Spain to begin with (Summerfield 2003). In short, the musical influences evident within "Delta blues culture" converged and manifested in different ways, in different places, at different times.

The exact timing and precise musical connections remain vague, yet what is vividly clear is that the convergence of Hawaiian and Spanish diffusionary influences, in combination with the expressive vocal traditions rooted in African practices of melisma, contributed to a syncretic musical culture in the Delta whose sonic impacts were profoundly and globally significant. The tendency for blues musicians from the Delta – Charley Patton, Son House, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and Elmore James, to name just a few – to so effectively, and so powerfully, combine the Hawaiian slide-guitar and Spanish open-tunings as means to replicate and respond to the human voice undoubtedly partially explains why they became so popular to later generations of blues-influenced rockers world-wide (Oliver 1984; Dicaire 1999; Gioia 2008). Thus, our conclusions provide further support for notions refuting previously oversimplified depictions of the Delta, and by extension Delta blues, as somehow being detached from the progression of history and the world (Cobb 1992; Strait 2012). Cobb's characterizations of the Delta as a region exhibiting "close and consistent interaction" with a host of prevailing national and global forces have a geographical parallel; the uniqueness and significance of the Delta, and the musical culture to which it gave birth, stems from the region's multiple connections with a wide variety of other places. Moreover, the dynamic vitality of Delta Blues can be largely explained by the region's musical connections to a particular combination of other places – namely Hawaii, Spain and West Africa – that functioned as unique cultural crossroads in their own right. Acknowledging these connections does not diminish the extensive African-American cultural influence that lies at the core of blues culture and music. Likewise, the results presented here certainly do not indicate that Delta blues musicians were less creative or less talented than previously thought. They do, however, suggest that the magnitude of multiple diasporic collisions evident within the Delta were responsible for a musical culture that was and is far less isolated and segregated, and far more fluid and ethnically diverse, than has been traditionally imagined (Troutman 2013).

Using the lens of musical culture, it is undeniable that Spain, Hawaii and the Mississippi Delta are indeed linked to one another within a extensive and complex network of cultural exchange, one that has been responsible for the distinctive evolution of a musical form whose impacts have been felt globally. For this reason we believe the time is past due for scholars to more significantly incorporate the geographical dimensions of music within endeavors that utilize the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena as a means to study globalization, transculturation, or diasporas (Appadurai 1991; Glick Schiller et al. 1996; Hannerz 1996). Musical forms obviously can and have spread freely and are capable of easily crossing borders in ways that many other commodities and cultural phenomena cannot. In doing so, music originating from geographically wide-spread source regions can still influence one another, and converge with one another, in complex ways.

The terms "global music" and/or "world music" are indeed present within both public and academic discourse, but ironically are most frequently used as marketing categories to refer to musical expressions that have supposedly been isolated from non-Western musical traditions. We maintain that blues music, particularly Delta blues, irrespective of previous attempts to inculcate its mythical folk roots, is in fact truly a transcultural or global phenomena. Geographers investigating the spatial aspects of particular musical forms often relate them to specific cultural landscapes or regions, typically by referencing actual lyrics and or themes inspired by these areas (White and Day 1997; Hancock- Barnett 2012). The few scholars who have approached the geographical study of music from a more global perspective have tended to focus on the ways that particular genres, or sub-genres, have diffused over space (Connell and Gibson 2003; Dalbom 2010; Strait 2012). We feel that a thorough understanding of the geographical aspects of any musical culture requires a deeper level of analysis. If the geographical study of Delta blues teaches us anything, its that an exceptionally complex and multi-layered circuitry of spatial connections was directly responsible for both its very creation and its relevance to the wider world. Accordingly, we maintain that thoroughly understanding the role that diffusion has on the globalization of music requires more than a mere consideration of its movement from point A to point B, or to point C. One key to unlocking the mysteries of music posed by Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards is to acknowledge the dynamic impact that the very process of geographical movement can itself have on musical evolution.

Notes

1 – The Mississippi Delta is a distinctive northwest section of the state of Mississippi that lies between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers. This region is most commonly referred to by locals simply as the the "Delta." Irrespective

of its name, the region is not part of the actual delta of the Mississippi River, which is generally referred to as the Mississippi River Delta. By comparison, the Delta is actually a alluvial plain, created overtime by regular flooding of the Mississippi and the Yazoo rivers over thousands of years. Accordingly, this region is exceptionally flat and contains some of the most fertile soil in the world. Due to its well-entrenched history of plantation agriculture, and the unique racial, cultural and economic systems historically associated with this form of agriculture, the Delta has been referred to as "The Most Southern Place on Earth" (Cobb 1992).

2 – An earlier version of this map reflecting Marcus's original ideas has been utilized within previously published work (Strait 2012). That original map has been modified somewhat to accommodate newly developed ideas.

3 – Muddy Waters precise birthplace and date have been debated, but his birth name was McKinley Morganfield and he was most likely born in Jugs Corner, in Issaquena County, Mississippi in 1913. Morganfield grew up on Stovall Plantation near Clarksdale, Mississippi, which is where he was recorded by musicologist Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress in 1941. In 1943 he migrated to Chicago, Illinois. His use of electrical amplification led him to be considered the father of electric blues (or Chicago Blues) and is why he is often cited as the critical link between Delta Blues and Rock 'N' Roll.

4 – The Rolling Stones recorded at Chess Records, then located at 2120 South Michigan Avenue, during the group's first U.S. tour in 1964. Chess Records was in operation at this location from 1956 to 1965, the time period when Muddy Waters released most of his classic blues hits. The company eventually relocated to much a larger building in the late-1960s, 320 East 21st Street, the label's final Chicago home. The original location on 2120 South Michigan Avenue is now home to *Willie Dixon's Blues Heritage Foundation*.

5 – The historical significance of Son House (born Eddie James House, Jr.) to blues evolution is generally based on four factors. First, he was a contemporary of and played with Charley Patton, who is considered the Father of the Delta Blues due to the fact that was the first Delta blues musician to record and became known outside the region. Second, like Muddy Waters, House was recorded by Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress in 1941 and 1942. Third, House had formative influences on a number of other Delta musicians, including both Waters and Robert Johnson. Finally, House was one of the more important Delta musicians that was "rediscovered" during the blues revival of the 1960s, whereupon his career was re-established as an entertainer when he began performing widely for young, mostly white audiences in coffeehouses, at folk festivals and on concert tours during the rise of the American folk music revolution.

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