University of Alberta

Musical Taste, Performance, and Identity
among West African Canadians

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Music

Fall 2010
Edmonton, Alberta

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Abstract page

In this thesis I consider the role of music in the construction of identity among West African Canadians, focusing on musical taste and performance. Drawing on themes from participant narratives, I look at how music can maintain connections with or reference identities from "home" cultures. Focusing specifically on popular music, I suggest that identification with genres such as hip hop and reggae does not directly imply an identification with the African American or Afro-Caribbean cultures from which they originated, rather I point to how the music refers back to West Africa. I also look at the place of music and religious identity, discussing how performance of religious music embodies multiple registers of individual and communal identity. Traditional music and dance ensembles provide another focus, and I explore how musicians transmit cultural practices and use their profession to foreground West African elements of their identity in Canada's multicultural society.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to the many individuals who have helped me with this project. Foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor and mentor, Dr. Michael Frishkopf who gave me his support and guidance through the entire process. Thank you. I would also like to recognize the other members of my committee, Dr. Federico Spinetti and Dr. Guy Thompson for their advice and encouragement, along with my other professors, particularly Dr. Regula Qureshi. I also wish to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its generous funding, and the Department of Music for its support.

In addition, none of this would have been possible without the interest and participation of the individuals who generously shared of their experiences and musical interests. Thank you, all of you, both those specifically mentioned in my thesis as well as others who spoke with me and helped to shape the direction of this project.

Finally, there are several others I would like to recognize and thank for their part in helping this project come to fruition, including Lisbeth Slabotsky and Gloria Lipski who hosted me while I conducted fieldwork in Toronto and Montreal, and my fellow graduate students and other friends who have provided insightful feedback, and encouragement during both the research and writing process. To Laryssa Whittaker, Sarah Buddingh and Andrew Buhr, thank you. I am also forever grateful to my family, especially my parents who have provided unwavering support.

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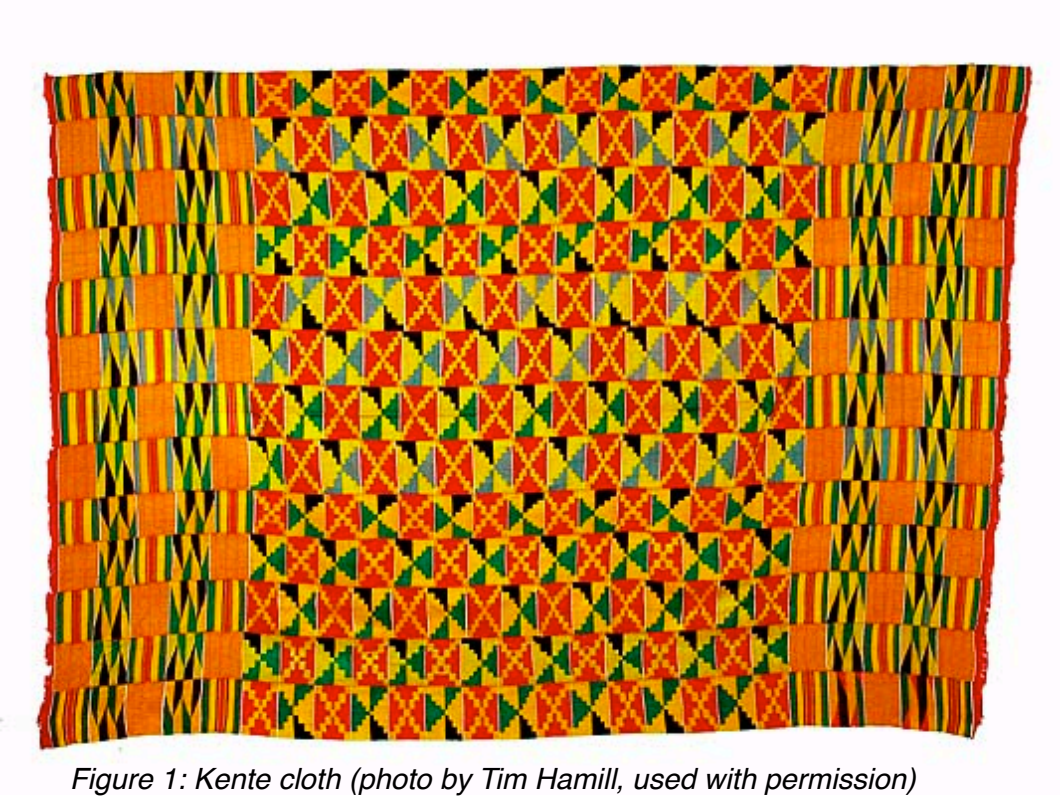

Figure 1: Kente cloth (photo by Tim Hamill, used with permission)

Music and *Kente*

Chapter 1: Theory and Method

Introduction

This thesis focuses on how West African Canadians express, contest and formulate their identity through music. I use the Ghanaian *kente c*loth as a metaphor to explore these issues. Just as this cloth is bound up in culture, identity and heritage (Ross 1998), music is likewise an important aspect of culture, and often a key signifier of identity. *Kente* fabric (Figure 1) is woven by hand, strips of cloth made of colorful thread that are then sewn together. As I teased apart my research participants' narratives, it seemed to me that the themes that surfaced were like threads that they wove together to create the different ways that West African Canadians

negotiate music and identity in their lives, which mimic the different patterns in the cloth. In the same way, I am a weaver in this project, with this thesis as the cloth. I have organized this thesis to reflect how I understand this metaphor of *kente* cloth, and thus I begin with a section to prepare the loom, as I provide the background and introduce my research participants. I then consider the threads or themes from my participants' narratives in a more ethnographic section and begin the weaving process. In the third section I look at the cloth as a whole, exploring the patterns that have developed in my participants responses while also conducting my own weaving through analysis and synthesis.

There is a growing interest among ethnomusicologists in the politics of identity among immigrant and refugee communities, as music is used to maintain identity ties to the "home" culture and to build community in a new cultural context. Music also provides a means of performing or representing a particular identity, through the agency provided by musical choice, musical taste. For this reason my research investigates how members of the West African community interact with music, providing insight into their concepts of identity and their relationship to the broader Canadian cultural context.

I draw on the narratives of West African Canadians in four different Canadian cities (Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver), comparing their experiences and demonstrating the complexity of this question: the relationship between music and identity. Although I originally conceived of

"West African Canadian" as a salient identity category among African Canadians, I soon realized that this was not the case. African immigrants do share many similar experiences, but this does not lead to a regional West African communal identification among African Canadians, nor even primary identification with the broader category "African Canadian." At the same time, West Africa is a recognized region of Africa, with a shared history due to the various empires that rose to dominate much of the region, influence through migration of key ethnic groups (Mande, Songhai, Hausa etc.), trade relations and more recently, their experience under French or British colonial rule (Shillington 2005). Thus I continue to use the term West African Canadians to refer to my participants, while recognizing that it is a convenience (a shorthand to describe my

Figure 2: Map of West Africa and participants' country of origin (< http://maps.google.com*>).*

participants whose origins are from West Africa, see Figure 2) and may not reflect a unified group identity. Instead, I focus on individuals, and consider the common threads revealed through their narratives, exploring how their identities intersect based on subjective experiences (including age), as well as ties of ethnicity, nationality, and religious or linguistic groups. Other ties for group affiliation include race, class, educational level, profession, and gender.

Over the past fifteen years ethnomusicologists have begun to emphasize ethnographic research in immigrant identity. Schramm (1982), Turino (2004), Stokes (1994), Frith (1996), Ramnarine (2007) and Slobin (1993) all explore aspects of identity politics and consider the role of music in identity creation and maintenance, emphasizing the immigrant and diasporic contexts. In addition, a rich body of work is developing that analyzes the music and identity politics of particular groups in North America or Europe, groups with connections to Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean. These include ethnographies such as Diethrich (1999/2000)'s discussion of the hybridized identities and *desi* music of Indian-American youth, Sugarman's (1997, 2004) exploration of the Albanian diaspora, Ragland's (2009) discussion of Mexican migrants, Borkowska's (2006) research concerning the Egyptian diaspora, Wong's (2004) work on Asian American musicians, and collections of essays like that edited by Hae-kyung Um (2005) on performance and identity in the Asian diaspora.

Alongside this growing body of work on music and diasporas or transnational communities, there remains little scholarship on recent immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Okpewho and Nzegwu (2009) call this "the new African diaspora," referring to the voluntary postcolonial migrations of the past fifty years in contrast with the earlier, pre-colonial diaspora of slavery. This scholarship is growing, but although several edited volumes on issues relating to African immigrants have been published in the past five years (see Konadu-Agyemang, Takyi, and Arthur 2006, Okpewho and Nzegwu 2009, Tettey and Puplampu 2005, Falola and Afolabi 2008), none of these focus on issues of music. Through my research I join a small, but growing number of scholars who are expanding scholarship into this area. I build on the work of Forman (2002) and Kelly (2001) in looking at popular music and mass media, recognizing the relations between immigrants and the African American black youth culture. I also consider the work of Canon (2005), Ebron (2004), and the transnational work of Bourderionnet (2008), Burns (2009) and Winders (2006) in order to focus specifically on the West African experience. With this thesis, I hope to generate more interest in the discussion of music and identity in the new African diaspora, and add a Canadian component to this body of scholarship.

