“I’m Creating My Own Soca Tune… as I Discover Myself”
Intersections of Music and Identity in Immigrant Young Adults

by

Rachelle C. Myrie

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ABSTRACT

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Rachelle C. Myrie
University of Guelph, 2017

Advisory Committee:
Dr. Andrea Breen
Dr. Lynda Ashbourne

This study is a qualitative exploration of music as a narrative form and the role it plays in the identity development of African and African-Caribbean immigrant young adults residing in Ontario, Canada. Eleven African and African-Caribbean permanent and temporary immigrants, between the ages of 19 and 29, participated in semi-structured interviews. Interviews centered on immigration experience and music use. The interviews elicited rich accounts of experiences pertaining to personal, racial and ethnic components of identity. Thematic analysis indicated that music is instrumental in identity development as it can provide coherence across time and context in the framework of relationships, including relationships with place, people and various selves. Furthermore, findings highlight that music can contribute to identity development by facilitating resistance to master narratives. This study expands on current narrative research and pushes scholars to consider narrative forms that veer from traditional oral storytelling; it calls for exploration of stories that are not only experienced in the mind but are embodied.
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Introduction

At the level of daily life, music has power. It is implicated in every dimension of social agency... Music may influence how people compose their bodies, how they conduct themselves, how they experience the passage of time, how they feel – in terms of energy and emotion – about themselves, about others, and about situations. (DeNora, 2000, p. 17)

Music is a personal and social phenomenon, transcending geographic and temporal boundaries and situated at the centre of everyday life (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). Music is used in many contexts, such as driving, exercising, hanging out with friends, working, and studying; allowing individuals to set the atmosphere, regulate emotions, and generate pleasure, amongst other things (DeNora, 2000; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). Whether it is the central focus of attention or the accompaniment to another activity, music also serves as a tool for identity exploration; it helps individuals to further understand themselves and affirm self and group identity (DeNora, 2000; Rajs, 2007; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003; Vitale, 2013).

Identity exploration occurs throughout the lifespan; however, it is especially pronounced during adolescence and emerging adulthood. During this transitional time period individuals are often focused on developing their self-concept, constructing identity, and finding their place in society (Arnett, 2006, 2007). Identity is the understanding of self both socially and personally (Bamberg, 2011). Identity development is a continuous dialectical process in which identity is being constructed and modified over time (Bamberg, 2011; Barratt, 2011; Clary-Lemon, 2010; Ngo, 2008). New experiences spark re-evaluation of identities, through which identities are either confirmed or altered.
Experiences of migration can place individuals in the position of not fully belonging to their home country or the country they migrated to (Ogbuagu & Baffoe, 2015). New cultural contexts highlight and increase awareness of differences; particularly when an individual has migrated to a context in which they are no longer part of the ‘majority’ population. In these cases, it is important for individuals to retain a positive identity and view of themselves or modify their identity to suit desires to fit into their cultural context (Baffoe, 2011). This study focuses on connections between music and identity in the context of African and African-Caribbean individuals’ migration to Ontario, Canada. The term African is used to refer to individuals who migrated from African nations, while the term African-Caribbean refers to individuals with African ancestral origins who migrated via the Caribbean islands (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005).

Throughout this manuscript references to racialized black identities are made; however, it is important to highlight that when these terms are used I acknowledge the heterogeneity amongst this diverse population and the extent to which participants’ subscription to these various social labels varies. This study provides new insights on the personal and social functions of music by exploring the participants’ experiences of music in their transitions from one cultural and geographical location to another.

**Context**

**Immigration**

For immigrants, successful integration in a new country is influenced by their ability to explore and reconstruct their identities (Baffoe 2011; Rothe, Pumariega, &
Identity exploration can be more prominent in immigrant populations because of the loss of links to one’s culture (Matsunaga, Hecht, Elek, & Ndiaye, 2010). Immigrants are not only faced with losing connections to their country of origin, they also have to learn different cultural norms and practices in their new country, creating a balancing act between their ‘home’ and ‘host’ culture (Matsunaga et al., 2010; Rothe et al., 2011). Successful integration into new cultural communities is often contingent on the ability to transform or maintain positive self-concepts and identities in the face of new cultural paradigms and an intense desire to fit in (Baffoe, 2011). For visible minority immigrants such as African and African-Caribbean young adults, the maintenance or building of identity can promote cultural integration, aid and support social adjustment, buffer negative reactions to discrimination, increase academic success, moderate negative media effects, and increase empowerment (Baffoe, 2011; Travis & Bowman, 2012; Way, Hernandez, Rogers, & Hughes, 2013; Zhang, Dixon, & Conrad, 2009).

Why African & African-Caribbean immigration and identity?

This study focuses on young adult African and African-Caribbean immigrants, both permanent and temporary residents, who currently reside in Ontario. I am especially interested in young adults (ages 18-30) because this time period is when identity concerns are paramount (McLean & Breen, 2015). My decision to focus on immigrant young adults of African and African-Caribbean descent is informed by the large population of African and African-Caribbean young adults in the Greater Toronto Area as well as my lived experience as a young adult, visible minority immigrant of African-Caribbean descent. The African and African-Caribbean population accounts for over 50% of the black population in Canada, with blacks being the third largest visible minority group in Canada (Statistics
Canada, 2013). Toronto has the largest African and African-Caribbean population in Canada and third largest in North America (Gooden & Hackett, 2012). African and African-Caribbean people have integrated themselves into the Canadian workforce and transformed the cultural and social face of the Greater Toronto Area bringing artistic, cultural, and political diversity (Gooden & Hackett, 2012).

Furthermore, this research interest was sparked by my experiences making and teaching music in the Greater Toronto Area as well as my experiences as an adolescent who juggled adjusting and integrating into a Canadian cultural context while navigating through the developmental processes of adolescence. This study is greatly influenced by a desire to further understand the experiences of those whom I encounter on a regular basis. I also seek to understand possible ways in which music is woven into young immigrants’ evolving narratives. As such, this study investigates the role that music plays in the exploration of identity, specifically narrative identity in young adult immigrants of African and African-Caribbean descent residing in Ontario.

Theories of Identity

There are many schools of thought on identity development within the social sciences (Dabback, 2010). Broadly, identity can be described as “the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions” (Bamberg, 2011, p. 4) and across time (Fivush, 2001; McAdams, 1993; McLean, 2008). Identity development is a process that is not static but fluid, constantly evolving (Bamberg, 2011; Barrett, 2011; Clary-Lemon, 2010; Ngo, 2008). The hallmark of identity is maintaining a sense of coherence while changing and evolving over time (Bamberg, 2011). Each time individuals face new experiences and contexts, they engage in identity work by
either confirming pre-existing identities or through modifying and reconstructing identities (McLean, 2008). It is the meaning making of such experiences that is at the core of identity development (McLean & Breen, 2015). New experiences and transitions into new social roles can influence both social and personal identities, identities that at times intersect in ways that cannot be separated (Breen, 2014).

The most commonly used theoretical framework for music and identity studies within music education and musicology is a symbolic interactionist perspective. From this perspective, most scholarly work is centred on social identity (Dabback, 2010; DeNora, 2000; Roberts, 2000). Social identity is how individuals define themselves in relation to group memberships (e.g. ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, vocations) (Howard, 2000). However, it would be remiss to focus solely on social identity as music creates experiences that are understood through both the personal and social dimensions of identity (Frith, 1996; MacDonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002). Music “describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social” (Frith, 1996, p. 109). It allows individuals to experience the world and themselves in new ways (Frith, 1996). There is often great interplay between social identity and personal identity (Howard, 2000) and a narrative conceptualization of identity allows scholars to capture both the personal and social realms of identity. As Riessman (2008) suggests, narrative can illuminate the intersections of personal biography and culture; it is because of its emphasis on the individual in the context of his or her culture and dynamic processes of change over time that a narrative conception of identity is utilized in this study.

**Narrative identity.** A narrative approach to identity emphasizes the use of stories as the mechanisms by which identity development occurs (McAdams, 1993; McLean &
Narrative identity is an individual’s life story, an integration of the past, present, and imagined future which provides a sense of coherence across time (McAdams & McLean, 2013). From this lens identity is realized through discourse and then represented through personal narratives, narratives that are constantly evolving as individuals interact with each other and social culture (Hammack, 2008, p. 230). In other words, through the construction and sharing of stories, whether personal stories, family stories, or larger cultural narratives, individuals provide insight into who they are and who they would like to be, to both themselves and to others (McAdams & McLean, 2013; McLean & Breen, 2015).

**Music & narrative identity.** Narrative identity highlights the relationship between self and society (McLean & Breen, 2015; Ngo, 2008). In narrative identity development, the process of storying reveals intersections of the personal and the social or cultural. A narrative conceptualization of identity allows scholars to focus on how individuals’ lives and autobiographical stories are constructed and expressed in connection to their sociocultural context (Hammack, 2008). The narrative approach may be especially relevant for examining music and identity as music can be a form for expressing stories. Ruud (1997) highlights that narrative identity theory is useful for music and identity work because music can anchor individuals in time, context and culture. Music provides connections between people and it also provides a sense of connection and continuity among our selves. In his work on music and narrative identity Vila (2014) highlights that music can provide “alliances” between our “diverse, fragmented, situational and imaginary narrative identities” (p. 15). From this perspective, a narrative approach to understanding music and identity highlights the dual nature of music to both aid in the construction and
the reflection of identity (Vila, 2014). Narrative identity is explored and constructed through social interaction and engagement with stories and it is also shared or reflected through the stories individuals share about themselves. Similarly, individuals can use music, including music sounds, lyrics, performance, or commentary, to both reflect individual identity and to explore imagined identities (Vila, 2014). An important dimension of music is that it offers potential for identity identification and exploration that is rooted in embodied experience. Music is experienced physically through sensory experiences and connections with bodily movement. It also communicates and establishes connections between and among groups of people and, as such, may be expressive and constitutive of identities that are connected to gender, race, class and other aspects of embodied experience (Vila, 2014).

**Music & Identity Literature**

Music is often portrayed as a powerful entity that has the ability to influence the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of people (DeNora, 2000). It is used to organize and formulate all aspects of the self, namely the social, emotional, and physical (DeNora, 2000). People use music to define themselves in both private and public spaces. Music also accesses and reflects cultural values and behaviours (Dabback, 2010). Without being limited to the concrete interpretation of language, music allows individuals to take from it their own meanings (Roberts, 2000). When compared to other art forms such as the visual arts and literary arts, music is made up of many components, such as sound, lyrics, performance, and commentary; each component can be significant and influential to individuals in varying ways (Vila, 2014).
Music as a story

To date, most of the literature centred on music and identity conceptualizes music as a form of expression with links to emotion and memory (Amir, 2012; DeNora, 2000; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2007; Robertson, 2004). Individuals often engage with music because the stories, messages, and themes captured are salient in their lives. The stories speak directly to the issues they are dealing with (Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). Meaning is found when individuals are able to connect lyrics of songs or the emotions generated by sound to their personal situations or contexts. This connection serves as a direct link and indicator of the individual’s lived experience (Elias, Lemish, & Khvorostianov, 2011; Miranda, 2013; Roy & Dowd, 2010). In essence, music is a direct reflection of one’s evolving autobiography (Roy & Dowd, 2010). Listening to, sharing, and performing music can be a way of expressing or understanding identity and telling a story to others when the lyrics or sounds are connected to an individual’s sense of being (Amir, 2012; Miranda, 2013; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2007).

Stories of emotion

Telling stories allows individuals to express how they are feeling (McLean & Mansfield, 2011). In the same way, when music is used to tell a story it is also a way of sharing one’s emotions. Music is often used by listeners and performers as a vehicle to move between different emotions. This allows individuals to change mood and energy to suit different environments or for personal well-being (DeNora, 2000). From infancy individuals have been taught to use music to regulate emotions; cross-culturally parents often soothe babies by singing to them (e.g. lullabies) (Miranda, Blais-Rochette, Vaugon, Osman, & Arias-Valenzuela, 2015). From this standpoint, music serves as a backdrop
against which feeling is discovered. Music is used as a resource for constructing and sparking emotion, and a tool for conveying how one is feeling (Amir, 2012; DeNora, 2000; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2007; Roy & Dowd, 2010). In this way, personal music choices facilitate emotional exploration.

**Stories of the past**

One of the ways in which individuals construct coherent identities is through meaning making of memories. Memories help position and create a sense of identity across time; they provide links between the present and the past (Clary-Lemon, 2010; McAdams & McLean, 2013). As such, the meanings individuals make of their memories are a key component of identity. “Identity is a discursive construct often revealed in the stories people tell about themselves and others, and in relaying memories of the past” (Clary-Lemon, 2010, p. 9). Memories of both significant and seemingly insignificant events are foundational building blocks for evolving identities; they shed light on how individuals create life stories and navigate the developmental process (Syed & Azmitia, 2008).

Music often serves as a marker of memorable, significant life events and evolving relationships. Music is often remembered in association with the relational frameworks in which it occurred (Breen, McLean, Cairney, & McAdams, 2016; McLean & Breen, 2015). Musical experiences are often embedded with memories of significant people and situations, thus rendering them a useful tool for recalling memories (Amir, 2012; Cohen, 2013; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Roy & Dowd, 2010). For many, certain songs have the ability to bring them back to certain points in their lives (Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). In essence, the stories and memories connected to songs can take one through an
individual’s life journey. Hennion (2010) comments on this idea by describing an amateur’s record library as a “trail of the amateur’s personal history” (p. 29). Music, however, is not only beneficial in remembering the individual’s history but also the history of a group. For example, in a study exploring the relationship between music, collective memory, and identity in Liverpool, England, Cohen (2013) highlighted that memories of local rock music from individuals residing in Liverpool, England were attached to the local identity of the people as well as their cultural heritage. In this example music served as a useful tool for recalling memories in a group context because it was something that everybody could access (Cohen, 2013). From this standpoint, music and the memories associated with it are instrumental in defining the identities of an individual or group of people.