Research Questions and Aims

As I spoke with my research participants, the main question guiding my research was how musical taste provided a way for them to assert or

express their identity. I was interested in discovering whether they saw music as a means of maintaining connections to their "home" culture, and how this took place. I also wanted to explore issues of agency, how they used their musical choices to express or perform identity, and how these choices related to the broader Canadian culture.

Drawing on developments from cultural studies and the study of subcultural ideologies, I see musical taste as a set of musical choices, subjective choices that are shared in the collective and felt through performance, even the performance of listening (Martin 2004, Thornton 1997, Frith 1996). In these contexts musical choice plays a role in the representation of identity. I also emphasize musical taste as a means of being inclusive, a means of exploring the place of music among listeners, consumers, as well as performers. At the same time, I recognize that musical tastes are varied, and often broad in scope. Yet in spite of this, or perhaps because of this, there is special emphasis and meaning ascribed to African musics, whether traditional or popular ("*moderne*"). How do West African Canadians [1] make use of this music as they negotiate the dynamics of identity? I also consider and question the relationship of West African Canadians to American and Caribbean music, an ambiguous relationship given that many mainstream genres are themselves connected to Africa on numerous levels. What then is the role of genres

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[1] By West African Canadians, I am referring to Canadian immigrants originating from countries in West Africa. I also include their children. I explain my use of terminology more fully in "Exploring the term 'African Canadian'."

such as hip hop or reggae and how does this music play in the discussion of identity among West African Canadians?

When I first began my research on music and identity among West African Canadians, I was interested in their musical taste and musical activities. I wanted to find out about the kinds of music that they listened to or performed, and how much of that was from West Africa (or Africa in general). I was also looking to see how music relates to their sense of self, and whether they felt that music provided them with a means of maintaining connections with their home cultures, and how that took place. Although I originally developed questions that focused on identity, in practice they proved to be vague and difficult for my participants to answer. Further exploration of the issue from multiple angles could enhance future research in this area. Appendix A provides a list of my y preliminary research questions which served as a guide during my conversations with research participants.

Method

The primary sources for this thesis emerged from multi-sited fieldwork among a sampling of West African Canadians in four different cities (Figure 3). I also draw on my own West African experiences, living in Burkina Faso for a year in 2000, and returning to West Africa (Ghana and Burkina Faso) for fieldwork during the summer of 2007. I originally intended to focus on Edmonton and Toronto, but the opportunity arose for me to expand my fieldwork to both Montreal and Vancouver, thus

Figure 3: Map of Canada noting cities where participants live (< http://www.earthatlas.info/maps/>)

incorporating all the major Canadian destinations for both French- and English-speaking West African immigrants.

My research participants were located through a range of methods. Several were acquaintances from my research trip to Ghana; others I met while visiting Holyrood Mennonite Church or through mutual acquaintances. Many were simply people that I met visiting stores, restaurants or music festivals catering to West African Canadians. I attempted to conduct interviews with at least three or four individuals from each city, leading to representatives representatives from over eight African countries. I was also able to attend several music performances, including multiple events at Les FrancoFolies music festival in Montreal. Although I attempted to locate both men and women from several different

age categories, I found it difficult to make contacts and arrange to meet with women. They seemed more hesitant to speak with me, frequently suggested that I talk with actual musicians, and several who originally agreed to an interview were busy each time I tried to arrange a meeting. Had I more time to develop a relationship with these women prior to arranging an interview, I think these issues might have been less significant, but it was not possible for this study. Thus while I would have preferred a broader sample, lack of resources and the time to develop connections limited both my sample size and scope. For this reason, the majority of my research participants were young men in their twenties or thirties, many of whom had arrived in Canada during past ten years.

Given the multisited nature of this research project, and my experiences in locating research participants, I found myself in several different relationships vis-à-vis my research participants. As a female (Euro-Canadian) graduate student, conducting research among West African Canadians, I found that these relationships affected the rapport that developed during the interview. As I think back, several issues seem to hover just under the surface of my interactions with my research participants. Although Canada claims to be a multicultural society, there is still an underlying tension regarding racism and other discrimination. Yet this issue never came up in my discussions with research participants, perhaps because of the musical focus of our discussions, or perhaps because my own Euro-Canadian background meant they were less likely

to raise the issue than they might have been with other African Canadians. Although I do not believe that they significantly affected my research, I was aware of my own gender and educational background as I spoke with my research participants and potential participants. My impression regarding the women who were hesitant to speak with me was that they were uncertain about the value of their own knowledge and competency, and I wondered how my educational background factored into their ambivalence. Gender dynamics also factored into the research, since I had to negotiate a research relationship with the young men who were a large percentage of my research participants. More significant to the rapport that I was able to develop were the connections that I was able to make with my research participants, through a shared connection or a demonstration of cultural competency. I found that my experience living in Congo as a child, and more recently in Burkina Faso, along with my research trip to Ghana, provided me with an understanding of West African culture(s) that helped me to relate to my research participants. Similarly, when there was a prior connection with the research participant, whether shared religious belief, or shared experience (visiting their home in Ghana or even attending the same concert) the interview flowed more smoothly, but it also was more difficult to guide the topic of conversation. In cases where I had less of a connection with the participant, I found that the interview became more structured as they simply responded to my questions.

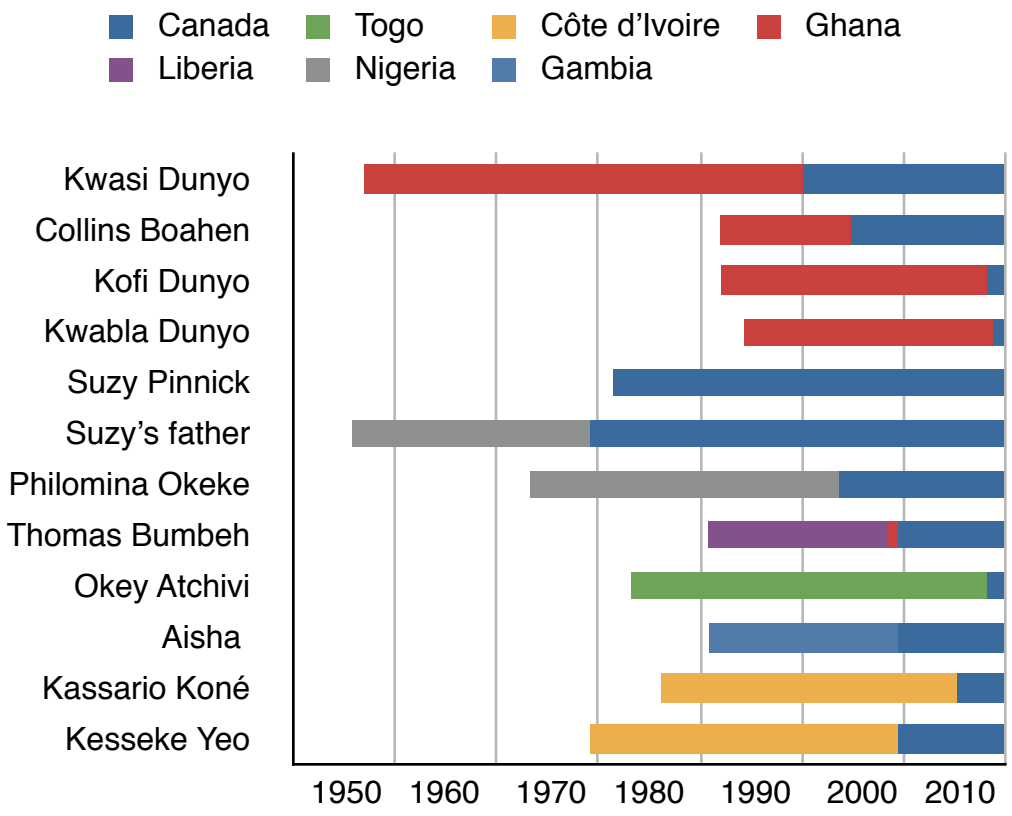

Figure 4: List of research participants with representation of approximate age, marked as years spent in Canada and West African countries.

Introducing the participants

Following the tendencies of the new African diaspora, all but one of my key research participants arrived in Canada since the 1980s, and eight arrived during the past ten years (Figure 4). Several of my participants came to Canada as adolescents, and one is a second generation Canadian. She is also the only participant who does not speak at least one of the languages from her "home" culture. While I recognize the limitations this poses in making generalizations about the second generation West African Canadians, I believe that her comments suggest

ways that young people who have grown up in Canada may be able to

make use of music in a way that speaks to their particular experience.

Edmonton

Okey Atchivi - Togo

Okey came to Canada in August 2008. Unlike most of my other participants, Okey does not plan to stay in Canada. He would like to return to Togo after spending a few years in Canada working and learning English. I met him at Holyrood Mennonite Church, and we arranged an interview near his work in Edmonton's Capilano Mall. When I spoke with him he was living with his older brother who has settled in Edmonton with his girlfriend and baby daughter. After completing several years of university in Togo, Okey worked as the coordinator of a humanitarian organization. He also spent several months in France before returning to Togo just prior to coming to Canada.

Thomas Bumbeh - Liberia

Thomas came to Canada as a Liberian refugee, and has since become a Canadian citizen. Thomas and three of his cousins were staying at a refugee camp in Ghana when they were sponsored to come to Canada. After their arrival, an immigrant support organization put them in touch with Holyrood Mennonite Church who helped Thomas and his relatives settle in Edmonton. A devout Christian, he continues to attends Holyrood, which counts a significant number of West African Christians among its members. When I spoke with him, he had been in Canada since 2001, after having traveled back and forth between Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ghana due to the civil war in Liberia. He briefly returned to Ghana to get married, and his wife joined him in 2005. She is originally from Sierra Leone. At the time of our interview they had a seven month old son, and his wife was pregnant with their second child. Thomas works as a real estate agent and I spoke with him at his office in Edmonton.

Philomina Okeke - Nigeria

Phil is currently a professor in Women's Studies at the University of Alberta. She came to Canada as a graduate student in the late 1980s, and after receiving her doctorate, has taught in several Canadian universities. Her research on gender and transnational issues sometimes draws her back to Nigeria. Phil's husband likewise came to North America as a student and they have two adolescent daughters. I met her through a chance encounter at the university, and we arranged to meet at her office on campus.

Suzy Pinnick - Nigeria

I met Suzy through my landlady, who has been a longtime friend of Suzy's family, and even sat in on our second interview when Suzy returned to

play me some Nigerian music. At the time of our interviews Suzy was preparing to move to Winnipeg, MB for an internship, having recently finished her medical degree. Suzy is the only second generation West African Canadian among my research participants. Her mother comes from the Black community that has lived in Alberta for nearly a century. Suzy's father emigrated from Nigeria around 1970 and frequently traveled to the UK. Although he himself did not return to Nigeria, several of his friends traveled back and forth. Suzy also maintained connections with her relatives in Nigeria, using English as the means of communication as she was never taught Itsekiri or Yoruba. Suzy has never been to Nigeria, but she recently returned from two years in Ireland where she became involved with the local Nigerian community.

Montreal

Aisha[2] - Gambia

Originally from Gambia, Aisha came to Canada in 2001 to join her parents who had arrived two years prior. She was sixteen. She has extended family scattered around Canada, the United States and the UK. She returns to Gambia on vacations, and relatives come to visit as well. She is currently attending college or university. I spoke with her during the quiet moments of her shift at the Dépanneur St-Naureen, a small corner store where she worked part time during the summer.

Kassorio Koné - Côte d'Ivoire

Kassorio grew up in Côte d'Ivoire and came to Canada in 2006 after graduating from the university in Abidjan (the capital) as a chemist. I met him after attending a concert at Les FrancoFolies, and we arranged to meet for an interview a couple days later. When I spoke with him, he had been in Montreal for a year and a half. He has been able to develop relationships with Montreal reggae musicians through connections with individuals in France. When we met I joked with him about his clean-cut appearance that was seemingly at odds with his deeply held interest in reggae. He laughingly explained that dreads would be considered inappropriate at the laboratory where he worked.

Toronto

Collins Boahen - Ghana

Collins is currently a student in political science and international studies at York University. He was born and raised in central Ghana (Kumasi) before joining his father in Toronto in 1998 at the age of thirteen. Although he never mentioned his mother, Collins did refer to other extended family, both in Canada and Ghana. Collins also pointed to his experience growing up with his grandmother as significant in guiding his interest towards traditional Asante culture. I met Collins through a mutual friend,

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[2] Aisha declined to provide her last name in our interview.

and I learned that he was also very close to the Dunyo family. He and Kwabla Dunyo share an interest in producing rap, and he took lessons in traditional Ghanaian music from Kwasi.

Kofi and Kwabla Dunyo - Ghana
Kofi and Kwabla are half brothers that I first met in the village of Dagbamate in Ghana's Volta Region in 2007 where I was hosted by their father. Since then, they and a couple other brothers have immigrated to Toronto to live with their father and further their education. Kofi arrived in September, 2008, while Kwabla came the following January. Their experience growing up has been shaped by movement back and forth between rural (the family village) and urban (boarding school, living in Greater Accra with their mothers) settings. This movement mimicked their father's travels back and forth between Ghana and Canada. When I spoke with them, they were still in the process of adjusting to their new life in Canada, upgrading their courses, and preparing for university in the fall. I spoke with them in their father's house in Toronto. Kwabla is very involved in hip hop producing his own music and music videos and maintaining a website at <http://ghcali.webs.com/>.

Kwasi (Frederick) Dunyo - Ghana
Originally from Ghana, Kwasi learned Ewe drumming growing up in the village of Dagbamate. Kwasi became involved with numerous drumming and dance societies in Ghana, including some with national affiliations, and has been lead drummer in many of these groups since the 1960s. He began instructing Ewe drumming since the 1980s, and in 1992 Kwasi came to Canada as the recipient of a Visiting Foreign Artist grant from the government. He has since settled in Toronto where he performs, teaches and conducts workshops on traditional Ewe drumming at the University of Toronto, York University, Toronto public schools and elsewhere. Kwasi frequently returns to Ghana where most of his family remain, and has developed a cultural study program for Western participants to learn drumming in his home village during the summers. Although I was not part of one of these study programs, it was in this setting that I first met Kwasi in 2007 when he was my host during my research in Ghana. This connection was made through my advisor, Dr. Michael Frishkopf who first met Kwasi Dunyo during his Master's research in Ghana in 1987-1989, and has recently developed a study abroad program in Ghana that includes drumming and dance lessons in the village of Dagbamate. Kwasi has recently brought four of his sons to join him in Toronto. Although he was very busy with his work, we were able to find some time to meet at his home in Toronto. He has a website at <http://www.dunyo.com/>.

Vancouver

Kesseke Yeo - Côte d'Ivoire

I met Kesseke through one of my friends who was connected with the live music scene in Vancouver. After speaking with me on the telephone, Kesseke agreed to meet with me.

Kesseke was born and spent his childhood in a village in northern Côte d'Ivoire. Orphaned at a young age, he was raised by his uncle until he was discovered at thirteen through a national dance competition sponsored by the Côte d'Ivoire government. He moved to the capital and danced with the *Ballet* for seven years before dancing with other groups, including Ballet Djolem d'Abidjan and Yelemba d'Abidjan. In the fall of 2001, Kesseke came to Canada from Côte d'Ivoire to join a group called Masabo Culture Company which performs and teaches West African (Ivoirian) music and dance. Kesseke knew the founder, fellow Ivoirian Soro Fana, from their time together in the *Ballet National*. Kesseke also works as a designer, sewing costumes and African-style influenced clothing. His website is <http://sites.google.com/site/kissofafrica/>.

Preparing the loom: Background Information

Before a weaver can begin the actual process of weaving *kente*, there is preparatory work that needs to take place. Skeins of thread are wound onto bobbins, and then laid out into the warp that creates the foundation for a strip of cloth. The warp threads are then retrieved and set up on the loom (Ross 1998, 84-86). In this chapter I prepare my own warp as I discuss my frame of reference, providing background and theoretical material for the "weaving" of music and identity that takes place in the following two chapters.

Chapter 2: History

African Canadian Presence

Following the *kente* cloth metaphor, I continue to prepare the loom by locating the experience of West African Canadians within the broader sphere of African Canadians and Blacks in Canada and the story or history of these communities. This discussion is somewhat problematic, since the terminology is confusing. Concepts such as multiculturalism, diaspora communities and minority groups each have their own nuances. Even the term "African Canadian" needs clarification, since the idea of *Africanness* as an identity can be defined by several overlapping and conflicting criteria.

History of African and Black Canadians

While my thesis focuses on the experiences of West African Canadians in the new African diaspora, meaning those who have recent (typically first or second generation) geographical and cultural ties to West African countries (whether immigrant, Canadian citizen, or refugee), I believe it is important to place their story within the broader history of Africans and Blacks in Canada. The large voluntary migration and settlement of Africans in Canada is a recent phenomenon, with significant "new" immigration only since the 1980s (Opoku-Dapaah 2006, 72). However, the story begins in the seventeenth century and covers several different waves of migration (Winks 1997).

The first wave consisted of forced relocation as Africans were brought to Canada as servants, slaves, or indentured labourers. Slavery in Canada persisted for nearly two hundred years, although not to the extent as in the United States or the Caribbean. Jones notes that by the 1760s, at least 1,000 Africans were enslaved in Upper and Lower Canada, most working as domestic servants (2007, 114).

During the second wave non-enslaved Blacks migrated to Canada, beginning with the Black Loyalists who came from the United States in 1783. The British offered them freedom in exchange for fighting for the British during the American Revolution, and most came to Canada where they were settled on infertile land in Nova Scotia. Others migrated to England and to a settlement in Sierra Leone (Winks 1997,29-44). From

the beginning, Black communities developed in several locations in eastern Canada, as well as Toronto and parts of Ontario (Jones 2007, 114). Following the War of 1812 additional refugees arrived, having been "encouraged by the British to desert their U. S. masters in return for settlers' status and land" (Mensah 2002, 48).

In the nineteenth century, a third wave of immigrants began to arrive. Many were fugitives who escaped from slavery via the Underground Railroad, since the *Abolition Act of 1793* in Upper Canada meant that runaway slaves entering Canada were considered free. Approximately 50,000 slaves are believed to have escaped to Canada between 1815 and 1860, with many settling in southern Ontario (Jones 2007, 115). Settlement in western Canada took place later, and more slowly. Winks notes that a group of Californian Blacks settled in Victoria, British Columbia in the late 1850s, although it was not until the early 1900s that Black communities developed in the Prairies (Winks 1997, 272-274, Mensah 2002, 50).

Racial discrimination and segregation were a fact of life for Blacks in Canada at this point, and populations dwindled as Canadian foreign policies restricted potential immigrants. In 1921 the population of Black Canadians was only 18,291, only 0.2% of the general population. This number remained fairly stable until the 1980s, although the major jump in population did not take place until the 1991 census, when the number of

Black Canadians exceeded 500,000, or 2% of the Canadian population for the first time (Winks 1997, 487, Mensah 2002, 53).