**Stories of resistance**

Through music choices individuals are able to choose the story they tell to others and the message they give. They can choose to ascribe to the dominant cultural stories or they can choose to resist stories or identities imposed on them by society. It also permits individuals to decide what groups they prefer to identify with (Rajs, 2007). In her study of South African music and its meaning to the South African people, Robertson (2004) highlights how listening to South African music allowed individuals to imagine themselves in relation to other South Africans. She emphasizes that music can aid in the creation of imagined communities with others; this occurs by forming bonds and alliances with certain individuals and distancing and/or distinguishing themselves from other individuals and/or groups. These processes often serve as a way of renegotiating identity (Robertson, 2004). Using music as a tool to reconstruct identity is not new; throughout history music has been
used as a response to oppression and alienation- a way to reform group identity and resist societal labels (Brown, 1995; Rose, 2007). In the words of Rajs (2007),

Music can literally give voice to the powerless to label themselves and to express their existence as a group and their “nature” in contexts where the powerful either do not acknowledge their existence or label and identify them in ways they find objectionable. (p. 31)

Therefore, music can either provide a means for accessing an overarching cultural story, or provide stories that inspire the deviation from traditional collective stories (Breen & McLean, 2017; McLean & Breen, 2015).

**Music, Immigration & Identity**

Music can help construct a sense of shared identity among people who live in the same geographical area. Music also creates identities and shared experiences between individuals geographically distant from each other (Robertson, 2004). Music is not limited by boundaries; as people travel, they carry music with them (Baily & Collyer, 2006; Sardinha & Campos, 2016). For this reason, music can play an important role in migrant and diaspora experiences (Baily & Collyer, 2006; Slobin, 1994) and it can be a tool for dealing with the difficult and at times painful experiences associated with relocation (Elías et al., 2011).

When individuals migrate the way they engage with music can also change; musical tastes change to reflect new needs, a new desire to retain identity and links to home (Baily & Collyer, 2006; Elías et al., 2011). For example, in a qualitative study conducted by Gigi Durham (2004), South Asian American girls reported listening to Indian music from their homeland because it was a prime resource for connecting with
culture and reminded them of home. Memories often play an important role in navigating identity in a new place; music is a tool for conjuring and re-living the memories, stories, and narratives of immigrants and connecting them to the present (Baily & Collyer, 2006; Clary-Lemon, 2010; Elias et al., 2011; Olsen, 2004; Sardinha, 2016).

In new cultural contexts music may also be used to create community among immigrant groups; it is a way to bond and create social identity (Guran Aydin, 2016; Slobin, 1994; Turino, 1993). In instances where immigrants experience social and ethnic exclusion, discrimination and/or marginalization, music also serves a form of expression, empowerment and resistance (Campos, Nunes, & Simões, 2016; Shabtay, 2003). However, music is also a means by which immigrants can relate to new people and integrate into their host culture; it can contribute to a sense of belonging (de Block & Buckingham, 2007; Elias et al., 2011; Rothchild, 2016).

In summary, music can help fulfill an immigrant’s need to retain their cultural heritage and establish identity in a new place. Furthermore, it can be an indicator of how immigrants are integrating into their new cultural contexts. Elias et al., (2011) nicely encapsulate this idea in their quote “tell me the music you listen to and I will tell you how many years you have resided in the host country” (p. 74).

Whether through the channelling of emotion, remembering the past, breaking boundaries between place, creating new imagined places, or sharing stories, music can be useful for coping with transitions. In a study conducted by Lippman and Greenwood (2012), emerging adults were asked to identify a single piece of music that was especially meaningful and evocative of personally salient memories and to identify why the music was important to them. When analyzing the data three major themes were identified.
Findings suggest that music was a reminder of happy times, it affirmed views and values, and music helped them cope with a challenging transition such as transitioning from high school to university, ending an interpersonal relationship, or dealing with the death of a loved one (Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). Music can give stability during times of instability (Lippman & Greenwood, 2012).

In conclusion, existing literature indicates that migration influences identity development, music relates to both social and personal aspects of identity, and music can be useful for coping with transitions such as migration. Integrating these three areas of literature, I use a narrative conceptualization of identity to capture both personal and social dimensions of identity in the context of music and migration. I specifically look at the role music plays in the identity development of African and African-Caribbean young adult immigrants in Ontario, Canada.

**Objectives**

The objective of this exploratory study is to examine the role music plays in identity development in young adults of African and African-Caribbean descent. Privileging the voices of immigrants, this study provides a nuanced look at the role music plays in narrative identity construction through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of participants’ stories about music. Specifically, the research questions that guide this work are:

- What is the role of music in the exploration of identity in African and African–Caribbean immigrants (ages 18-29) currently residing in Canada?
- How do young adult African and African–Caribbean immigrants engage with music before, during, and post migration?
Methodology

In this study I conduct thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with transcribed interview data from semi-structured interviews. This methodology allows for examination of the individual’s lived experience from the individual’s own perspective, providing insight into the social world (Baffoe, 2011; Snape & Spencer, 2003). This study seeks to privilege the voice of the minority immigrant, putting the marginalized voice of individuals culturally, racially and ethnically “other” at the forefront (Baffoe, 2011). Through qualitative research the context and settings that frame individuals’ stories can be further understood (Creswell, 2013, p. 48).

Epistemology

This study is framed by a constructivist/interpretivist epistemological paradigm. From this perspective, knowledge is generated through subjective understandings and interpretations, grounded in experience (Bengtson et al., 2005; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Snape & Spencer, 2003). As such, meanings are relative, varying from individual to individual and within individuals across time and situation (Bamberg, 2011); they are context specific, nestled in culture and history, and embedded in social frameworks. From this framework, it is understood that knowledge is inherently laden with biases due to its subjective and co-constructed nature (Lincoln et al., 2011).

Reflexivity

It is important to acknowledge and critically examine my role as the researcher and co-constructor of knowledge in this research (Kannen, 2013; Lincoln et al., 2011; Rapley, 2001). My own experiences and identity shaped all aspects of this research, from developing my research topic, question and methods, to conducting the interviews and data
analysis. In the following paragraphs I outline my understanding of my own role in various stages of the research.

Prior to collecting data I reflected on my own positionality and experiences, I explored my motivation for this scope of research. As highlighted in the Context section of this manuscript, my lived experiences and notions of identity were critical to my motivation for pursuing this line of scholarly inquiry. I am a British born, black, immigrant woman of Jamaican heritage, currently residing in the Greater Toronto Area. I am also a practicing musician and music teacher, with a Bachelor of Art in music. Throughout my academic career, as well as my employment and volunteer history, my desire to bridge music and psycho-social thought is evident. This research is indicative of a motive to bridge two aspects of myself—music and my interest in the psychosocial, my personal interests, my identity. This research area reflects my experience and interest in music as a tool for positive self-exploration and development.

As a researcher I am invested in giving voice to those often silenced, voices that differ from the mainstream; particularly voices of minority youth and young adults. It is important to privilege their voices, because they are the experts of their story (Baffoe, 2011). This leaning was evidenced in my commitment to the African and African-Caribbean demographic when conceptualizing this study. Despite recruitment challenges (to be described further in the Limitations section), I was committed to exploring the lived experiences of African and African-Caribbean young adults, racialized as black young adults. Efforts are often made to minimize topics of race in contemporary discourse in Canada as many Canadians believe that overt racial discrimination remains a thing of the past and it no longer exists (Henderson & Officer, 2017). Yet as Richeson and Sommers
(2016) highlight, if you look at any online article discussing topics of race there are often numerous examples of racism and hate-speech in the comments section. This demonstrates that racism continues to live and is very much a part of our present realities. In his recent documentary “The Skin We’re In” (Henderson & Officer, 2017), journalist Desmond Cole explores contemporary race-relations as well as the history of racialization and racism in Canada in the context of law enforcement and police carding. Race continues to be a dominant factor in the lived experience as well as the perceived and experienced identities of many individuals. This evidences the need for academics to continue to explore the social construct of race and racial discrimination (Baffoe, 2011; Richeson & Sommers, 2016).

A perceived shared identity existed between me and the participants. Some of these embodied similarities are visibly apparent, such as similarities in skin colour and hair texture. While these characteristics were evident without verbal disclosure, during recruitment I also disclosed to participants that I was an immigrant of African-Caribbean descent and a music teacher. If participants asked, I further relayed that I was of Jamaican descent. Eighty-two percent of the participants for this study were women; as a woman I identified with these female participants on an additional level.

I acknowledge that my identity as an immigrant, as black, and as a woman may have promoted an increased sense of rapport with the participants. During interviews I sensed an openness from many participants; a willingness to speak freely and be emotionally vulnerable. In many interviews I noted the feeling of ‘them’ versus ‘us’; ‘them’ being other races, most often ‘white’, and ‘us’ as ‘black’ individuals. This was often reflected in participant terminology; there was an underlying assumption that I was
knowledgeable about ideas or expressed experiences because of our mutual immigrant and/or racialized identities. For example, I perceived that many participants assumed I understood Afro-hair terminology and experience; they also often looked to me to assist with remembering song names and artists, thinking I would know. In some interviews they shared their music with me, so that I could experience what they experience; and perhaps I would experience a similar emotional response to the music. Although in many cases there were shared understandings; I always endeavoured to be explicit in asking participants to explain what they meant in our dialogue. It was important that I limit the extent to which my impressions or my personal understandings replaced their subjective meanings.

Throughout each interview I was mindful of projecting my own thoughts and feelings onto the participants. During and after the interviews I made personal memos of distinct thoughts and feelings I had in response to the stories participants shared. Memos that I took during analysis will be described in the Analysis section. Despite efforts to minimize my reaction to ideas that resonated with me, I acknowledge that my personal biases may have been evident through my body-language and pattern of questioning and probing. I did find that many of the interviews left me with a sense of connection: connection not only to the participant but to the experiences they relayed. I recall feeling a deep sense of conviction after my third interview; it affirmed my motivation for pursuing the study and resolve to focus on the African and African-Caribbean immigrant population because of the population specific ideas discussed. Despite my personal connection to the research, I ensured that I was always cognizant of differing experiences between me and the participants. Shared racial or ethnic identity does not dictate shared experience. It was important that I let the participants voice their own realities.
It is important to acknowledge the context of this research; context shapes knowledge and meaning. I should note that the interviews and subsequent data analysis occurred during a time where race-relations had become increasingly prominent in the media due to reported police brutality in North America, which also sparked deeper coverage of movements such as the Black Lives Matter movement. After an interview a participant voiced that they would be attending a Black Lives Matter rally, thus I deem it relevant information when considering context. While I am transparent and acknowledge my shared racial identity with participants, I deem it necessary to highlight that I do not view my role as a black researcher of Jamaican heritage studying participants of the same race/ethnicity to be any more biased than the common practice of scholars of the majority studying their own (Hendrix, 2002). Throughout this manuscript I simply seek to be candid and forthright in exposing my personal experiences and how they frame this study.

**Participants**

Eleven participants between the ages of 19 – 29 (mean = 23) were recruited for the purpose of this study. Recruitment posters (Appendix A) were circulated through the University of Guelph listservs; Black, Caribbean, and African student organizations were specifically targeted. Recruitment posters were also circulated in various settlement and community organizations as well as music schools in the Greater Toronto Area. Lastly, community leaders and music professionals were contacted to circulate posters in their professional networks (Appendix B). In addition to the circulation of posters, I visited university student groups to verbally inform students about the project. Individuals who came in contact with any of these recruitment methods were encouraged to forward information about the research project to others who they thought might be interested in
participating in it. In this way snowball sampling was used to increase the pool of informants. While there are critiques of convenience sampling due to potential limitations for generalizability, this sampling method is often a reliable way of penetrating hard to reach populations, such as recent immigrants and individuals of ethnic minorities (Weiss, 1994). This method was particularly important for the present study as I faced challenges in recruiting participants, which will be discussed in detail in the Limitations section of this manuscript. To be eligible to participate in this study individuals had to meet the following criteria:

1. They must be either an immigrant or international student
2. They must be of either African or African-Caribbean descent
3. They must reside in Ontario
4. They must speak English

**Procedure**

Individuals who contacted me expressing an interest in participating in the research study were screened via email to ensure they met the inclusion criteria (Appendix C). At this time they were also emailed a soft copy of the consent form; they were advised to review it and respond with any questions. Participants were informed that the consent form (Appendix D) would be signed in person just before the interview.

For participants who met the inclusion criteria, a mutually convenient time was set for an in-person interview. Interviews were conducted between February 2016 and June 2016. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted at the University of Guelph, four interviews were conducted in private rooms/spaces at other university campuses, public libraries and community organizations, and one interview was conducted in a participant’s home. After reviewing and signing the consent form, participants filled out a demographics survey (Appendix E); once this was complete the interview commenced.
Interview length ranged from 31 minutes to 130 minutes and lasted an average of 87 minutes. One interview was not completed; the participant had to leave before the last few questions were asked. This incomplete interview is included in the data analysis. All participants were given a gift card for $25.00 to a local mall (i.e., Stone Road Mall, Scarborough Town Center, Square One) in appreciation for their participation. In cases where there was no local mall nearby, participants were given a $25.00 MasterCard gift card. Participants also received city transportation tickets/tokens for their travel.