In the 1960s restrictions in Canadian immigration policies were eased, and the new policies enabled more Black foreigners (and other visible minorities) to enter the country, beginning with an influx of immigrants from the Caribbean, but later expanding to the African continent as well. These new policies claimed to judge each immigrant on their own merit, while emphasizing education and employment potential, but they were criticized as perpetuating certain racist elements through the class-based points system and constrained access to immigration officers and procedures in many African countries (Jones 2007, 115, Puplampu and Tettey 2005, 37). Since this shift in Canadian immigration policy took place at a time when Britain and other European countries were becoming more restrictive, large groups of Africans, especially Ghanaians, Ethiopians and Somalians began migrating to Canada and the United States (where similar easing of restrictions were taking place) in search of opportunities for employment, education and general prosperity (Jones 2007 111; Opoku-Dapaah 2006, 71, 74). Political, economic and environmental problems in Africa also contributed to the increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees from affected countries (Jones 2007, 116).

Migration in the United States and Canada

As in Canada, the increasing African presence in the United States can be traced to several factors, including favourable shifts to immigration programs beginning in the 1960s. While the first significant flow of African immigrants to the United States began in the early 1970s, it was not until the 1980s that their presence became visible in society. This was followed by a surge in immigration during the 1990s. Based on their analysis of the 2000 census records, Takyi and Boate note that over half of all foreign-born Africans in the United States arrived during the 1990s (2006, 52).

Although both the United States and Canada share the designation of being immigrant nations, and have a similar pattern of recent African immigration, there are still significant differences that affect migration and experience within the two countries. One of these differences is simply national demographics. Very little is known about the most recent wave of African immigrants, since, as Takyi and Boate suggest, they are "often invisible in a 'sea of native-born blacks' and other black immigrant groups, especially those from the Caribbean" (2006, 51). This is particularly true in the United States, where the large number of pre-existing African Americans, along with significant immigration from the Caribbean, overshadows the numbers and experiences of current African immigrants. According to the 2004 Census, the foreign-born Black population was only 8% of the total Black population; of these, only 30% came from Africa

(U.S. Census Bureau 2007, 2). This means that the vast majority of the American Black population are born and raised in the United States.

In Canada these numbers are more evenly divided between the different origins. In 2001, African immigrants formed approximately one quarter of the Black[3] population in Canada, while immigrants from the Caribbean, Central and South America form another quarter (see Figure 5 for breakdown of immigrant arrival dates). While about half of the Black population were born in Canada, only one-tenth have been in Canada long enough to be third generation or older (Milan and Tran 2004, 4). Thus, as Balakrishnan and Gyimah point out, "[u]nlike Blacks in the U.S., Blacks in Canada are more recent immigrants with a wide diversity regarding places of origin, historical past, and cultural background. There is a mix of African Blacks, French-speaking Haitians, and English-speaking Caribbeans, as well as a sizable number of native-born Blacks (2007, 319).

This reference to French- and English-speaking immigrants points to another difference between Canada and the United States. In the United States, the primary source countries for West African immigration are Nigeria and Ghana, followed by Liberia and Sierra Leone (Takyi 2009, 241). Takyi points outs an emphasis on anglophone countries, and suggests that a shared linguistic experience (English) may be a key reason for these immigrants to choose the United States as their

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[3] In regards to Canadian census data, "Black" is a demographic category, that includes all who self define as racially Black, one of the visible minority categories. Milan and Tran note that Blacks vary greatly in their roots, with some born in Africa or the Caribbean, while others have been in Canada for generations (2004, 2,3).

destination (2009, 242). The same may hold for Canada, since Ghana and Nigeria are likewise significant sources of West African immigrants. However, as a bilingual nation, Canada offers opportunities for immigrants in both of its national languages, providing a reason why immigrants from francophone countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Guinea are present in similar numbers as those from Sierra Leone or Liberia (Stats Canada 2007). The majority of these immigrants are located in Québec, specifically, Montréal.

Although these francophone immigrants may live in Canada, many of them maintain transnational ties with France and the de facto hub of *l'espace francophonie*, the sphere of French influence and francophone culture. Canadian reggae artist Corneille, for example, is signed on to a French record label even though he has lived in Montréal since emigrating from Rwanda (Bourderionnet 2008, 14). These connections are maintained because Paris emerged as a centre of world music in the 1980s and 1990s. Following the immigration restrictions of the mid 1970s, this period of of relative openness for African immigration marked the beginning of a time of opportunities for African musicians from the former French and Belgian colonies (Winders 2006).

The New African Diaspora: Summarizing the situation

The past few decades have seen a growing number of Africans emigrating to the United States and Canada. This is a new pattern of migration, since previous migration was directed towards Europe, particularly the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain

(Opoku-Dopaah 2006, 71). Scholars suggest earlier European migration was due to both colonial ties and close proximity (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemangdu 2006, 22). Although changing dynamics in both Europe and North America have led to a shift in migration patterns, both the United Kingdom and (more significantly) France, remain important locales in the broader transnational African context, particularly when music enters the discussion.

Statistical and demographic Information

According to 2006 Canadian census records, Blacks are the third largest visible minority group in Canada, since they make up 15.5% of the visible minority population, behind South Asians (24.9%) and Chinese (24.0%). At the same time, they are only a small percentage (2.5%) of the overall Canadian population (Statistics Canada 2008, 13). This in contrast

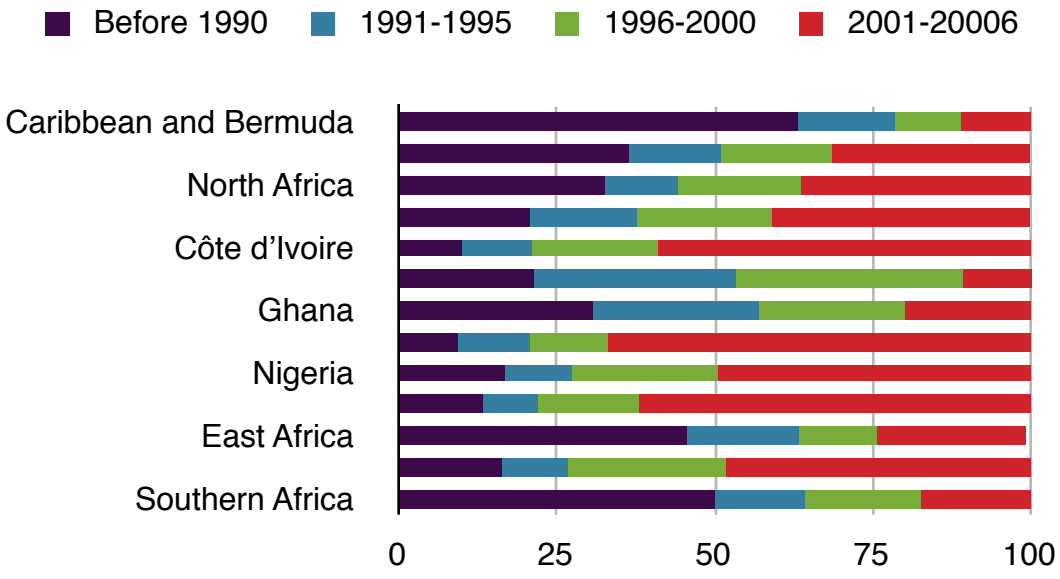

Figure 5: Percentage of total immigrants to Canada from select region (including relevant countries in West Africa), divided into different periods of immigration

with the United States, where Blacks make up 12.85% of the American population (Central Intelligence Agency 2010).

In 2006, nearly one-fifth of the Canadian population were immigrants, and of these, 5.13% were born in the Caribbean and Bermuda, while 6.05% came from Africa. As explained earlier, various forces have affected immigration and period of immigration. This has led to different periods of high or low immigration for particular regions or countries. As can be seen from Figure 5, the majority of immigrants from the Caribbean arrived before 1991, during the first wave of immigration after Canada relaxed its immigration policy. Immigrants from West Africa have a different pattern of immigration, which also speaks to issues in their countries of origin, such as the recent political and social unrest in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

In "Africans abroad: Comparative Perspectives on America's Postcolonial west Africans," Baffour Takyi notes the importance of studying the new African diaspora, emphasizing the significance of West African immigrants in the United States as he describes the historic connection of the region to native-born African Americans and the Atlantic diaspora. He also mentions their significance within the heterogeneity of Africa as a whole, and their increasing numbers in the most recent waves of African immigration to the United States (2009, 239). According to American statistics, African immigrants made up 3.7% of all immigrants in 2007, a percentage which had increased significantly during the past ten to fifteen

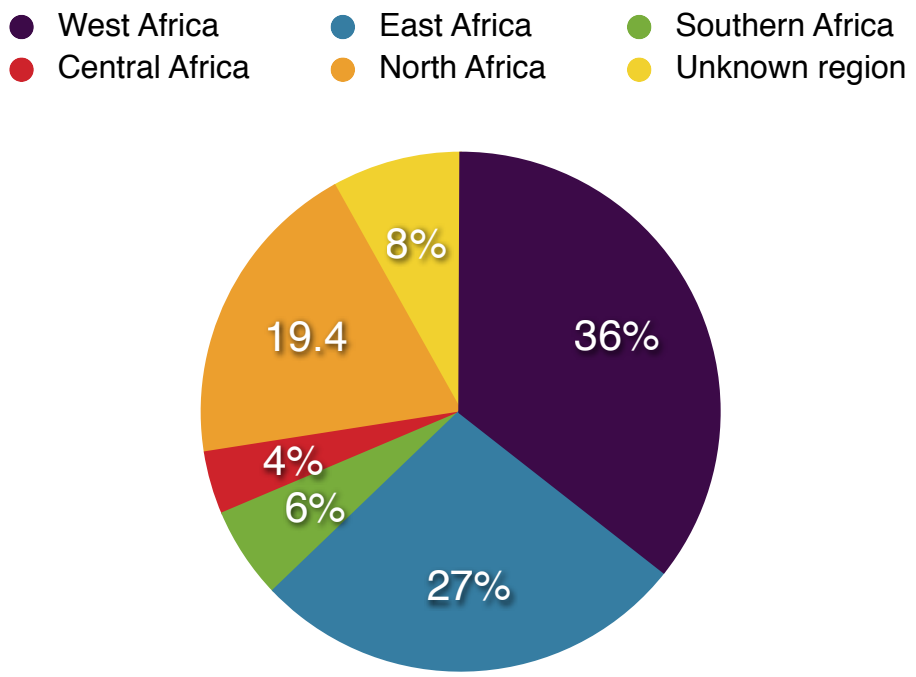

Figure 6: African immigrants in United States divided into regions of origin (based on data from Terrazas 2009).

years. Of these, over one-third came from West Africa (Figure 6), particularly the countries of Nigeria and Ghana (Terrazas 2009). Although the number of African immigrants is growing, it is important to place it in perspective—the number of immigrants from the Caribbean to the United Sates is nearly triple that from the continent, and in 2006 Caribbean immigrants made up nearly 10% of all the foreign-born population living in the United States (Gelatt and Dixon, 2006).

The situation in Canada is different (Figure 7). The percentage of Africans and Caribbean immigrants is more balanced in relation to the overall number of immigrants in Canada, and the majority of African

immigrants in Canada are from East Africa [4] (34.7%) rather than West Africa (13%) (Statistics Canada 2007).

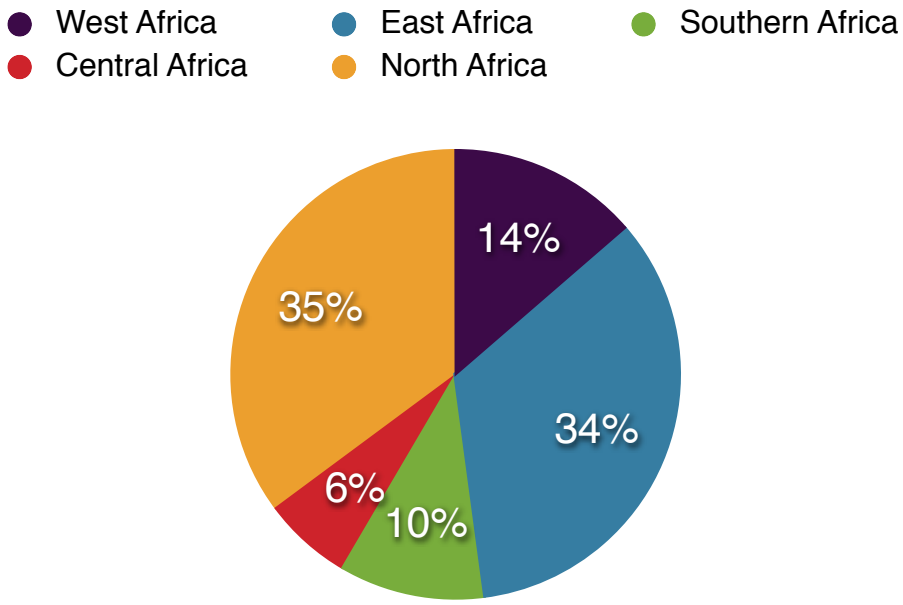

Figure 7: African immigrants in Canada divided into regions of origin (based on data from Statistics Canada. 2007*).*

Canadian Multiculturalism

Canadian multiculturalism provides the context in which West African immigration and adaptation to Canadian society takes place, but this term is multifaceted, with four main connotations in Canadian social discourse: demographic reality (a descriptor of the Canadian population), ideology (a normative prescription for a pluralistic Canadian society), a competitive process among and between ethnocultural groups (for economic and political resources) and a government policy that seeks to manage diversity in Canadian society (Satzewich and Liodakis 2007,

[4] Data regarding immigrants from East Africa likely includes both Black individuals as well as others who had settled in the region (White, East Indian).

123-124, Mensah 2002, 204). Although the government policy on multiculturalism has gone through several stages of development, the idea has frequently been contested, with both critics and defenders.

History of Canadian multiculturalism policy

Canada's official policy on multiculturalism was developed in 1971 in response to several factors that together contributed to the "demise of Canada's assimilationist stance and paved the way for official multiculturalism" (Mensah 2002, 205). After World War II, increased immigration from a variety of European and developing countries began to broaden the Anglo- and Franco-Canadian symbolic order that previously formed the basis of Canadian society. By the 1960s, pressure from Québécois nationalists, along with lobbying by members of various (European) ethnic minority groups and First Nations peoples added to the political turmoil of the time (205). The Liberal government under Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau responded by introducing a multicultural policy which would, as Fleras and Elliott quote from the government's statement, "strengthen the solidarity of the Canadian people by enabling all Canadians to participate fully and without discrimination in defining and building the nation's future" (1999, 301).

This policy has shifted over time. Fleras (2010) identifies three different emphases that have evolved since its inception, describing them as ethnicity multiculturalism, equity multiculturalism and civic multiculturalism. The first stage developed under Trudeau in the 1970s,

and marked a folkloric orientation with an emphasis on “Celebrating Differences” as a means of eradicating prejudice and racism. Following guiding principles regarding the equality of cultures, diversity, personal choice and anti-discrimination, the government developed initiatives to support and assist development of cultural groups, assist the members of such groups to overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society, promote creative interaction between groups, and help immigrants learn at least one of Canada’s two official languages (Fleras 2010, 294, 295; Fleras and Elliot 1999, 301).

In the 1980s the focus of official multiculturalism shifted from an emphasis on the centrality of identity and ethnicity towards the concerns of racialized immigrants with “a commitment to equity, social justice, and institutional inclusiveness” (2010, 295). During this period the government focused on managing diversity by equalizing the playing field in the political, economic and sociocultural spheres. This was done through the creation of relevant organizations as well as changes to existing organizations in an attempt to address systemic and systematic barriers to access (Puplampu and Tettey 2005, 39). In 1985, for example, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms “constitutionally entrenched multiculturalism as a distinguishing characteristic of Canadian life,” while the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, “sought to promote cultures, reduce discrimination, and accelerate institutional accommodation” and “imbued

multiculturalism with the cloak of legal authority and the weight of Canadian law" (Fleras and Elliott 1999, 303-304).

The third phase of multiculturalism developed through a civic focus in the mid 1990s. Under the Department of Canadian Heritage, the multiculturalism program currently pursues the three goals of social justice, identity and civic participation (Fleras 2010, 296). While ensuring minority access, representation and equitable treatment, this focus emphasizes the ideal of a shared "sense of citizenship and belonging as a way of deepening loyalty and allegiance to Canada" (Puplampu and Tettey 2005, 39). Using similar language, Fleras explains that rather than simply focusing on racial and ethnic minorities, the current policy is directed to Canadian society at large, with an emphasis on "fostering a sense of belonging, a civic engagement, an active involvement in community life, and a shared awareness of Canadian identity against the broader backdrop of Canada's national interests" (2010, 296).

Contesting Multiculturalism

Since its inception, policies supporting Canadian multiculturalism have been subject to varied public perception and critical reviews. Fleras (2010), Mensah (2002), May (2002), Puplampu and Tettey (2001) and Satzewich and Liodakis (2007) all examine and respond to the main criticisms leveled against official multiculturalism. Some of the main issues are reflected in Figure 8.

Costs and Benefits of Multiculturalism	
Costs	**Benefits**
Divisive: undermines Canadian unity and identity through endorsement of diversity ("balkanization")	**Unifying:** promotes unity and coherence by depoliticizing diversity (building society)
Regressive: ghettoizes minorities and keeps them in their place	**Progressive:** provides platform for articulation of interests and stepping stone for success
Symbolic: without substance, full of fury, signifying nothing except preservation of the status quo	**Substantive:** symbols can move mountains by legitimizing diversity as part of the national agenda
Fraud: instrument of control that deludes, conceals, evades, and distorts; that is, it promises a lot, but delivers little	**Catalyst:** instrument of opportunity through creation of social climate for diversity to flourish

Figure 8: Costs and Benefits of Multiculturalism (Fleras and Elliot 1999, 315, Table 9.3)

Writing from a Black perspective, Mensah suggests that despite its pitfalls, official multiculturalism has been beneficial for Canadian Blacks, who "have used official multiculturalism to achieve tangible and practical goals in the Canadian mosaic" (2002, 230). This would also apply to other visible minorities as well. Mensah points out how multiculturalism has led to growing awareness of, and legislation against, racial discrimination. Also, that Black history and culture, as well as Black concerns have become legitimate components of the Canadian mosaic, at least officially (231). Speaking to the African Canadian experience in particular, Puplampu and Tettey pose several critiques regarding the practical implications of multiculturalism. They argue that even though one of the fundamental beliefs of official multiculturalism is that it is altruistic, promoting the equality of all cultures, "the reality is that certain cultures are accorded a pride of place in Canadian society, while the values and

practices of other cultures, which are not concordant with those of the dominant groups, are rejected and/or denigrated as *backward* and likely to contaminate the *civilized* ethos of the dominant culture" (2005, 39).