**Interview Protocol**

The in-depth, semi-structured interview consisted of guiding questions centered on the individual’s immigration experience and use of music. The interview protocol was fashioned to explore music and its interconnections with identity through open-ended questions such as: “If you could tell your life story using music, what music would you use?” “Why is this music important to you?” “Is there music that reminds you of home?” “Why does it remind you of home?” “Does music connect to your sense of who you are?” The questions were split into three sections. The first dealt with the participants’ memories of music across their lifespan, the second dealt with music as it pertained to their immigration transition and the final section asked specific questions centered on music as it connects to their own identity. A complete list of interview questions can be found in Appendix F.

This research study was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph (see Appendix G). No deception was used in this study. Participants were aware of the purpose of the study at the time of recruitment. This information and additional information outlining risks, rights, and confidentiality were reiterated during the signing of
the consent form. The study consisted of minimum psychological risk. Participants were reminded of their right to terminate the interview should they wish to withdraw; however, no one withdrew from the study.

**Data Analysis**

**Transcription.** All interviews were audio recorded on an encrypted voice recorder, transferred directly to a password-protected, encrypted laptop, and transcribed verbatim. After transcription all audio files were destroyed. I transcribed nine of the interviews; due to time constraints a transcriptionist was hired to transcribe two interviews. Once interviews were transcribed I reviewed them by listening to the audio files and modifying any typological errors. Each interview was anonymized and given a participant number.

**Analysis.** I analyzed the interview transcripts utilizing thematic analysis methodology. I used the six phases of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) for line-by-line coding and later categorization of the codes into emergent themes. I also utilized Nvivo software to assist in organizing the data codes. Throughout the analysis process it was important that my interpretations of data were consistent with my constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. Although my initial coding was data-driven, I acknowledge that my personal biases and theoretical leanings were undoubtedly influential in data coding. In the later stages of analysis, I purposefully consulted the literature review and guiding theory for this study - narrative theory, to assist in the organization of themes. Throughout, it is understood that the experiences of each participant are unique, shaping their meaning and understanding of the world; knowledge is also co-constructed between researcher and participant. Being explicit about the theoretical assumptions guiding this
study is important for its rigor and the integrity of the thematic analysis methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To commence, I familiarized myself with the data by reading through each transcript and taking handwritten notes and memos on areas of interest and initial patterns observed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also made memos of my own thoughts and feelings while engaging with the data.

In the second phase of the thematic analysis I uploaded my transcripts to Nvivo and generated initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I read through each transcript individually and used Nvivo to highlight small segments of data that represented an idea or moment. This process of generating codes was inductive – driven by the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After coding all transcripts, I revisited some transcripts and added further codes if I felt that the codes did not fully represent an idea. To ensure my coding was complete, I systematically worked through and checked each transcript to verify that every idea was captured. My coding was extensive; in total 1468 segments of data were coded into 60 codes. All the data was equally and thoroughly coded, accounting for as many themes and patterns as possible (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The third phase of analysis built on the second phase by broadening the analysis and searching for overarching themes across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this stage I printed out all my codes and manually used mind maps, notes, tables and flowcharts/diagrams to identify how several codes could be combined to create a theme. During this time, I met with my advisor two times; in our first meeting we discussed my list of codes and ways in which certain codes could fit together. After my first meeting I continued to organize the codes into categories, identifying overarching primary themes.
and subthemes using notes and diagrams. At this point certain thematic ideas started to stand out; however, I did not discard any themes or ideas I continued to work with all potential themes and subthemes. After this I met with my advisor once more to discuss the themes and subthemes I had identified.

Once I had identified themes, I started to draft an outline of my Results section, considering how each theme would flow from the other to create a coherent narrative. At this point I engaged in review and refinement of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process I discarded themes that were not strongly supported and created themes that more effectively reflected the codes they represented. I also combined themes that overlapped and separated themes that grouped discordant codes and were not coherent when put together. The goal during this stage was to ensure that themes were well supported, coherent, and distinct from each other. It was important that each theme had enough supporting interview excerpts and that those excerpts clearly demonstrated the identified theme. I also reviewed the themes to ensure they accurately reflected the entire data set and experiences highlighted in each interview, representative of the 11 interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each theme was then named and defined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I subsequently put together a second outline of my results that brought the themes together in a cohesive way. During the drafting of my results further small edits were made in the terminology of themes to ensure they were clear and concise. Themes and subthemes are presented in the Results section below. Direct quotations are used throughout to support the themes and give voice to the participants.
Results

This section outlines the findings from the data analysis. I present a brief description of the sample and then focus on two thematic areas. The first thematic area centers on *Immigration and Identity* and the second one focuses on *Music and Identity*. The first thematic area is general and provides insight into who these participants are and how immigration impacted their identity concepts. The majority of the Results section will concentrate on the second thematic area, in which four themes and corresponding sub-themes dealing specifically with the intersections of music and identity will be discussed.

**Participant Demographics**

Of the 11 participants in this study, 9 were female and 2 were male. Six participants were of African-Caribbean descent and the remaining 5 participants were of African descent. All but 1 participant referred to themselves as a visible minority. When asked to define their race/ethnicity, participants responded with black (*n* = 4), African (*n* = 3), Mixed/Caribbean (*n* = 1), Jamaican (*n* = 1), Afro-Caribbean (*n* = 1) and Afro-Trinidadian (*n* = 1).

The largest group of participants reported residing in the Greater Toronto Area (Toronto, Scarborough, Mississauga, Markham; *n* = 5), 3 reported Guelph as their place of residence, 2 reported Hamilton and 1 reported North Bay. Participants immigrated to Canada at a mean age of 14 years (*range* = 5 - 25) Seven participants immigrated to Canada as permanent residents and are now Canadian citizens; 5 of these participants reported dual or more citizenship. Of the remaining 4 participants, 3 identified themselves as temporary residents on a student or work visa and 1 immigrated with refugee status (please refer to table in Appendix H).
Immigration and Identity

Many participants highlighted ways in which immigration challenged their identity concepts. They spoke of immigration by choice, as well as forced migration including migration as refugees and the migration of their people through slavery. The changes they experienced often initiated identity questions. For example, Participant 5 states:

Coming to Canada is when I first viewed myself as black, like, I’m never like black you know. I was just...I mean I was dark skinned ‘cause we had like dark skinned, light skinned you know...so I was dark skinned...but like it wasn’t like a big deal...and I got here and I was like black.

In addition to the physical differences participants experienced at immigration, questions from individuals in their new country also sparked identity questions. Participant 8 voices:

Especially coming here, to another country...People have so many fucking questions to ask you who...where are you from? What are you mixed with? Like...do you want to know me or do you want to know my ethnicity? You know? So there’s all these questions of course begins to...believe it or not, after the person walks away and you walk away from that person, that shit is still in your self-conscious. Something like that and you’ve got to unravel this on your own.

Participant 8 highlights that everyday conversation centred on ethnicity and place of origin with people in Canada can trigger identity evaluation. He describes having to “unravel on [his] own” the identity questions that are posed by others in this new context. He continues by voicing that his experience was heightened because of his migration as a refugee. He states “there was this big build up to your refugee hearings”; however, after that:
Nothing happens, you’ve earned your success. After that point in time, because these bitches ask you a lot of questions during the hearing. You leave that hearing even asking yourself more questions. And on top of that...ask again some questions based on that. You have to, you sit down believe it or not and there’s another state of reflection that you go through. You experience another state of reflection. And since that point, I’ve realized there are so many pieces to myself that I never sat down, broken apart or...appreciated or I’ve known to be part of myself.

(Participant, 8)

These excerpts demonstrate some of the ways in which immigration can impact identity development. They suggest that conversation, experience, and/or visible appearance can directly or indirectly result in the reconstruction of identity concepts in new geographic contexts.

Participants’ identities and stories reflected some of the diversity of racialized Black young adults living in Ontario. The following excerpt from Participant 5 highlights this diversity:

When I came to like, Malton - Malton is in Toronto, so it’s pretty like diverse, and uhmm, I just thought like okay, just everybody was white and then there was black people. But then I started to like listen to people. And like Jamaicans would speak like Patois and I didn’t quite know what that was...and I was like hmm, this is different. And it was like, all these like different things. And I was like, okay... so like, I guess...like we’re all black but we come from like different places.

Although Participant 5 did not directly identify with all black people (i.e., Jamaicans speaking Patois), she came to accept a black identity realizing that amongst black people
there is diversity. This excerpt highlights complex questions immigrants may have to
navigate when developing their identity in new places; questions such as what it means to
be black.

Participants emphasized that social context is especially influential in their identity
development. The messages and values of society shape identity, irrespective of whether
participants accept or reject them. Participant 5 accepted her black identity because of her
context, she states:

On the TV, like on the news if they were describing someone that did something,
they’d be like black, like black male, black female...black was just like okay...so I
guess I am black. ’Cause it was an important component when they described a
person.

She continues:

I guess come to accept the identity of being black, because that is what people see
when they look at me. And I like, and also like, I am treated you know...like there
is a certain way people treat me based on my skin colour.

Conversely, Participant 9 emphasizes the power of context when she discusses her desire
not to use the term visible minority as a personal label, but does so because that is how
society labels her:

Like, in your question...am I a visible minority...I said yes, because according to
society's definition I am a visible...I am a black woman...but to myself am I a
visible minority...no I’m me...I’m not a minority in any way...I am visible, ’cause
everyone is...but I’m not a minority...but I do realize that I have to also...my
definitions do not rule the world (laughs)...there are other people’s definitions who trump mine.

While Participant 9 may not subscribe to defining herself by society’s labels, she cannot control what societal labels other individuals adhere to.

Participants continued to highlight the importance of social context when they discussed historical context. For example, Participant 3 highlights the personal impact slavery has left on her identity as well as the identity of her people:

I feel like, this whole...I find it so dumb when people say...Well like oh slavery happened such a long time ago, you guys should just forget about it ’cause they honestly don’t understand what an impact it has...on every single people they’ve touched right? …It’s so sad that they end up brainwashing us into thinking that we’re any less than anybody else...like they almost brainwashed a whole continent...they brainwashed a whole continent...as well as the diaspora...into believing that. (mhmm) Like there are people in Africa that believe that they’re not African. Like east Africans...they’d rather connect with like, Arab culture...than African culture...only because of the hierarchy in terms of who's close to white people...like white ideology or white lookingness....

Participant 4 echoes similar sentiments when she speaks of colonialism and its effects in Nigeria:

In Nigeria...well we’re colonized by the...British...I believe and Portuguese too...so umh, umh I feel like a lot of Nigerians they...they want...they seek out the western world better...they feel it’s better to be umh, westerner...it’s more, better things that come out from there compared to Nigeria...or like, you know with the colour,
colourism and thing too...if you’re fairer you’re more...prettier...which kinda comes from like, if you’re western you know.

Both participants voice how historical social context can shape how individuals function. For Participant 3, slavery and the dispersion of African slaves throughout the Caribbean is the source of many identity questions; she states:

I deal with a lot of identity issues when it comes to this stuff...cause it’s like, obviously we know we have West African background but like where? We don’t know...so like that’s far...Jamaica’s as far back as you can go.

Although Participant 3 has a strong desire to identify her African roots, Participant 8 highlights that this is not the case for everybody:

I’m beginning to appreciate my blackness but I cannot call myself African. No way how would I call myself African because being African is one thing, being Caribbean is another and I think, yes while I appreciate my blackness I am becoming more and more Caribbean. Not Africa but they have their own history, their own identity, their own culture. That is not what I am of.

These excerpts demonstrate the diversity amongst participants. Each of them have different experiences and opinions; however, whether they choose to resist or accept certain values or societal beliefs, all of their excerpts give evidence to the importance of context both past and present in identity development. Their new contexts resulting from recent migration as well as historical migration in the form of slavery are important to their identities.
Music and Identity

The following themes centre on the ways in which participants described music use in their development and evaluation of identity in various social contexts. The four themes identified are (1) Music and homeland; (2) Music and connection to other people; (3) Music and selves across time; and lastly (4) Music and embodiment. Collectively, these themes focus on music as a tool for developing the self in the context of relationships, including relationships with people, places and various selves.

Music and homeland. Participants described music as providing connections to ancestral heritage. In response to the question “Why do those different genres or types of music remind you of home?” Participant 10 explains her connection to the afrobeats genre of music: “Afrobeat because, at least part of me is from Africa...so, you know...have that little connection there. And it feels authentic, it’s not like I’m forcing myself to like it...I, I legitimately love it...” Here, she expresses a seemingly “natural” connection to afrobeats because it feels like a part of her heritage and therefore a part of who she is. Participant 3 echoes similar sentiments:

I have this Afro-Cuban mix that I listen to. Because Cuba is one of those Latin American countries that have like a very rich Afro history as well. And like, I can hear it when I listen to that mix. And it just like...I don’t know, I really would like to visit there to see like, what else I can learn about people that could of like, also influenced me. Cause we also had Spanish settlers before British like stayed right?...so, like we’re not very different. Like Latin, Latina’s they’re not really a race, we’re all just a combination right?...same three things. Different Indigenous people, African slaves, and settlers...and that’s it. So I don’t know...that’s really
what...what I would like to get more into...I don’t really know how. But I do feel like music helps me with that a lot.

This quotation suggests that music helps Participant 3 to feel connected to her ancestral history and the people who “could have like, also influenced me”. She asserts, “I have that connection, when I listen to their type of music or Afro-Cuban music...’cause I can hear the roots right? The Afro roots in it”. Participant 3 highlights that music reminds her of where she comes from, it evokes a seemingly spiritual connection to her forebears.

Both Participant 10 and Participant 3 describe feeling connected to their ancestors through music. This is despite their inability to directly trace their genealogy back many years. Participant 10 highlights this:

Even just like me saying I’m from Africa, but I have no idea where...that says a lot...a lot of people can...I can’t go on ancestry.com and figure it out. I don’t have that privilege that other people do...so...my people are a struggling people.

For Participant 3, speaking of this evokes strong emotion. After speaking about the rituals her friends of different ethnicities use to connect with their ancestors, she states:

Don’t look at me. (pause – cries for a while)...and these are things I can’t talk to my mom about. Cause she doesn’t really understand. Cause she posted some like weird thing, about I don’t know...I think ancestry.com was having some like free trial so she did it and she’s like...oh and she posted it on her Facebook...oh ancestry.com let me check my last name...like we’re Caribbean, why are you even checking your last name? Like what does that have to do with anything...(mhmm, mhmm) but anyways...so ya....

R: How does the music help?
I: I don't know how to elaborate anymore...uhm...(pause). To be honest, I don't really know how to elaborate any more. Cause like, for Ibeyi, they do this like, this chant that's in Yoruba and I have no idea what they're saying...I’ve looked up the lyrics once... but like when I listen to it I don't remember the lyrics...but just hearing them speaking...I just, I just feel like, like my ancestors telling me everything I need to know.

Although these participants don't know their specific African roots they both highlight that music can provide a meaningful connection to that part of their heritage.

When discussing music and ancestors, participants voiced that the connections between music and heritage can also motivate or affirm change. When considering music and its connection to homeland, Participant 3 highlights that her ancestors motivate her to conquer the daily stresses and obstacles of life. She states, “when I listen to like Afrocentric music where I feel like I can feel them...like it feels like it gives me, like the strength to get through some everyday things, we have to deal with here.” Participant 3, continues by emphasizing that through music she experiences a sense of responsibility to do something with her future so she does not disappoint her ancestors:

I listen to this Afro-Cuban sister group, they’re twins and they’re called Ibeyi...and like, when I listen to them, it’s not like they’re telling me things specifically...but when I hear them speak, like doing Yoruba chants or stuff like that, it just reminds me of my ancestors and how I feel like, I have some type of, responsibility or like obligation to do something...worthwhile, once, I have this opportunity that was not granted to them, or given to them. They fought for it. Right?
Participant 3 is very conscious of the fact that her ancestors fought for her to experience the privileges and freedoms that she has today. These are opportunities that they did not have; as such, she feels obliged to do something of importance and worthwhile with her life.

Participants also described music providing ongoing connections to the culture(s) of their country of origin. As immigrants, many participants emphasized that music is important in their retention of cultural identity and continued sense of connection to their place of birth. For example, Participant 10 expresses her love for soca music by stating, “I’m kinda like the soca head in the family, and again it’s something that ties me to my heritage and it kinda reminds me of where I came from....” Many participants expressed that in their absence they actively use music to stay current with the culture and social happenings of their homelands. Participant 11 expounds on this when she speaks of music and her connection to Jamaica:

I: I try to keep up I guess with the new music that’s coming out in Jamaica...uhm...I’m not as up to date but uhm, like if I hear someone else playing the song, I’ll try to add it and you know...just try to keep up with what’s going on back home.

R: Why?

I: Just uhm, I don’t know...I guess you just wanna still be a part of a culture...and still feel like you’re Jamaican even though you’re in a Canadian society...ya.

Participant 8 reiterates this thought:

I’m listening to more soca. It’s from home. In being...an individual who experienced forced migration through refugeeism it’s very hard, at times, to
constantly be assimilating into this culture. So listening to soca reminds me of who I am. It reminds me of my identity. It also keeps me updated on the new things that are happening back home.

Here, both participants highlight that music keeps them cognizant of the events occurring back home. Being connected to ‘home’ through music may enable individuals to carry that identity with them, even as they travel and establish themselves in new places. Their connections to culture do not die once they leave their homes, they remain ‘alive’.

Music can also foster connections to cultural experience by providing insights into cultural history that participants may not have otherwise known. For Participant 8, calypso plays an important role in his understanding of Trinidadian history:

Calypso is Trinidadian as well…The way it has been nurtured and kept. The integrity of that in terms of storytelling and history and so forth. I identify with that. Not only do I identify from it but it’s a teaching aid. An aid...sharing something that you know we don’t have time to...to read in books. It helps me learn about what...and understand current issues. But the mardi-gras when they have the calypso competition, this is the time we learn about the political scandals. You learn about history that has been forgotten. About singers and artists within the cultural...within the cultural sphere that have been forgotten you see. You learn so much. And you learn about people’s business too (laughing).

Here, Participant 8 emphasizes the wealth of information gained from calypso music; he describes it as telling the story of politics, history, artists, and even people’s personal business. For participant 8, learning this information is important because it allows him to
further understand the history that has contributed to his identity. Participant 10 articulates a similar concept in the following excerpt:

Actually [music] did get me to, kind of, pursue that knowledge of where I’ve come from, and how I’ve got to where I am now, in terms of just basic like, heritage, so...listen to a lot of back home, old school songs...and to me it’s kind of like (sings)...and it’s like, ya I’ll listen to this…but my dad’s like, that’s social commentary...so...and it’s true, if you actually listen to it, you get a sense of what was going on, in a certain place at a certain time…

Here, Participant 10 talks about actively listening to music to gain knowledge about her heritage.

Oftentimes music is used to learn about culture because it can be more accessible than other tools. Participant 6 describes afrobeats, stating, “it’s been such a huge way to connect back with my culture in a way that is comfortable and fun for me as opposed to like very...very...formal I guess yeah.” Here she describes the process of listening to afrobeats as a fun enjoyable experience. Similarly, Participant 8 refers to learning things from music that he wouldn’t have otherwise learnt from a book, “There are calypso songs that speak of historic events that I... may not have looked for in a history book but I’ve learned it through calypso.”

When considering the connection music has to homeland, these quotations demonstrate the role music plays in bridging geographical boundaries and initiating cultural learning. Music can connect individuals to their ancestors in the ‘motherland’, or to the people and culture of their 'homelands' - countries which they or their parents recently left. Furthermore, music can be a means through which individuals can learn
about their family and cultural histories. The excerpts highlighted in this thematic area suggest that music can be a powerful and accessible tool for connecting individuals to the stories that give rise to cultural identity. This may be particularly important for individuals with a history that they cannot access in the mainstream culture in which they are embedded, whether a result of slavery, colonialism or migration. In these cases, the ability to access music that reflects one’s heritage may be especially important for the development of identity.

**Music and connection to other people.** Participants discussed using music to connect with others. Music can connect family and friends; it can foster new relationships and provide access to social groups. These bonds can be created intentionally or by chance and they can also be positive or negative.

**Family and friends.** Music can assist in the maintenance and nurturing of established relationships, such as relationships with friends and family. For example, Participant 5 describes her use of music to connect with her friends:

> Even like, in res...not res, but dorm...it was a way to like bond with your friends. Like we’d listen to the radio and just like dance you know...and ya. That’s...it’s not really anything special about it. And we used to also learn songs from each other. Like if someone sang a song...we’d be like oh I like it...teach me...or we’d like practice and try to do like harmonies.

In like manner, Participant 6 speaks of her use of music with her family:

> It’s also been like a form of like bonding with people. Like my brother was telling me like here’s this song that you’d like... my sister would be like I think you’d really like this song. She said that to me in the form of like bonding.
These participants highlight that sharing, listening, or making music together, is a way of bonding and connecting with friends and family.

Recalling memories of shared music can also reinforce relationships. Participant 9 expresses that listening to Bob Marley is a positive experience because it brings to mind shared experiences she had with her father as a child:

I’ve always been a daddy’s girl, like...I’m his only daughter...uhm and I feel like, a lot of our...like my dad and I are really similar in a lot of ways and I think creatively musically...and just…in...ya we’re pretty much the same person almost. And that, having that as a kid, I don’t know like it just made me really close to him. Like I am still close to my dad, today’s his birthday actually...but uhm, I don’t know it’s just...I don’t know...it just reminds me...it just kind of hits something...like I would do anything for him. And that’s just from me singing Bob Marley with him as a kid.

For Participant 9, listening to Bob Marley not only reminds her of the things she would do with her father in the past; it reinforces how important her relationship with her father is to her currently.

Participants highlighted that music can expose them to new ideas and ways of thinking or being. This can be important for maintaining relationships. For example, Participant 2 describes how music has influenced how she deals with relationship conflicts:

Music also helped me like, figure out how to deal with certain situations...
so like a lot of times, when like, they sing about things like, like dancehall it’s always like, "bullet, bullet" if like, a boy violate...or whatever...(right)...like, the music I listen to is more like, "uh, let’s talk about it".

Participant 2 emphasizes that her music choice encourages her to deal with conflict through communication, not violence. These strategies can be useful for building and maintaining healthy, strong relationships.

**Strangers.** In their interviews participants suggested that music aids in establishing bonds with strangers. When forming new relationships music can serve as an initial point of commonality. Participant 1 describes music as a tool to connect with new people, “I listen to like, I guess so much music, there’s always some part of my music library that I can find like, like somebody else will like...somewhere, somehow....” Participant 10 adds that listening to music from different places has helped her to connect with people who are different from her, “world music...it just helped me have an ear and have just an appreciation and a way to connect to people who haven’t necessarily shared my same life experiences.” Similarly, Participant 10 highlights that “listening to different types of music helped me to see the world through a wider lens...not just how I see it”. The ability to see things from a different standpoint can influence how individuals relate to others. In this sense music can be used to bridge the gap between people with different lived experiences.

Music can bring together many kinds of people. At a concert music connects large groups of people; people from different backgrounds with different experiences.

Participant 1 highlights that:

...somehow you feel connected to more people when you listen to it...I heard this quote once where a guy was like...he’s like...uh, he’s like the leader of a band, he’s
at a concert and he’s talking about...how like...I’m at a concert, like 80,000 people just singing back my lyrics to me and all of them are singing it back for a different reason...and that’s what I like...it’s just like...we don’t know what we’re connected by, but for some reason we’re all connected by this one thing...and it’s for different reasons but it all brings us together somehow...connected to more people when you listen to it...

Similarly, Participant 3 recounts her experience with the artist Florence and the Machine:

R: What was it about being there?... What was it about it being live?
I: The fact that I felt like I was surrounded by...were also feeling the same thing probably right...like for Florence I knew that for a fact! ...’Cause I could hear them yelling the same thing...that I was yelling right...but just, in the music festival I just...the vibe you can feel it...uh... cause it not...you’re not even thinking about the person’s individual...but like all together... just like...a AHHHH...AHH...oh my goodness...uh I love music festivals...

In both of these cases, music was a connecting fibre that bound thousands of people together in that moment. Though they did not know each other, the individuals felt a connection to those around them.

**Social groups.** Music can enable individuals to establish bonds with various social groups, such as social peer groups, socio-economic groups, and racialized groups. For example, Participant 2 states that dancehall music allows her to connect with her classmates:

A lot of dancehall too, dancehall like, the culture that like you wanna connect with the people who are in your class, you wanna be like "oh I know the latest songs"
and like, at the parties I can sing along to this, or I can bob along to this because I know the beat and whatever...

Participant 2 describes her reasons for listening to dancehall music as being based in a desire to keep up with what the ‘group’ were doing.

Music can also break down barriers and make new social groups accessible.

Participant 8 voices his experience accessing a higher socio-economic group or ‘class’ of people:

So it was access other circles because I wasn’t always happy with my not so prestige school… But it afforded me a lot more different circles just like how you know you play tennis, you play golf, it affords you new circles. This is what music did for me.

He continues:

So this is classical again, not European right bourgeoisie so there was an elevation to one’s ego that you know this is superior shit. You know I’m the shit. I play you know the classical, okay and I’m damn good at it you know so like yeah there’s a little box that I check that says I got extra shit (laughing). And uhm… that’s what music did for me. It created another world but it also added to my ego. Especially I did not go to a pricey school. But when I hung with those who did. They say [name] you play the violin and the piano? Oh wow! You must be one of us, you see?

Participant 8 highlights that music allowed him to become a member of a new socio-economic group; it provided access to something that was out of reach at the time. The same was true for Participant 6 and her group membership with ‘black’ people. She states:
“when I came to Canada I got into the culture of like black music because in Nigeria there isn’t like black music. Everyone is black. So coming and getting to that culture.” Although Participant 6 describes not having ‘black’ music in Nigeria, when she immigrated to Canada she absorbed ‘black’ music and affirmed her group membership. These excerpts emphasize that through music people that might not ‘belong’ or people that are new to a group can be given access to that group.

Music may allow one to be part of a group, but as a powerful symbol of group membership this can also be problematic. For example, Participant 7 highlights that sometimes the pressure or need to ‘fit in’ with the in-group is so strong it causes him to relinquish his own ideas, values and views. In the following excerpt he discusses the Lil Wayne song “Lollipop”:

But like ‘Lollipop’ is just so, so like, club oriented. Like, very simple lyrics about things that like... (sings song) ...like what?!... It just...and the, and the reason why I shake my head is because I got into it because I wanted to like fit in. Uhm, with like my roommate and his friends and stuff and like, I don’t know, it’s like...throwing out like my mental framework of like what is good. Just to like, fit in.