Where the values and practices in multicultural Canada are celebrated, it is often in what Puplampu and Tettey describe as the "simplification of culture" whereby "the supposed exotic features of the *ethnics* are put on display without any context or intention to learn anything of value, let along challenge existing stereotypes" (42). This often takes place at "ethnic festivals" which are presented by policy makers as mechanisms to break down intercultural barriers. Puplampu and Tettey criticize this representation suggesting that "[unless] they are anchored in the critical learning and interrogation of culture that promotes intercultural learning and understanding," such festivals cannot build equality and respect for different cultures, and that, "these events only tend to reinforce their otherness, as those who attend focus on the *strange* and *exotic* performance and cuisine" (42).

While it is true that many such festivals are a simplification of culture, I argue that they do provide the opportunity for cultural interaction, and as such may be the beginnings of more significant intercultural learning and understanding through workshops or long-term interaction. This is important, because for several of my research participants, music and dance ensembles are deeply connected with identity formation and representation. I explore these issues in more detail when I discuss

issues of representation and identity formation in the chapter on diasporic performance.

Chapter 3: West African Music

In an immigrant or diasporic context, music is an important signifier of culture and identity. While itself fluid, music can represent and articulate identities through associations—its ability to create or recreate iconic and indexical relationships. Turino suggests that this is particularly salient among diasporic identities, which "are composites of elements from disparate social groups, locations, and types of experience" (2004, 17). For West African Canadians then, interaction with music from the "homeland" plays a key role in the negotiation of their identity. The experience of listening to music, or participating in a musical performance in Canada may be different, and the music itself may be different, but there is still a connection to its origins in West Africa. Thus it is one of the threads that forms a connection between Canada and West Africa. Drawing again on the metaphor of *kente* cloth, this introduction to West African music provides a link between my preparation of the loom, and the examination of the threads that, when woven together, demonstrate how music and identity are intertwined in the experience of West African Canadians.

Music in West Africa is a broad descriptor that can be subdivided in many different ways. One of the most common is to differentiate between

traditional and popular or urban music, what my francophone participants call “la musique moderne.” I also include a further section on “gospel” or Christian music, since it is an important category among several of my participants. These categories are draw from both the emic narratives of my participants, as well as etic discussion by writers on African music (Chernoff 1979; Roberts 1998; Charry 2000). As Charry points out, although

> these terms can conjure up outdated binary either/or ways of looking at the world, they can also provide valuable frames of reference for the very real possibility of nonexclusive dualities... It is perhaps best to understand these terms here intuitively as shorthand ways to distinguish sensibilities associated with old local musical instruments, genres, and styles from more recent ones. Traditional and modern in a Mande context...reflect states of mind that can be fluidly combined and respected (2000, 24).

In this section I provide an overview of musical styles. For more detailed description of key genres, see Appendix B.

Traditional Music of West Africa

The traditional music category makes a claim to a continuous connection to music of past, often the pre-colonial past. This claim may be through instrumentation, musical style, or even accompanying traditions. For example, one of my participants explained how

> a lot of times the way you could tell how a song is by how the instrumentals is, and how the person is, you know, playing with the, with the song, right? Yeah. So it’s, it just sounds more traditional. It makes a lot of the continuation of traditional instruments, right. They've carried it on. They haven't just abandoned it and stuck to the little keyboard and whatnot (Boahen 2009).

In West Africa, traditional music designates styles that are specific to individual communities or ethnic groups, but share some broad characteristics throughout the region. These include vocal call-and-response techniques and an emphasis on cyclical cross-rhythms or the 12 beat pulse, along with a strong emphasis on music as a communal function that is part of everyday life, without negating the place for private or contemplative music (Nketia 1962). Such music is closely related to social function, accompanying lifecycle, seasonal, political, and religious ceremonies, and often incorporates the entire performance experience. This community orientation is key, as such music is fully participatory with no "audience" but only various roles such as singing, clapping, and dancing. There may be a professional role, but the music events remain participatory.

There is likewise an emphasis on speech, with the tradition of "talking" instruments, and the use of music to speak to social ills or contemporary events while at the same time foregrounding the poetry and lyrics of the songs (Roberts 1998). The Mande griots (*jelis*), for example, are hereditary musicians and oral historians who use music to tell the stories of ancient heroes or to honour individuals by singing praises of their ancestors. These individuals or patrons respond by presenting gifts or money to the praise singer (Charry 2000, 98). While the griots were often professional musicians, earning their livelihood from the gifts that were presented to them by their patrons, other musicians perform more

casually, or for special occasions, depending on farming or other professions for their main income.

Globalization and change

While there often remains the impression that traditional musical styles are static representations of the "true" African culture, the reality is that these styles have developed and changed over the years, like any other musical tradition. Interaction with neighbouring groups, changing cultural and economic systems, and flow between rural and urban areas have all affected the musical styles. Where traditional musical styles are often imagined as the "authentic" cultural practices of West African societies, "la musique moderne" is upfront about it's stylistic hybridity and the cross-fertilizations that have been a part of its musical development.

The impact of these changes had the most effect in the cities, where the influences of international musical styles (especially those with African American roots) and new technologies of musical production combined with new live music contexts to create popular music forms in West African cities (Waterman 1990a). In addition, nationalist ideals led to folklorization of traditional music through national ensembles, and the ensuing practice of international performance at world music festivals and concerts (Polak 2000). These two developments have led to a transnational class of musicians who travel through a nexus of global cities performing not only for diasporic audiences connected through ethnic links and migration channels, but also for the broader world music market. It is

may be significant that these performance routes follow similar patterns to those Saskia Sassen describes as part of the geoeconomics of migration, where immigration in Europe is often from former dominions or colonies (2007, 135). Paris, for example, is a key node in the nexus of global cities for (francophone) West African musicians.

Audiences were also affected by aspects of globalization which led to changes in audience participation, as well as the context of the performance. The shift from participatory village contexts to the stage meant that the differentiation between performer and audience became more pronounced, especially as technology allowed for increasingly mediated performances. With transnational migration, performance contexts changed even further, as audiences were now located outside of the original sociocultural locale. Within the world music festival and concert circuit, audience demographics are no longer limited to ethnic links or diasporic communities, but now consist of broader transnational or cosmopolitan classes. In the case of my research participants, several of them are involved with traditional music ensembles in a diasporic context, and others attend music performances at festivals and concerts. One of my research participants, himself a master drummer, has adapted the commodification of music and performance for his own purposes as he returns to his home village each summer to host foreigners wishing to study drumming in a “traditional” environment.

Popular Music or "La Musique Moderne"

Popular music in West Africa blends together aspects of Western musical styles or instruments (including those descended from African forms) with that of the local musical cultures. This interaction has gone on for centuries, but has been particularly prevalent in the past century due to various technological advancements. Western harmonization and instruments were an important part of the mixture, especially the arrival of the guitar, and additional influence in West African popular music has also been the "feedback" or "cross-fertilization" between the music of the African continent and that of the diaspora, leading to the creation of new forms by young people (Roberts 1998, 258). Richard Shain (2002) notes the role of sailors, soldiers, and later recordings and radio in the feedback process. He also describes shared genealogies between Afro-Cuban and urban African music, and explains that in Senegal, Cuban music was seen as a path to modernity, progressive, but without colonial baggage (91). Reggae's arrival in West Africa and the rest of the continent follows a similar story, and it has become so popular that Abidjan, the capital of Côte d'Ivoire, is now considered the third world-center of reggae, after Kingston and London (Konate 2002, 778). Hip hop is a more recent arrival, now adapted to the local context, and in Ghana it has even led to the development of a new hybrid genre called hiplife. Several of the specific popular genres described by my research participants include highlife (Ghana), Afro-beat (Nigeria), Jùjú (Nigeria), reggae, mbalax or

ndaga (Senegal/Gambia) and hiplife (Ghana). More detailed descriptions of these genres are located in Appendix B.

West African Gospel - Christian Popular Music

Another popular music genre (although it can be considered under traditional music as well) is that of gospel. Among my West African participants, "gospel" refers to an encompassing category that includes Christian songs used for worship, reflection and entertainment. In describing these songs as gospel, I do not mean to imply a direct connection to American Black gospel or Southern gospel. While they may share some stylistic tendencies due to shared historical roots or more recent transnational influence, West African gospel relates more closely to contemporary Christian music, or the Praise and Worship genres, while at the same time drawing on various popular musical styles particular to individual countries. For example one variation of Ghanaian gospel is gospel highlife, which draws on the same instruments and musical style as highlife music, only with religious lyrics (Collins 2004, 420).

This understanding of "gospel" is very similar to that in the Trinidad context. In *"Mek Some Noise": Gospel Music and the Ethics of Style in Trinidad* (2007), Rommen contrasts the contexts in Trinidad and the United States as he points out how American Protestant musical practices are subdivided into specific genres (such as Southern gospel, praise and worship, urban rock, Christian rock, inspirational, etc) whereas in Trinidad (as in West Africa),

> ‘gospel music’ generally functions as a catchall category for Protestant music, in effect reversing the North American trend toward compartmentalization. The term “gospel music” as used in Trinidad, thus privileges content over style--a usage that groups rather divergent musical styles under a larger umbrella by virtue of their shared content (5).

I first came across this use of “gospel” as an overarching category while conducting research in Ghana in 2007. Through research and day-to-day activities I was introduced to gospel highlife along with gospel versions of *bobobo*, *agbadza* and other traditional musical genres. The most common of these was gospel highlife, which exploded in the 1980s due to a mix of increased openness to the use of popular dance music in worship and outreach, along with the negative economic impact of government policies in the 1970s (Collins 2004, 418). During my fieldwork for this project on West Africans in Canada, I was again introduced to West African gospel music by several of my research participants when they described and played for me examples of Ghanaian, Liberian or Togolese gospel. These examples demonstrated the previously mentioned influence of both popular West African musical genres and contemporary Christian music (praise and worship music, American gospel). Thus West African gospel music is a complex musical style, incorporating both Western and African musical styles along with texts that relate to adoration and worship or other aspects of Christian life from a West African context. (See Appendix B for more details on West African gospel).

Chapter 4: Theory

Identity

In cultural studies, scholars have suggested that identity is constructed, multiple, and can be understood based on particular traits or habits that are represented or emphasized in different contexts (During 2005, Turino 2004). As Stuart Hall points out, "identity is always in the process of formation" (1997, 47). It is a process, a narrative that may be contradictory at times, since it is composed of more than one discourse and lived through difference (49, 57). Speaking from the Black experience, Hall recognizes that through this politics of difference,

> all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one. ...we are all complexly constructed through different categories... Because identifications change and shift, they can be worked on by political and economic forces outside of us and they can be articulated in different ways (57).

Thomas Turino also recognizes the fluid nature of identity, describing the intersections of multiple, socially emphasized categories that make up individual subjectivity and identity. He describes subjectivity or the *self* as the composite of life experiences, emerging through the interaction of particular subjects and the objective conditions in which they find themselves, and explains that *identity* has to do with the partial and variable selection of salient habits and attributes used to represent and perceive oneself and others (2004, 8; 2008,102). Drawing on Fredrik Barth's ideas of boundary construction and maintenance, Turino suggests that group identities come out of recognized similarities within groups and

differences from others, the “recognition, selection, and sometimes conscious creation of common habits among varying numbers of individuals” (2004, 8).

Music enters the scene as one of these habits or markers of identity, yet there is more to it than a simple choice, as with fashion or food. Martin Stokes has emphasized that music is a significant contributor to identity formation because it “evokes and organizes collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity” (1994, 3). Music’s indexical quality —it’s ability to gather associations and meanings—is key to how music contributes to identity formation (see Turino 1999).

As we think about the relationship between music and identity, Peircian semiotic processes come into play. As *icon,* music represents possibilities or realities, since it can be used to *actualize* or perhaps better put, to *naturalize* various practices. Thus iconicity in music can help create social identity and aesthetic systems because of how musical forms sound like or resemble what is perceived as good, true and natural in the social experience (Turino 1999, 234). Indexical signs, on the other hand, signify their ‘objects’ (what they indicate) through a more existential connection, which is grounded in personal experience, felt as a direct connection and interpreted as “authentic signs of actual connection” (2004, 11), and for this reason they can condense different meanings into a single sign.

Indices are dependent on actual experience rather than social convention. They are very context specific, allowing for high levels of polyvalence or ambiguity. The idea of music as an indexical sign helps explain different responses among individuals to a particular piece of music. This also means that shared reactions or responses to the music themselves become an index of similarity and identity between people. The social connection itself is enhanced through the existential yet shared experience of the music (1999, 235, 236). Several layers develop as the music creates particular associations leading to individual response, which, when shared by others, becomes a separate layer, an indexical sign signifying similarity and creating a shared identity. Music, then, can integrate the affective and identity-forming potentials of both icons and indices that are found in the different sonic qualities and contextual associations of the particular music. In song, additional signs, whether iconic, indexical, or symbolic can be located in the lyrics, adding to the overall collection of meanings (2004, 17).

There is also a performative or experiential element to both music and identity. Stokes draws on Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau to describe music and dance as social performances that do not simply reflect identity, but actually generate meanings, negotiating identities and hierarchies of place (1994, 4). Frith emphasizes the experiential nature of identity when he suggests that “music seems to be a key to identity, because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the

subjective in the collective" (1996a, 110). This simultaneous sense of the self and the collective is felt through performance, and here he suggests that listening can itself be a way of performing. This means that even personal choice in music—musical "taste"—can constitute performance, and a way of representing identity.

Musical taste also intersects with identity and community building in other ways as well. Bloustein (2003) borrows Bourdieu's notion of cultural and symbolic capital to suggest how "taste" can be described as "a way of asserting *authenticity,* constituting and 'proving' who one is or who one would like to be, through bodily praxis" (223). This choice in music can also help create experiential and affective cultural communities. Timothy Taylor (1997) comments on this when he suggests that "wider spread commodifications of musical forms allows distant solidarities to be fashioned, even 'across the ocean'" (76), thus expanding the discussion to include issues of commodification and mediazation. The transnational nature of mediated music and it's identity building and sustaining characteristics are an important point, and return us to the discussion of identity in an immigrant context.

Identity and African Canadians

Korbla Puplampu and Wisdom Tettey provide a foundation for this exploration, refocusing the discussion on group identity as they consider identity among African-Canadians. In their essay "Ethnicity and Identity of African-Canadians," (2005) they draw on Max Weber's concepts of

ethnicity from his study *Economy and Society* as a framework to situate and discuss key notions such as common decent, race, kinship and nationalism. Accordingly, they suggest that ethnic groups "identify themselves on the basis of a subjective belief tied to a real or assumed common descent. This common decent may be based on claims of a common genealogy, shared history or heritage, and/or attachment to a real or imagined territory or homeland" (2005, 29). In addition, ethnic identification can be ascribed from both "insider" and "outsider" perspectives, "a process which subsequently generates a degree of collective consciousness among those so designated" (29). Puplampu and Tettey also recognize relations of power among individuals and groups and the impact these have in the context of identity and belonging, thus considering the structures and mechanisms involved in the identity, representation and integration of various ethnic groups. For example, peoplehood and nationality have to do with a sense of belonging, often fostered through particular symbols or rituals and creating the imagination of a community (Anderson 1991), but "ethnic background, for example, plays a role in determining the extent to which people feel a sense of belonging and identify with particular symbols and rituals" (Puplampu and Tettey 2005, 32).

While many sociological studies tend to separate ethnicity and race, in Canadian discourse these concepts tend to be used interchangeably (James 2003, 50-53, Puplampu and Tettey 2005, 29). Driedger suggests

that this fits into Weber's broader conceptualization of ethnic groups as that stresses subjective (even artificial) belief attached to similarities in physical type and/or cultural practices (2003, 5). Satzewich and Liodakis likewise note the overlap between concepts of race, ethnicity, visible (and non-visible) minorities (2007, 206), but what is important to recognize in their discussion and that of other scholars regarding "race" as a term or category, is the problematic and contested nature of this construct. Paul Gilroy, for example, acknowledges this when he writes that,

> ..."race" is a historically conditioned "relation" capable of grouping various themes across varying social formations. Race must be retained as an analytic category, not because it corresponds to any biological or epistemological absolutes, but because it refers investigation to the power that collective identities acquire by means of the roots in tradition (1987, 5).

Mensah similarly notes that "[r]ace is frequently taken as a decisive factor in several social and economic situations involving Black Canadians" (21), explaining that "for most Blacks, the term has a real meaning in their daily activities in Canadian society. Irrespective of their place of birth, Canadian Blacks share the common prejudicial experience that their presumed blackness engenders in their association with White Canada" (22). Even though the term has such lived meaning, it is important to remember that race is a contextually based construct, as Stuart Hall (1996) argues when he writes,

> What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences, and cultural identities which compose the category "black"; that is, the recognition that "black" is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or

> transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature (166).

In Canada, then, Blackness is used alongside terms such as African Canadian to describe those with diverse histories of migration from the Caribbean, the United States, and the continent of Africa. These terms also lead to slippage between different Canadian and American identities, as "Black" is frequently tied in with African American culture, particularly African American youth culture (Kelly 2001). In the following sections I will explore some of the nuances of these terms, and explain the rationale for my use of them in the rest of this essay.

In the context of West African Canadians, the discussion of identity becomes even more complex. As immigrants or refugees adjusting to a new cultural environment, West Africans in Canada are categorized as different, "African," through physical appearance along with their habits (in Turino's sense of the word) that are part of the representational process—habits that relate to choices about language, food, dress, behaviour or music. Where these choices differ from mainstream society, they may lead to misunderstanding or confusion, ultimately contributing to the stresses involved in adapting to a new society. Attah Anthony Agbali (2008) notes the appeal of religion and religious spaces (particularly the Christian church) when dealing with these stress and powerlessness associated with immigration and the Black experience in North America. He suggests that besides providing a helpful resource for dealing with stress through connection to religious entities and spiritual values,

religious spaces and communities offer a locale where immigrants "can enhance their self-identity, achieve feeling of self-worth, engender community, and offer positive space for the affirmation of cultural identities and expressions that are meaningfully congruent with immigrants' social identities and sense of selves" (82), while also providing the opportunity for them to form and expand social networks. Other cultural associations likewise form a source of ongoing support within the immigrant community (Turino 2003, 59).