This excerpt suggests that Participant 7 endorsed music styles or genres that he did not agree with for sake of belonging.

In contrast, some participants resist the urge to conform to the group when faced with a disconnect between the group’s music and their personal preferences. Participant 2 describes resisting the ‘expectation or norm’ when she would listen to Taylor Swift:
When I really started exploding into music and just like realizing that like, I don’t have to listen to dancehall all the time because my friends do...I can like...like, I can still like, Taylor Swift and not care if you don’t think I’m cool cause I like Taylor Swift but... cause growing up in like the environment where like, the predominant thing is dancehall, and like liking a white girl... with white music, is like social suicide.

Similarly, Participant 9 discusses the tensions she experienced when her music choices did not align with what society deemed ‘black’ music:

One of my best friends...she’s like my sister, and I remember hanging out with her a lot as a kid, well as a kid, 17, 18...wow...I feel old (laughs)...uhm, and a lot her friends who didn’t know me...like they didn’t know me personally, like they knew...they knew me like as like...a friend of [name] or whatever...It was just like, ya...you’re trying to be white... I’m like why...’cause of the shit you listen to...I’m just like...but that doesn’t make me white...I...I was born in Africa, I’m blacker than you, if you wanna go back...(laughs)... if you wanna go far back, I’m blacker than you. So, and I guess that’s something I’ve always struggled with...and also the older I’ve got the less I care.

Both Participant 9 and Participant 2 highlight the negative social repercussions that occur when their music tastes differ from what their friends or society deem appropriate for 'black' or ‘Jamaican’ individuals. Despite this they uphold their personal music preferences and resist social labels and boxes.

In addition to resisting the labels of society music can be used to redefine those labels and bridge groups of people together. Participant 4 highlights that music can bridge
the gaps between people of different groups. In the following excerpt she speaks of unity between Nigerians and Westerners:

There’s also there was one with D’Banj...and Idris Elba in it…I think just having Idris Elba in it, it just like, why not...(laughs)...and I really…it’s nice seeing western musicians collaborate with Nigerian uhm, hip-hop artists...having that, and Drake and like AKON.... I just feel like a kind of unity coming you know with both uhm, race...not races sorry...with both...ah ha am I trying to say...(laughs)... ...uh both concepts...that’s not the word but ya...

She continues:

Having them see that, Nigerian artists are important and uh we are talented and...as they know. And they’re able to like, collaborate with them, even though they might not know like, the language per se...but they see that oh, there’s potential in these people...so uhm, I think that’s really important. Cause now it’s not just like westerners on one end and Nigerians...you know it’s like, both African like, or whatever races, are coming together to build something important and something that everyone can enjoy.

Participant 4 suggests that the fusion of music from different parts of the world serves as a connecting force for the people each artist represents, thereby reducing the barriers between each group.

Music and selves across time. Music is not only a social phenomenon that connects people to one another, music itself can serve as a companion.
Music as company. The concept of music functioning as company is suggested in the following excerpt in which Participant 6 discusses how the people at her workplace respond to her singing:

They see me and they’re like you’re not singing today? (laughing) They’re always expecting me to sing so I didn’t realize I sung that much until...(right) It was just a way of like keeping myself company because I spend a lot of time alone and I’m fine with that. So music is also a form of keeping myself company. If nothing else like I’ll always have like my music to like listen to if I’m that bored or like that lonely or whatever.

For this participant, music seems to be somewhat of an extension of herself, she uses it to keep herself company. Other participants seem to share this sense of music as a source of company, but their descriptions suggest that music may be more external to the self. This idea is suggested in the following excerpt from the interview with Participant 3, who describes her relationship with music:

If I could never listen to music again I don’t even know what I would be...to be honest... I have no idea, what I would do... ’cause like, I’m an only child right and like, I don’t... well depending on what music I’m listening to I will...I won’t feel alone right? (sigh)... it’s like a constant for me as well...well my mother’s kind of a constant but I mean obviously she’s at work or she’s not there physically...but music’s always there...and I have the power to make it whatever I want it to be...in terms of what type...but it’s always there right…

From this standpoint Participant 3 describes music as something that she is in a relationship with; she experiences music as a relationship. It is her companion, there for
her even in ways that her mother cannot be. Music also changes into what she wants it to be; this suggests that depending on her state of mind and emotions she can manipulate music to be exactly what she needs for that moment. She highlights that she does not want to be in a situation where there is no music she can connect to:

I would like to have something to listen to for every moment... for occasion, for every type of feeling I have. I would like to have... a song I can listen to, while I’m in that, feeling... you know what I mean? (mhmhm)... it’s a totally... it’s all the time. I don’t want to have a feeling where I’m like... I don’t know what to listen to for this feeling...

These excerpts suggest that music can be experienced as a vital source of companionship and perhaps even relationship for participants.

_Music and ongoing identity development._ As people change, the way they experience music can also change. Participant 5 describes this process when she says, “and it’s like, you’re in a different place now... and you’re listening to it like... it reminds you of the different place that you were, like back then.” Participant 3 adds to this when she describes her relationship with Sade’s music:

I feel like back then, listening to certain songs... not the Mariah Carey songs but like the ones that, like, say more like the Sade ones... they feel... like when I listen to them now... you’d feel a bit different than if you were listening to them back then... ’cause like back then you just like, I don’t know... songs we listen to now... as in like, you’re thinking about back then as you listen to them... you can appreciate them in a different way.
These participants highlight that they experience a difference in the way they respond to music from the past compared with when they listen to it in the present. This suggests that their response to music evolves as their identities evolve. However, music serves as a link that connects them to past versions of themselves.

One of the ways in which music serves as a marker of ongoing development is by evoking memories of the past. Participant 3 asserts: “when I hear certain songs they end up being associated with memories or like how I was feeling when I decided to start listening to that song”. Similarly, Participant 2 describes music as “a permanent reminder of what was in that moment.” She elaborates on this in the following excerpt:

Writing down lyrics in like, my journal. Is like, a permanent stamp of like what happened in that moment and what I did. Or like, a better explanation of like, what I was feeling. And so, even though the song ended in like years past, like the fact that I wrote those lyrics down on that page at that time is a way to remember. Like you can remember, and so when I go back and look through my journals and I see like, song lyrics, I see like Taylor Swift and I’m like, yea, I remember this day, sitting down I was listening to the song and it just like, really spoke to me and I just like, wrote down the lyrics. Or like, not even like writing out a full song, just like writing out like, different parts of a song that I felt like really connected to the situation I was going through. It’s like a collage of lyrics... it just, it’s just like a stamp for me, basically. When it, when it moved from like, a way that I could learn lyrics to like, I don’t need to anymore I can just like play the song and look to it in like 100 years…
Writing down the song lyrics served as a way of remembering songs that resonated with Participant 2’s experiences in the past. Although she started writing down lyrics as a way to learn them; now she can read the lyrics many years from now to remember the thoughts and feelings she had at the time. Participant 5 echoes this idea in her discussion about music she liked in the past:

...You don’t remember everything, so I may not, remember this song anymore. And like...I don’t know...sometimes you listen to music and you really like connect to that song like, ya...and for some reason you find another song, and you move on...like ok, this is a new song...but like, it’s still...like there was something in that music, there’s a reason why you liked it, so like...it is like important. So it’s kinda sad...’cause then when you go back and you listen to music, it brings back memories I think, or like the phase you were in when you listened to that music. For this participant music seems to connect her to versions of herself that have existed across time.

Using music to ‘revisit’ the self can be experienced as both positive and negative. For Participant 7, reliving the past through music is a joyful experience:

It’s great, it is great. It (sigh)...like not only is it nostalgic of my...my childhood and stuff like...I, I can go back to a time where like, life was just so simple and like...I don’t know...like no major responsibilities...but also like; just like...it was just like a joy...that like, comes from just hearing like, a tune that kinda like resonates with your self...uhm, and ya...I don’t know how to describe it...Just like...it literally makes me happy.
For Participant 7, music allows him to remember how he experienced life as a child. Although his life is not as simple as it used to be, he is happy when he is able to reflect on that time. In contrast, Participant 6 highlights that sometimes music brings you back to the dark times in life:

I haven’t listened to that Destiny’s Child song in a while except for when I just pull out their album and want to listen to it. When I listen to that song I just remember that time in my life when I was like pretty sad. I was like oh I was so stupid like when I was feeling that way I’m like oh my God.

Whether positive or negative, music can be a way of experiencing and re-experiencing the self across time.

Throughout their interviews, participants also highlighted that music can influence their future selves. Many times, the narratives encountered in music motivate individuals to keep pushing and reaching for their personal goals. For Participant 11, music is what she uses for motivation to tackle the day head on:

I’m into this soca song called ‘Cheers to Life’...so it’s like uhm, I guess it’s more like, pushing me to...just be...start the morning off right, and get going...so I guess that’s kinda me. I’m tryna...you know, just push forward...and do the best I can do in life...

When dealing with difficult situations Participant 2 actively seeks out music that will strengthen her and reassure her that things will get better:

Music has always been like in my life...I’ve gone through a lot of like, though times or whatever, and to like, I would find songs that relate to that, and then
always like, use that music to just like, motivate me. Just like, realize that it’s not always gonna be like that.

The same is true for Participant 10, for her, songs with a spiritual message connect to her faith and encourage her to keep pressing forward in life:

The main music I listen to, outside of like, in class and all that stuff...became more gospel...uhm, cause I went through a lot of rough times during this period and you already know...that during that time, you know you look to God, and...to help you out... and it just helped me center myself...and keep my eye on the goal...and you know.... reiterating promises that have already been made to me and claiming those things.

Participant 4 also highlights how encouraging she finds spiritual music in comparison to the song ‘Reflections’ in Mulan:

I can focus on worshiping God...or like...you know...knowing he is the one...’cause I always forget that like he’s gonna do it all that he knows...but with ‘Reflection’ on the other hand I’m just looking inwards and...if I don’t think I’m good enough anyway... there’s nothing to look inwards to...(right) but with the gospel it’s better ’cause I’m able to hold on to something.

Gospel music gives Participant 4 something to hold on to, hope for the future. In times of struggle Participant 4, also finds self-motivation in other genres of music, she indicates this when she voices why she likes certain songs. She states “...oh I like this song, and I like what it’s saying right now. Might be like, relationships or just...str.... like struggle you know (right) ...like to rise up and be a better person or something....” Regardless of
context, each of these participants highlighted that music empowers them on a personal level to think and act differently.

The excerpts above focus on the positive motivational power of music; however, it would remiss not to acknowledge that music can also initiate negative change. For example, Participant 5 highlights her negative experience with the song ‘Stay Gold’:

Last semester, there was this one song, it was really beautiful...um I forget what it’s called...oh it’s called ‘Stay Gold’ and the words were like... ‘what if our hard work ends in despair? What if the world doesn’t take you anywhere, and you know, you keep trying and you just feel like you’re falling short?’...and I, I would listen to it like constantly on replay. And I was so like, unmotivated and I don’t know...like I was working hard but not achieving my goal. I didn’t have any like...I wasn’t like ya I can do it. And then I just, I realized I’m like...so I was talking to my roommate, and I was like...I was telling her like, what if my hard work doesn’t like...and she’s like what is wrong with you, and I was like, I was just listening to this song...and she’s like stop listening to it. ’Cause it’s like...and I didn’t even realize that it was like impacting me.

Participant 5 realized that her music choices have the ability to negatively impact her future actions. Whether positive or negative, music can influence an individual’s future self. When individuals are aware of this they may be able to manipulate their music choices so that its impact is favourable.

Music can be useful for self-exploration across time. Participant 9 emphasizes that music a useful aid for present self-exploration:
I am like constantly searching for things that fit...either fit what I want or force me to explore something that I’m trying not to explore. And music does that a lot for me. Like it kind of puts me in a state of mind, where it’s like, ok you can’t run away from yourself at this point. Figure it out, or do something with whatever you’re thinking or feeling or whatever...and move on. (laughs) Like it’s...it’s a catalyst for, in a way, actually in a lot of ways...

Participant 9 describes music as a force that compels her to face identity questions head on and confront herself. In like manner Participant 8 voices “I have found myself... partly because of music. It, it, it has... I’ve travelled because of that.” From this standpoint music can facilitate the ongoing process of self-discovery.

**Music and embodiment.** Throughout their interviews participants discuss self and identity with a strong emphasis on an embodied identity. They discuss music as strongly embodied, perhaps more than other narrative forms and identity tools. In my discussion of embodiment, I discuss emotion, physical expression and the experiences of being in a body and the physical characteristics of that body. While physical expression and physical body characteristics are often discussed under the umbrella of embodiment, emotion is not always considered in that bracket. However, in alignment with certain scholars (i.e., Michalak, Burg, & Heidenreich, 2012; Winans & Dorman, 2016) I define emotion as embodied - there is a bodily experience of emotion and how emotions are processed.

**Emotional expression.** Music fosters a connection to the emotional self. Participant 7, describes his first encounter with music stating:

It’s like trying something you haven’t tried before and it just makes you feel happy and like, it...it activates senses that you never thought like were even possible
to...you know... experience. And so...it’s weird...that’s the best way I can like describe it...uhm...(sigh)... think about like having alcohol for the first time. Like you didn’t even...like it’s impossible for you to imagine like, the state of mind being intoxicated...and, like...I like that state of mind. Like I don’t like...like there are limits but like, I like being wavy...you know what I mean? And so like...it just, like when I start...like I would hear music on the radio and I was just like...oh that’s just the radio...like just kinda...whatever...but when I actually like sat down and listened. Put the headphones in and just like close my eyes and go...like...like...that state of mind and like, how it affected my emotions...like I didn’t even think that was possible.

For Participant 7, listening to music for the first time is extraordinary; he has a physical reaction to music, sensing things he didn't think were possible. Similarly, Participant 3 describes listening to Florence and the Machine as an emotional release:

I: She’s very...I feel like I release through her in a weird way...wow...oh my gosh...wow...like she’s like an uh...she’s something else...I can’t even explain...

R: What does that mean, release through her?

I: She’s like very cathartic but not in a weird way where it feels like...there’s cathartic where it can be in a weird way like, where you’re angry and letting things out. But there’s another way where it can be like...I didn’t know how to uh...I didn’t know how to...uhm, what’s the...um put it...there’s a word...for it but I’m losing it right now...so I’m just gonna say, you don’t have a way to put into words how you’re feeling or anything but she does it so eloquently...and it’s like...so powerfully, the way she delivers it to you…
For Participant 3, this performance by Florence and the Machine is powerful because it engages her in a moment of emotional discovery and expression. Participant 7 adds to this by highlighting that music is also useful for controlling and regulating emotions; he states, “music... is what I fall back on when I’m not able to like control my emotions any other way, right?” He relies on music when all other sources of emotional regulation fail. From this standpoint music tempers his emotions and self-expression.

*Physical expression.* In addition to emotional expression, music can also influence physical expression in the form of movement and dance; this can be significant for music listeners. For example, Participant 10 states, “I may not do in public...but I love to dance and obviously not everything I need to be able to dance to, but I like to be able to get down to the music….“ Music is enjoyable when Participant 10 is able to dance to it. This is also true for Participant 6; she asserts:

I just really loved that song and I want to dance to it. There’s some songs for example there’s a song by R Kelly, World’s Greatest. Every time I listen to that song there’s a choreography in my head and a lot of times when I want to do something it’s like do it, I don’t forget so I dance to it.

Participant 6 is inspired to use movement to tell a story when she hears particular songs. The quotes outlined above demonstrate that both emotions and dance can be initiated by music. These are just two ways in which music can spark physical expression.

*Embodied racial identity.* Music not only initiates physical expression, it also connects to the physical characteristics by which individuals are racially and ethnically labeled and categorized by society. For example, Participant 10 voices that Chaka Khan’s
music had more of an impact on her because she identified with the artist’s Afro-textured hair:

   Just one song (sings) ‘ain't nobody, do me better’...It had like the rhythm and you could just imagine her big afro just getting down...and I don't know...it just really connected with me...so, the afro, for me, is like a sense of, it's a symbol...it's a symbol, of empowerment, of...for that demographic, for where I am, my social location cause you know, especially at that time, it was all about having the straight hair, you had to have a perm, if you didn't have a perm, or naturally like curly, mixed girl, the good hair...uhm, you weren't as desirable. But to see somebody who had, I know who I am, ain’t nobody... and she had this natural...I mean it was probably a weave, but it looked natural you know, hair...it was like, okay there's nothing wrong with my little kinky hair...I stopped asking my mom for perms, and ya...it helped me have confidence in myself.

Participant 10 reveals that she felt empowered seeing someone ‘famous’ like Chaka Khan wear an afro. It gave her confidence to keep and wear her own natural hair despite the prevalence of perms. Through music her hair choices were affirmed.

   While music can affirm an individual's physical characteristics, one's physical characteristics can also dictate music choices. For Participant 8, his racialized identity and skin colour, dictated his music preferences. He describes his experience:

   As a child, especially in my adolescent years and the school that I was going to there was a lot of skin grading. So I did not fall as dark, I didn’t fall as white. But there was a certain privilege afforded to me and of course at the other prestige schools, the other prestige children the minute they saw someone that looked like
me I fell into black class just because I fell within an identity. So because gospel to me was...something that was black and I was trying to negate that part of myself (right) to afford what I thought was sophisticated. To afford what I thought was superior.

Participant 8 did not want to be labeled as black so he avoided music genres that were considered black. He continues:

In my...so my adolescent years gospel music did not resonate with me (right) and one of the major reasons is because it was black. Hillsongs I remember them.
(Right, right) Because they’re white. I would cry Holy Ghost to fall on me when I would sing the Hillsongs. You know Avalanche we don’t have no avalanche in the Caribbean but Avalanche ok…

As a teenager, Participant 8 negated his black identity, consequently he also disregarded black gospel music. Instead he would listen to the ‘white’ Christian group ‘Hillsong’. He would have a big reaction to this music and experience the spirit, despite not relating to all the things they sung about.

Participant 3 highlights that many sentiments about skin and one's physical characteristics are highlighted in music:

When I listen to hip-hop and dancehall and they talk about like, they want some redbone chick...or some like light skinned chick...I’m just like...Anyways. (mhmm) It’s just like...oh you guys are so annoying...uh...but ya...and I remember hearing this one song, and they’re like, she looks like this but she’d looked better white...I’m like "did he really just say that..." and we’re all turning up to this...
Participant 3 speaks of individuals making music that supports messages of “colourism” or “shadeism”; these messages emphasize skin colour and ‘white’ being better than. She states “unfortunately, the bad one is usually the mainstream one…” the messages that are negative often come from mainstream media “you’ve got to be looking at the underground people that are telling you the good things”. However, she continues by emphasizing that when mainstream music artists such as Beyoncé, attempt to go against the grain to speak on issues that are not being addressed, society reacts adversely:

So ya, even when Beyoncé did like formation right… that was such a big deal because… Right! (mhmm) It wasn’t saying what everyone else was saying…or what everyone else was insinuating…so it was just like, wow oh my gosh, this is so political now…(mhmm) Please miss me with that…like oh my goodness. They’re so exhausting…(mhmm) They’re so lost… …if you’re attacking the song, what are you tryna say? …that you disagree… right? (mhmm) Like, I’m really lost. Cause if you’re like…like I don’t understand…and then people are saying how, they disagree that she was using the word negro…I’m just like…you’re the same people that wanna say the ‘n’ word…like I’m so…so confused… (mhmm) I’m like… oh my goodness…all they do is confuse me…I’m just like, so lost... But then when things like that happen, it keeps me in check. It reminds me that people still need a lot of guidance…they’re all very ignorant…(mhmm) So…so like when things happen to me personally…I remember like, I didn’t have high hopes for you in the first place… (Participant, 3)

How society responds to songs such as Beyoncé’s ‘Formation’, is a reminder of Participant 3's racialized identity and the growth that is needed in individual's attitudes and
perspectives. The music as well as how the music is received heightens her consciousness of her embodied black identity.

The following excerpts demonstrate that music can also motivate changes in how individuals perceive their embodied identities. Participant 8 highlights that music has had a direct impact on how he composes his body:

I no longer, in pictures I have to do this. I have to step to my left so that’s smaller. You know? Like there are certain features that I try to hide. But now I don’t care. This is beautiful. Being black is beautiful. I should not hide these things and I’ve come to that and music helps me appreciate that self as well. So yes, music has been a healing process.

Participant 8 no longer tries to hide his ‘black’ features; music has helped him realize that his black is beautiful. He continues, by emphasizing that in order for him to appreciate ‘black’ music genres he has to appreciate the ‘black’ parts of him:

Once I began to appreciate my blackness and again appreciating more of my heritage which is my music because in order to appreciate soca and I appreciate calypso. I have to appreciate my blackness because my blackness is in those things. So me appreciating these things and appreciating my heritage on a whole which is music and what I see in the mirror, that to me, that... that process of appreciation is also a healing process. Because I’ve hurt myself. I’ve created the anxiety issue of am I good enough. I’m healing myself by no longer feeling anxious as am I good enough. But I’m healing myself by being confident in knowing I am good enough. And that is what music is doing. I am good enough. This genre is good enough to
listen to, dance to and appreciate and share with someone else. Hence I can share another part of myself and not hide it.

In this excerpt, Participant 8 specifically voices the ongoing process of healing that is occurring through music. He asserts that if he can share and appreciate ‘black’ music styles with other individuals and they can welcome and accept it, he can also share the ‘black’ parts of himself with others. Similarly, for Participant 3, music also plays an integral role in motivating her as a racialized black woman:

I keep forgetting...what the song is called...but James Brown he says...I don’t...I need to get this (mutters)...I don’t want nobody to give me nothing just open up the door...I’ll get in myself...(laughs)...type of thing...so...I don’t know...that me...it’s not really that message...it’s not really talking to me; it’s more talking to... "you know" ...but it’s kind of like, we shouldn’t feel helpless either right? I mean we’re more than capable of doing anything...(mhmm) right? So also the idea of like mental slavery right...so...some things you can’t help physic...by yourself, but if you mobilize anything is possible...but just don’t take the closed door in front of you right now as the final answer...

Music provokes Participant 3 to action; but on a larger scale the black community to action. While they may encounter hurdles and closed doors, the music encourages them not to wait for doors to be opened for them, but to push ahead despite the hindrances.

Each of the themes highlighted throughout this results section support the notion that music is a tool for ongoing identity development in the context of relationships. These relationships include relationships with family, friends, social groups, ancestors, places
and with various selves. While many of the participants in this study did not identify as musicians, in the words of Participant 8 many may say:

I’m now writing my own song (right) and I am discovering myself and learning myself and something’s being written. You know it’s being played. The brass is there...as I live and continue to grow and discover who I am I am creating my own music. I am the lyrics to my own song and I think I’m creating my own soca tune or calypso tune as I discover myself.

**Discussion**

The objective in this study was to explore how music intersects with identity in immigrant young adults. This objective was underscored by the following questions: (1) What is the role of music in the exploration of identity, in young adult African and African-Caribbean immigrants, currently residing in Canada? (2) How do young adult African and African-Caribbean immigrants engage with music before, during, and post migration? Despite many studies on music and identity (i.e., DeNora, 2000; Frith 1996) few studies have focused on music, identity, and migration from a narrative identity perspective (i.e., Ruud, 1997; Vila, 2014). The results of this study provide new insights on the intersections of music, migration, and identity. They emphasize that identity develops within a relational framework.

**Music: Coherence Across Time and Context**

Findings from this study suggest that music can impact identity development because it contributes to an individual’s sense of continuity across time and context. Music allows one to establish, maintain, and transform relationships with place, other people, and various selves. Findings indicate that migration heightens one’s awareness of identity
processes; change of context uncovers group similarities and differences. Furthermore, migration requires individuals to face new identity questions from the framework of differing social norms, practices and master narratives. Each of these ideas will be elaborated further below. However, I first highlight how music functions as a narrative form and suggest that narrative identity theory should expand beyond its focus on traditional oral storytelling to include storytelling through and in relation to music.

**Music as Narrative**

This study was based on the premise that music is a narrative form. The findings of this research support this notion; they demonstrate that music functions in a similar way to storytelling. They highlight that music can illuminate the intersections of time and context, aid in providing self-continuity, and promote identity development in the context of relationships. The nucleus of identity is maintaining continuity amidst change- a sense of coherence across time (Bamberg, 2011; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; McAdams & McLean, 2013). As people constantly evolve (Bamberg, 2011; Barratt, 2011; Clary-Lemon, 2010; Ngo, 2008), whether physically, cognitively, relationally or even in geographic location, coherence is paramount. Failure to maintain a sense of self-continuity can have negative consequences to well-being (i.e., Chandler et al., 2003).

Narrative identity is the integration of the various selves - selves across time (i.e., past, present and future) as well as selves in differing contexts (i.e., student, mother, sibling, Jamaican, Nigerian) (McAdams & McLean, 2013; McLean & Breen, 2015). It is one of the ways by which individuals cultivate a sense of continuity across time and context; through engagement with stories and meaning making of lived experience identity is explored (Chandler et al., 2003, McLean & Breen, 2015). The findings of this study
detail some of the many ways in which music enables individuals to ingrate various selves. They build on Vila (2014)’s assertion that we do not encounter music with unified selves, but rather with many fractured identifications; however, music can be an aid for maintaining a sense of continuity.

To date, the emphasis of narrative identity work has been on storytelling, usually written and oral narratives, as a tool of identity exploration (McAdams & McLean, 2013; McLean & Syed, 2016; Syed & McLean, 2016). However, this study suggests that music might perform many of the same functions as written and oral narrative. Accordingly, it is reasonable to suggest that music is a narrative form and methodology tool that should be considered and used for exploring identity development. This inclusion of the non-verbal, such as sound and movement, in our conceptualization of narrative serves to deepen our understanding of identity (i.e., Caldwell, 2016); emphasizing that identity can be explored, experienced, and voiced in a number of forms.

Relationship with place. The findings of this study highlight that music can provide meaningful connections to one’s place of birth, heritage, and ancestors. Music enables individuals to engage with cultural narratives, narratives that relay cultural history, norms, and values. These links can play an important role in the retention of cultural and ethnic identity; they can also enable individuals to maintain identity concepts, particularly ethnic components of identity, after both forced and voluntary migration.

Findings suggest that music can reduce the boundaries that separate immigrants from their home countries or places of birth. The participants in this study highlighted their intentional use of music to remain connected to the people and culture of their homelands. This connection serves as a way of navigating and/or maintaining identity in face of new
contexts. Thus, the process of listening to and sharing music can foster a strong sense of identity, particularly as it pertains to culture and ethnicity (i.e., Elias et al., 2011; Gigi Durham, 2004; Robertson, 2004; Sorce Keller & Barwick, 2012; Syed & Azmitia, 2010). Vila (2014) underscores that music is laden with meanings that centre on how it has been used in the past; these meanings are often central to how individuals engage with music in the present.

One of the reasons why music can provide connections to culture and homeland is because it is often a source of information about cultural history, norms, and practices. From a narrative perspective, music can be seen to communicate “Master Narratives,” which are defined as “culturally shared stories that tell us about a given culture, and provide guidance for how to be a “good” member of a culture” (McLean & Syed, 2016, p. 320). Narrative researchers have emphasized that identity develops in part through engaging with master narratives (i.e., Breen & McLean, 2017; McLean & Syed, 2016). Findings of this study suggest that music may be an important media source for communicating master narratives because it can contain cultural history (Cohen, 2013) as well as information about cultural values. As such, music can be useful for cultural learning and identity development (Miranda, 2013; Sæther, 2008). Some participants referenced learning more about homeland culture through music compared to other sources, such as books. It seems possible that music may be more accessible than other sources of cultural learning because it can be shared easily, listeners can absorb it in short time intervals, and it has an engaging appeal.

Music can bridge geographic boundaries, connecting individuals in different countries, as well as providing connections to generations that have come before. In their
discussion of music and connections with ancestors, participants acknowledged that music allows them to go back in time, to the “Motherland”; for some this plays a pivotal role in their identity. Participants emphasized that music is especially powerful because alternative sources for tracing genealogy through the years, such as family trees and intergenerational stories, are not available due to slavery. The use of music to connect to ancestors of diaspora communities has been explored in other research studies (i.e., Baily & Collyer, 2006; Olsen, 2004; Sardinha, 2016). However, these studies have often focused on known ancestors in immigrant home countries or refer to music being used to connect to ancestors in a ritualistic way (i.e., Kyker, 2009). In this study participants described being disconnected to their ancestors because of forced migrations through slavery; for populations or communities with such lost histories this function of music may be particularly important in providing a sense of connection to ancestors.

**Relationship with others.** Music is instrumental in identity development in the context of relationships with other people; specifically, relationships with family, friends, strangers, and social groups. The findings of this study underscore music as a tool to maintain and nurture established relationships, bond with new individuals, and move between different social groups. Music can bridge gaps and bring individuals or groups of people together; however, it can also alienate and create tensions between them.

The participants in the study emphasize their use of music to bond with others. The act of sharing music with friends and family is a way of creating bonds, as well as maintaining and deepening connections. This has been suggested in a number of studies that explore music as a bonding tool (i.e., Boer & Abubakar, 2014; Breen et al., 2016; Lewis, 2002; Miranda & Claes, 2009; Miranda & Gaudreau, 2011; Rentfrow & Gosling,
Findings from the present research also demonstrate that one of the ways in which music reinforces personal relationships is by eliciting memories of the relational contexts in which it was shared. Breen et al., (2016) highlight that memories of media, such as music, are often infused with memories of other people and corresponding relationships; recall of these experiences can aid in further understanding those relationships. From this lens the meanings gained from musical stories are not solely our own; other people may play dominant roles in shaping these meanings and identity concepts (Breen et al., 2016).

Secondly, findings demonstrate that music can connect individuals to new people. This idea has been emphasized in other research that has found that music choices can indicate shared preferences and commonalities and can act as a barometer of personality and values (i.e., Lewis 2002; Miranda, 2013; Rentfrow & Gosling 2006). This process can be direct; however, it can also be indirect. This is exemplified when music serves as a common thread connecting large groups of people in the same place (i.e., concert) (Miranda, 2013).

Thirdly, findings underscore that individuals also purposefully choose music to access social groups, groups they may not otherwise be able to access. This includes social peer groups, socio-economic groups, and racialized groups. For example, Participant 8 highlighted playing classical music in order to access a different socio-economic group. Music genre stereotypes demonstrate that many individuals have strong ideas about the people that ascribe to certain music styles (Renfrow, Mcdonald, & Oldmeadow, 2009). Consequently, groups may be labelled by music genres. In these cases, perceived similarities in music can spark social acceptance and increase positive group relations (Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006; North, Hargreaves, & O’Neill, 2000). However, these
dynamics can also pressure individuals to disregard personal values in order to fit in, as was the case with Participant 7 who described listening to certain rap songs in order to be accepted by a social group.

For some individuals being labeled by others according to the music they listen to sparks tension between the labels ascribed by society and personal identity. Participants in this study voiced that as individuals who were ‘black’ or of a particular ethnicity there were unsaid rules that dictated the type of music they should listen to; in other words, there was a master narrative that assigned a particular music genre to ‘black’ people. However, some individuals chose to resist that narrative by listening to music that challenged these stereotypes. When there is a discrepancy between an individual's views and the master narrative society attributes to them, individuals may change their views or assume an alternate narrative that resists the master narrative (McLean & Syed, 2016). The practice of resistance or acceptance of master narratives or stereotypes plays an integral role in identity development (Rogers & Way, 2016). However, it is important to note that resisting master narratives can come with its share of risk. Resistance is frequently imperiled by culture and society (i.e., McLean & Syed, 2016; Rogers & Way, 2016; these pressures increase throughout adolescence (Rogers & Way, 2016). For example, Participant 2 referred to her deviation from the master narrative as “social suicide”; however, this did not prevent her from deviating from the dominant narrative. Irrespective of the repercussions, music can be a way of either accepting master narratives or deviating from them.

While music can bridge the gap between individuals and social groups, it must also be emphasized that music can bridge the gap between two social groups, such as cultural
and ethnic groups. Throughout their interviews participants highlighted that when music artists from different cultures collaborate together on music it promotes unity between the two cultures. For individuals, such as immigrants, who may identify with multiple cultures, music fusions and collaborations of this kind can aid in their personal bridging of different cultural identities.

**Relationship with selves.** The findings of this study suggest that music is a link that connects individuals to versions of the self that have existed across time and context. Furthermore, they emphasize music as tool to engage in conversation with various selves. It is in this dynamic relationship between various selves that identity development occurs.

In their discussion of dialogical theory as it pertains to narrative identity, McLean and Breen (2015) propose that an individual’s various selves are developed through interaction with other selves within a narrative ecology—a world of stories. These selves include variations of personal selves, such as the selves across time, selves in different contexts and roles and selves that are other people. They continue by emphasizing that media can play an important role in developing selves and illuminating the intersections of selves with culture. In this study, findings specifically highlight that music is a way in which one can access various selves across time and context; moreover, music is a way in which individuals can engage in dialogue with the self.

While existing literature cites music as a tool for connecting to selves across time (i.e., Amir, 2012; Blais-Rochette & Miranda, 2016; Cohen, 2013; Lippman, & Greenwood, 2012; Roy & Dowd, 2010), and selves across context (i.e., Elias et al., 2011; Gigi Durham, 2004; Robertson, 2004), the notion that music is a tool by which individuals can engage in conversation with the self is a seemingly new idea. Findings from this research indicate
that individuals can use music to keep themselves company. Participants speak of music as if they are in relationship with it— it is there for them when others are not (Refer to Participant 3 p. 40). Drawing on dialogical theory (Hermans, 2001), I propose that when music is used in this way it may be enabling individuals to connect to other selves, reflect on other selves, and engage in dialogue with other selves; selves that may not be confronted or accessed by other means. This dialogical function of music may be why music can be experienced by some as offering companionship.

**Embodied self.** The findings of this study underscore that music can heighten embodied experience, further facilitating identity development. Specifically, they suggest that music is strongly embodied and can be a catalyst for embodied narrative identity. In the words of Frith (1996) “Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body...” (p. 124). Furthermore, Vila (2014) highlights that music enables individuals to experience their narratives as embedded and articulated in the body. He underscores that music is not merely a tool to express identity but it is a way to live identity. In the following paragraphs I will discuss music and embodied narration and identities, focusing on emotion, movement and racial identities.

**Emotion.** In the words of Winans and Dorman (2016), “emotion is fundamentally an embodied experience” (p. 96). The term embodiment underscores the bilateral relationship between the bodily experience of emotion and how emotions are processed (Michalak et al., 2012). Findings from this study demonstrate the connections between music and emotion, emphasizing that music can spark emotion, initiate new emotional discovery, and it can be a vehicle for emotional expression. These concepts are supported by current literature (i.e., Amir, 2012; DeNora, 2000; Miranda 2013; Rentfrow & Gosling,
From this standpoint it is reasonable to suggest that music can promote emotional awareness; however, it may also enable individuals to avoid processing certain emotions, such as when music is used as an emotional suppressant. Music memories can evoke emotions; including emotions that individuals are aware of, as well as emotions that they are not fully cognizant of. The onset of these emotions can be both expected and unexpected, as well as negative or positive. For example, the participants in the study often had emotional experiences when discussing music, such as crying as they remembered songs. Music seemed to give some participants access to emotional experience even in the interview context; at times this was seemingly unexpected. Whether expected or unexpected, positive or negative, music in this context can serve to connect individuals to their emotions across time.

Movement. Some participants highlight that listening to music compels them to move and tells stories through their bodies. Recent literature highlights that through dance individuals can use their bodies to tell and experience stories that reflect their lived experiences and identity (i.e., Thomas, 2015). Dance as a narrative form has not been a dominant subject of inquiry within the field of narrative identity studies and this may be a promising avenue for future research.

Embodied racialized identities. The findings of this study demonstrate that music is not only connected to emotions and dance but also to how individuals experience their racialized bodies. In particular, emphasis was placed on the embodiment of racialized identities. Vila (2014) underscores that music offers us the ability to experience identifications such as race, ethnicity, and gender in the body. Music is often laden with messages about our bodies, both direct and implicit messages. It often is a source for
master narratives that reflect the dominant cultural ideologies about race, gender, and other aspects of embodied experience (i.e., Breen et al., 2016; McLean & Breen, 2015; McLean & Syed, 2016; Rice, 2014). Echoing current literature, participants specifically highlighted that mainstream music forms such as hip-hop can promote notions of shadeism reflective of dominant narratives that portray lighter/whiter skin as better (i.e., Maxwell, Abrams, & Belgrave, 2016). When faced with these master narratives participants either modify the way they compose their bodies (i.e., straighten their hair) to fit the narrative (i.e., McLean & Syed, 2016; Rice, 2014) or they resist the narrative, creating an alternative narrative. Participants also highlighted that they were able to use music to access messages that affirmed their embodied experience. However, they emphasized that music messages that affirmed their embodied experience were not as prevalent or accessible as other forms; they were often found in underground music forms. Participants voiced that music didn’t only impact how they experienced their embodied identity; their embodied identity also dictated their music choice. Findings suggest that embodied racialized black identities can prompt one to either subscribe to or disregard music that affirms black identity.

**Future self.** Music as it pertains to the self as becoming is a thread that runs through each of the thematic ideas discussed above. The findings suggest that music can provide a blueprint of alternative ways of being, and it can motive both positive and negative change. Participants highlighted that music is a means for individuals to envisage future selves (i.e., Miranda, 2013). Paralleling Breen et al.’s work with media stories (2016), findings demonstrate that music can be used to inform individuals of the kind of person one wishes to be and the type of characteristics one wishes to possess. The
influence of music in this realm can be positive and negative, as well as intentional and unintentional. This supports the notion that music can influence processes of becoming.

The findings of this research underscore that identity develops in the context of relationships, including relationships with various selves, other people, and place. As Frith (1996) emphasizes, identity “describes one’s places in a dramatized pattern of relationships - one can never really express oneself ‘autonomously’. Self-identity is cultural identity…” (p. 125). These findings support this claim as they highlight that in the same way identity is relational; music is experienced relationally. It intersects personal biography with culture and it is in these relational contexts that identity is explored.

Limitations

Although the interviews in this study generated rich data and contributed to our understanding of music, identity, and immigration in African and African-Caribbean young adults, I acknowledge that there are some limitations. These limitations centre on sample size and recruitment.

Firstly, the sample size for this study was relatively small. There were 11 participants. Recruitment challenges made it difficult to obtain more participants from the target population. The majority of my recruitment occurred at newcomer centers and the University of Guelph. It was difficult to contact the target population because many newcomer centers were primarily comprised of alternate ethnic groups. Newcomer centers that did have a large population of African or African-Caribbean immigrants often worked with youth younger than the lower age limit of 18. Similarly, the African and African-Caribbean immigrant population at the University of Guelph is small; I also found that those who were temporary residents of African or African-Caribbean descent were often
graduate students that exceeded the upper age limit of 30. After experiencing limited response to recruitment methods over a period of seven months, the methodology was modified to include snowball sampling.

While snowball sampling may present potential limitations for generalizability, the goal of this study was to further explore specific aspects of music and identity not generalize (i.e., Creswell, 2013, p. 157). Convenience sampling is a useful way to penetrate hard to reach populations, such as recent immigrants and individuals of ethnic minorities (Weiss, 1994). Despite these efforts, the sample size remained relatively small. However, Creswell (1998, p. 65) suggests that phenomenological studies of this kind, focused on uncovering participants lived experiences, should have longer interviews with a sample size in the range of 1-10. Creswell (2013) highlights that scholars have varying thoughts on sample size. Dukes (1984), for example reports a range of 3-10 subjects as sound. My sample size of 11 participants with an average interview length of 87 minutes falls within the guidelines articulated by these scholars.

The participants in this study overwhelmingly identified as women. Out of the 11 participants only 2 identified as men. Further scholarly inquiry is needed to explore the experiences of men in comparison to women. In a similar vein, the sample consisted of 6 individuals of African-Caribbean descent and 5 of African descent. Participants of both African-Caribbean and African descent highlighted very similar concepts; however, participants also discussed experiences that appeared to be unique to their background, whether African or African-Caribbean. Some African-Caribbean participants discussed forced migration in contrasting ways to African participants; these groups have distinct histories and these variances are expected. While the goal in this study was not to examine
differences between the two groups, future research centred on these groups, as well as others, would be important to examine potential ethnic differences.

Lastly, participants self-selected for this study. At the time of recruitment, participants were aware of the study subject matter and they chose to volunteer and participate. It is reasonable to suggest that those with a musical leaning were more inclined to participate in this research. Given the recruitment methodology, self-selection bias was unavoidable; however, I remain transparent and acknowledge this as a limitation.

**Applications and Conclusion**

This research adds to the literature on music and human development, specifically narrative identity development. To date, much of narrative identity work has centered on oral storytelling, privileging it over other narrative forms. The findings of this research urge scholars to reconsider the notion of narrative: what constitutes narrative? How can our understanding of narrative be broadened to include other narrative forms? This contribution provides insight into how music functions as a narrative form; it highlights how selves are constructed through stories, sounds and imagery, and how the arts bind us to ourselves and others across time.

The findings suggest that music can play an important role in exploring identity particularly in the context of relationships with place, others and various selves. Most narrative research has been conducted by scholars of the racialized ‘white’ majority with like samples. Findings suggest that stories are not only experienced or actualized in the mind but are experienced with embodied selves. Thus it is imperative that scholars continue to expand the focus of their research to include other population groups; this way the embodied experience of various selves can be further understood.
The applications for this research are not only theoretical; they are also practical. Buster and Baffoe (2015) emphasize that the migration process can be especially challenging for immigrants and their identity concepts; they highlight the importance of cultural competency training and understanding for immigrant service providers. This research on music and narrative identity in immigrant young adults provides insight into possible ways music can be used by practitioners to promote positive identity development in youth and young adults, whether they have a clear sense of identity or they are struggling with identity concepts. Brittian Loyd and Williams (2017) underscore the importance of ethnic-racial identity for the positive development of racialized black youth and young adults. This research highlights that music can be used in resistance to oppression and stereotypes that challenge such positive development; it calls scholars to further explore narrative forms in this context.

Brittian Loyd and Williams (2017) also indicate that programs for youth are especially beneficial for shaping youth and young adult identity. Additionally, they voice a need for policy and funding agencies to support such programs and services. This research builds on this, outlining that music can also aid in identity exploration and development. It reveals that there are opportunities for the development and implementation of programs using musical interventions that support and aid in newcomer sociocultural integration, learning and identity development.
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AFRICAN & AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANT & INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

What for?

• A research study on music and identity development

Who is eligible?

• Immigrants or international students of African and/or African-Caribbean descent, ages 18-30 who are living in Ontario

What’s involved?

Participants will be asked to complete a short survey and participate in an individual interview or group interview.

The interview will last about 1 hour and will focus on your experiences with music, your identity, and your migration journey.

Who is the researcher?

The research is being conducted by Rachelle Myrie and is supervised by Dr. Andrea Breen at the University of Guelph. Rachelle is a graduate student, a musician, and an immigrant of African-Caribbean descent.

Why get involved?

You’ll be contributing to new research regarding identity development, migration and music!

City Transit fare (to and from the interview – i.e., TTC/Guelph Transit)

A $25 gift card to a local shopping mall will be provided.

To find out more contact Rachelle Myrie (rmyrie@uoguelph.ca) in the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition.
Appendix B

Recruitment Email Script for Music Professionals/Community Leaders

Subject: Recruitment for a research study on experiences of music, migration and identity in young adults of African and African-Caribbean descent.

Dear __________

We are currently recruiting young adults for a study on music, migration and identity. Our aim is to develop a better understanding of how teens and young adults use music as a tool for developing identity and well-being. I am hoping that we might be able to recruit participants through your (agency/Network etc…..) for participation in this research. Specifically, we are recruiting African and/or African-Caribbean young adults who are between the ages of 18-30 who have moved to Ontario from another country.

If you know of anyone who fits these criteria and might be interested in participating, please forward on the attached recruitment poster.

All participants will receive a $25 gift certificate to a local shopping mall and city transit fare. Our research procedures have been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph.

This research is being conducted by myself and Dr. Andrea Breen from the University of Guelph (http://www.uoguelph.ca/family/faculty/breen-andrea). I am a graduate student in Family Relations and Human Development, an immigrant of African-Caribbean descent, a practicing musician and a music teacher.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this. Please feel free to contact me with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Rachelle Myrie
Rachelle Myrie BA BSc
MSc Student, Family Relations & Human Development University of Guelph
rmyrie@uoguelph.ca
Subject: Recruitment for a research study on experiences of music, migration and identity in young adults of African and African-Caribbean descent.

Dear __________

My name is Rachelle Myrie and I am a Master’s student at the University of Guelph in the Family Relations and Human Development program. I am also an immigrant of African-Caribbean descent.

I am researching experiences of music and identity in African and African-Caribbean young adults who have moved to Ontario from another country.

- Are you an immigrant or international student of African and/or African-Caribbean descent living in Ontario?
- Are you between the ages of 18 and 30?

If you answered yes to these questions, then please consider participating in this research study.

If you choose to participate in this study you will be asked to fill out a short survey and participate in an individual interview or a focus group. Questions will focus on your experiences with music, your sense of identity, and your migration journey. Participants will also be asked to complete a short demographic survey. Participation is completely voluntary and you are free to skip any question that you are not comfortable answering. I expect that the interview and survey will take about an hour to complete.

Participants will be given city transit fare (e.g. TTC/ Guelph transit) to cover travel costs to and from the interview, as well as a $25 gift certificate to a local shopping mall.

If you would like to participate, or would like more information about the study, please contact me at rmyrie@uoguelph.ca.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Rachelle Myrie BA BSc
MSc Family Relations and Human Development student
rmyrie@uoguelph.ca
Appendix D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Music and Identity in Young Adults of African and African-Caribbean Descent

We are conducting research to explore identity development and music.

We are inviting immigrants and international students of African & African-Caribbean descent, ages 18-30 who are living in Ontario to participate in individual interviews and a short survey.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore and further understand the role music plays in African & African – Caribbean young adult’s identity development.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study you will be asked to fill out a short survey. The survey will include demographic questions relating to your migration experience (i.e., What is your birth country? How long have you lived in Canada?). This will take a few minutes to complete.

You will then be asked to participate in an interview with Rachelle Myrie, a graduate student at the University of Guelph. Questions will focus on your experiences with music, your identity, and your migration journey.

The interview is expected to take about 1 hour. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. Your identity will remain confidential.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

It is possible that you may feel stress or emotional discomfort if you choose to discuss experiences that were difficult for you. There are no other anticipated risks. You are free to skip over any question that you are not comfortable answering.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no direct benefits to participants. However, this research is expected to contribute to our understanding of cultural processes of identity development in
immigrant youth and relations with positive development and may help inform interventions for immigrant youth.

APPRECIATION FOR PARTICIPATION

All participants will be provided with city transit fare to cover travel to and from the interview and a $25.00 gift card for the local shopping center in appreciation of their participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. It is important to be aware that all efforts to ensure confidentiality will be to the extent of the law.

All audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected and encrypted computer. Audio recordings will be recorded on an encrypted voice recorder and audio recordings will be transferred directly to a password, protected, encrypted laptop within 48 hours of the interview. Names and contact information will be destroyed within two years after the end of the research project. Your name will not be used in any products (written or electronic) that may result from this study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics
University of Guelph

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
If you have any questions about this research study, please contact:

Rachelle Myrie
Graduate Student

Andrea Breen, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study “Music and Identity in African-Caribbean Immigrant Emerging Adults” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in a survey and individual interview for the study. I have been given a copy of this form.

☑️ I give permission for the researchers to use verbatim quotes from the approved transcript any reports, presentations, or publications associated with the research project Music and Identity in African-Caribbean Immigrant Emerging Adults

☑️ I would like a summary of the study results to be sent to my email address: __________________________

____________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

____________________________________
Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

____________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

____________________________________
Signature of Witness Date
Appendix E

Background Questionnaire

Interview ID#___________________ (To be filled out by researcher)

Date of interview (mm/dd/yy): __________________________ (To be filled out by researcher)

Demographic Questions

1. Date of birth: Year____________ Month ______________ Day____________
2. Gender: Male_______ Female________
3. Race/Ethnicity: ______________________
4. Would you consider yourself a visible minority? ______________
5. What is your country of birth? __________________
6. What country did you immigrate from? _______________  
7. When did you immigrate to Canada? Month ________Year___________
8. What was your immigration status?
   a. Permanent resident: __________
   b. Temporary resident (student or work visa): __________
   c. Refugee: __________
   d. Other (please explain): ______________
9. Have you lived anywhere else (other than your birth country and country you immigrated from), prior to moving to Canada? Yes_______ No__________ N/A
   a. If yes, what country(ies) have you lived in before and for how long?

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<th>Country</th>
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10. Country of Citizenship: ______________________
11. What is your current place of residence? City ____________
12. State your current level of education: ________________
   a. No schooling completed
   b. Elementary school
   c. Some high school, no diploma
   d. High school graduate
   e. Some university or college
   f. Trade/technical/vocational training
   g. Associate degree
   h. Bachelor’s degree
   i. Master’s degree
   j. Professional degree
   k. Doctorate degree
   l. Other (please explain) ________________
13. Employment status: Are you currently...?
   a. Employed for wages
   b. Self-employed
   c. Out of work and looking for work
   d. Out of work but not currently looking for work
   e. A homemaker
   f. A student
   g. Military
   h. Retired
   i. Unable to work

14. What is your religious affiliation? (Church, denomination, religious organization)
Appendix F

Interview Guiding Questions

Introduction: How often do you listen to music? …In what contexts?

Thinking back over your life: Childhood, adolescence and recent years is there music that stands out for you that is especially memorable in each of these periods?

Childhood: What do you remember most about music in childhood? What songs stand out for you? What makes these especially memorable or meaningful for you?

Adolescence: What do you remember most about music in this period? What songs stand out for you? What makes these especially memorable or meaningful for you?

More recent – the last 5 years, or since 18: What do you remember most about music in this period? What songs stand out for you? What makes these especially memorable or meaningful for you?

If you could tell your life story using music, what music would you use? Why is this music important to you?

Next I want to focus on music in relation to your experience immigrating. Is there music that is especially memorable or meaningful to you in your experience immigrating?

Is there music that reminds you of home? Why does it remind you of home?

Is there music now that is meaningful or relevant to your immigration experience? Why is it meaningful?

Music and an understanding of who you are.

One of the main interests in this research is exploring connections between music and people's understanding of who they are. Does music connect to your sense of who you are? What else can you tell me about this that we haven't talked about?

Do you consider yourself a musician?
Appendix G

**RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS**

**Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROVAL PERIOD:</th>
<th>August 20, 2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>EXPIRY DATE:</td>
<td>August 20, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>REB:</td>
<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td>REB NUMBER:</td>
<td>15AU006</td>
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<tr>
<td>TYPE OF REVIEW:</td>
<td>Delegated Type 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</td>
<td>Breen, Andrea (<a href="mailto:abreen@uoguelph.ca">abreen@uoguelph.ca</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENT:</td>
<td>Family Relations &amp; Applied Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPONSOR(S):</td>
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<td>TITLE OF PROJECT:</td>
<td>Music and Identity in Young Adults of African and African-Caribbean Descent</td>
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**CHANGES:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Document Name</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Change Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-Feb-16</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Changed inclusion criteria; Increased recruitment locations; Added focus groups to method</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td>Changed age of immigration to last 7 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consent form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment script</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Changed age of immigration to last 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment poster</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Changed age of immigration to last 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New: Focus group consent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adapted consent form for focus groups in regards to confidentiality</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-Apr-16</td>
<td>Recruitment poster</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Included international students and individuals of African descent in Ontario. Increased age to 18-30yrs. Eliminated criteria of having migrated in the last 7 years. Changed wording to be more inviting. Changed study title</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Email/Phone Script</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Included international students and individuals of African descent in Ontario. Increased age to 18-30yrs. Eliminated criteria of having migrated in the last 7 years. Changed wording to be more inviting. Changed study title</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Included international students and individuals of African descent in Ontario. Increased age to 18-30yrs. Eliminated criteria of having migrated in the last 7 years. Changed study title. Changed TTC fare to transit fare</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consent Form for Focus Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Included international students and individuals of African descent in Ontario. Increased age to 18-30yrs. Eliminated criteria of having migrated in the last 7 years. Changed study title. Changed TTC fare to transit fare</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Application</td>
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<td>Included international students and individuals of African descent in Ontario. Increased age to 18-30yrs. Included snowball sampling. Eliminated criteria of having migrated in the last 7 years. Changed study title. Indicated that we may be submitting to other research ethics boards for approval. Indicated that interviews will be conducted “at a private office/space in the participating organization or in a public location in the community where sufficient privacy can be provided (eg. Study room in a library).”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Transcription protocol and confidentiality</td>
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The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University’s ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a Status Report to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature:  
Date: May 9, 2016

L. Kuczynski  
Chair, Research Ethics Board-General
## Appendix H

### Table: Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>Immigration Status</th>
<th>Years since migration to Canada</th>
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<td>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</td>
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