Diasporic hybridity

Diasporic identifications also play a role in this discussion of identity. As Tettey and Puplampu point out, many African Canadians, (including my West African Canadian participants), maintain a connection to the cultures of their homelands, often stronger than their connection to mainstream Canadian culture (2005c, 153). This connection is not simply that of immigrant communities who "define themselves in relation to their original and new homes," (Turino 2008, 118), but rather a diasporic formation that "combine[s] habits from the original home and their new home *and* [is] influenced by the cultural models from other places in the diaspora" (118). In referring to diaspora, I draw on the contemporary usage that emphasizes the dispersion of a cultural group from an original homeland to multiple host locations (Clifford 1994, 304) and also "seek[s] to represent (and problematize) the lived experiences...of people whose lives have unfolded in myriad diasporic communities across the

globe" (Braziel and Mannur 2003, 5). Thus for African Canadians, the concept of diaspora speaks to ties that develop among immigrant communities and relate not only back to the homeland, but also to other diasporic sites. My participants, for example, spoke of interactions with community members in France or the United Kingdom, and many maintained routes of material and symbolic exchange with others in these locations and the African continent. Along with the unifying symbol of the homeland and collective cultural consciousness between multiple sites, another criterion for thinking about diaspora would be a sense of separation from the host society, with the additional sense that these criteria continue for an extended period of time (Clifford 1994, 307, 311; Turino 2004, 6).

These issues all come into play concerning identity, which Turino suggests is characterized in diasporic cultural formations by hybridity, a dramatic hybridity that develops out of "the multiple...iconic maps of reality and bases for cultural resources" (13) that are available to members of the diaspora. Paul Gilroy recognizes this in his discussion of the Black Atlantic (1993) and later when he refers to the cultures of Blacks in Britain and notes the "syncretic pattern in which the styles and forms of the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa have been reworked and reinscribed in the novel context of modern Britain's own untidy ensemble of regional and class-oriented conflicts" (2003, 51). While Gilroy's writings emphasize the historic diaspora that grew out of the slave trade, the

process of cultural hybridity can also be applied to other diasporic experiences. For example, Gillespie (1995) uses this conceptualization of diaspora in her work among Punjabi youth in London, and suggests a "diasporic perspective acknowledges the ways in which the identities have been and continue to be transformed through relocation, cross-cultural exchange and interaction" (1995, 7). In addition, Kelly (2004) explains how

> using diaspora offers the opportunity to re-read the relationship between identity and location, between nationality and geographic origin. ...[It] allows analysis of the political and the social aspects of identity as well as the ability to view the way in which representation of sameness and difference become part of meaning making and everyday culture. Diaspora helps us understand the intersections of ethnicity, class, religion, and genre in identity formation (34).

In the Canadian context, West African Canadians likewise find themselves part of multiple sites of meaning and identity. For my research participants, this meant exploring the intersections of Turino's various "iconic maps of reality" and "bases for cultural resource." These intersections include sites such as Canadian society, religious communities, Liberian cultural associations and the remembered Nigerian homeland. They may also include celebrations or observances of cultural activities with the ensuing affective displays of tradition, along with communicative tools, such as music recordings, audiovisual broadcasts or the internet that provide a *bridgespace* (to use Adams and Ghose's term from their 2003 article) that "help[s] Africans in the diaspora maintain an affinity to their compatriots and cultures of origin" (Tettey and Puplampu

2005c, 169). Music is especially helpful in this context. Turino describes it as “a particularly rich semiotic field,” that can produce complex effects through it’s ability to build associations and “creat[e] new coherent forms from pre-existing icons and indices” (2004, 17) drawn out of the various sites of meaning. Popular music, particularly the music of black youth culture is an important source for this negotiation of identity due to it’s own complex history.

Exploring the term “African Canadian”

While not as common as some other hyphenated identities in Canada, Tettey and Puplampu point out that the term “African Canadian” is often used in daily and academic language as an “uncontested signifier of identity capturing all peoples of African origin in Canada” (2005b, 6). Critically examining the term, they adopt Tettey’s (2001) framework to highlight the complexities ingrained within it, and note several conflicting approaches that privilege elements related to citizenship and geography, skin colour and race, and even the preservation of cultural values and norms.

The first of these approaches is that of the Canadian government and state institutions, which look at formal citizenship or geographical origins, and thus classify African Canadians on the basis of their country of origin. However, as Tettey (2001, 165) points out, critics argue that the approach is too narrow, since it does not include those who claim an African identity through an ancestral link with the continent, such as

descendants of African slaves who have lived in Canada for generations, or more recent Black immigrants from the Caribbean, the United States, or South America. Children of immigrants from African may likewise be excluded from this definition. In response these critics suggest a pan-African perspective based on the idea that "Black equals African/African equals Black," which recognizes Black people in the diaspora as Africans while also noting their deep roots within Canada. The problem here, as Lewinberg (1999) and Adeleke (1998) suggest, is that this approach ignores the historical and cultural experiences of diverse groups, which have have created differences greater than any shared pan-African perspective. Another problem with this second approach is that it does not include those groups with traceable historical and cultural origins in Africa, but who are not themselves Black, such as East Indians and Whites from eastern and southern Africa, or various Arab or Muslim groups in North Africa (Tettey 2001, 166, 167).

A third approach to this discussion of identity is a self-exclusionary perspective towards the expression "African Canadian." This perspective recognizes that there are groups who contest their designation as African, such as members of those White, East Indian, Arab or Muslim groups who assert their ethnic or religious identity as primary and do not wish to be associated with an Africa that for them, connotes Black. Similar tension is located in the ascribed and avowed identities of children of African immigrants (children of mixed marriages may also fit in this category) who

may wish to be considered primarily *Canadian* rather than *African*. These issues also relate to the final approach, which Tettey describes as "the Authentic African approach" (168). This approach takes on the belief that there is a common ethos or shared spiritual and philosophical African worldview that embodies the true essence of Africanness, and questions the legitimacy of those who claim an African identity without the preservation of cultural norms and values. However Tettey criticizes this approach, because it insists on conformity to a static, singular worldview and fails to recognize the diversity within Africa (169).

This brief discussion highlights the complexity surrounding issues of terminology, since, as Kanneh points out, "African diasporic and Black identities [need to be understood] as historically textured and politically determined constructs, constructs which rely on particular understandings of time, memory, and race" (1998, 48). At the same time, terminology is necessary in order to discuss communities and groups of people.

While not ignoring the other nuances found within these constructs, I generally use the term "Black" as an overarching term, generally describing those of African decent who have lived for generations in the "New World," while saving "African Canadian" for members of the new African diaspora, as I explain shortly. While somewhat hesitant, due to the issue of race enmeshed in the term, I use "Black" in part because it is both an etic and emic term in the Canadian context. Although in most cases this usage incorporates African Canadians, I separate the two in order to

foreground the differences in historical experience between the two groups. I base this in part on the emic usage by (some of) my participants. Suzy, for example, describes her mother as "Black Canadian," part of a community that has been in Alberta for generations, whereas her father is "from Africa" or "Nigerian" (Pinnick 2009). I also discuss "Black identity" in connection with African American youth culture. Here I draw on Kelly and her research among high school students. She notes that,

> ..recognition of youth culture as an important part of black identity is in line with recent theorization of black youth culture. Although the identification of students as black would appear to be a generic descriptor, the narratives indicate that the conception of black identity under discussion within the thesis is specifically a youth identity (2001, 104).

This issue comes up in the discussion of certain genres of popular music linked with Black youth culture, specifically hip hop and reggae (although reggae expands the African American focus to the Caribbean as well). Several of my participants similarly identify with a certain African American youth culture through the music and hip hop culture.

Given the conflicting approaches to the term African Canadian, I follow Tettey and Puplampu (2005b) in using this term (in a manner that is least contested) to refer to members of what scholars are now describing as the "new African Diaspora," those who have voluntarily migrated from the continent, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, in the past fifty or sixty years. Although their children (or grandchildren) may be Canadian-born, I include them in this category as well, since their parents' experience will

likely affect their own subjectivities and experiences growing up. I also make use of the (etic) expression “West African Canadians,” not because it is the most accurate term, nor even the identity that my research participants resonate with most strongly—in fact, none of them expressed any regional West African affiliation—but simply as shorthand for the scope of my research, since my participants were either themselves, or a parent originally from a country in West Africa and now living in Canada. As I explain earlier, there are economic, political and social connections, both recent and historical, that tie together the countries of West Africa through the effects of historic empires, migration, trade relations, the colonial experience, and contemporary relationships that provide justification for this shorthand (Shillington 2005).

Weaving: Ethnographic threads

As I begin this ethnographic section, let me return to my *kente* metaphor. After preparing the loom, Ghanaian weavers begin the process of making *kente* fabric. Through their choice of colors in the warp and weft, in conjunction with their manipulation of the heddles, weavers begin to create the designs and motifs of their trade (Ross 1998, 88). In this section I bring together the different threads that I have drawn from my participants' narratives, and explore the different ways that they negotiate the role of music and identity in their lives.

Chapter 5: Musical Taste: Globalization or "Glocalization"?

In this chapter I discuss some of the cross currents and flows within the musics of West African, and explore some of the ambiguities or complexities that arise when looking at musical taste and identity. As Simon Frith points out regarding popular music in *Performing Rites*,

> [m]usical taste, in short, is now intimately tied into personal identity; we express ourselves through our deployment of other people's music. And in this respect music is more like clothes than any other art form—not just in the sense of the significance of fashion, but also in the sense that the music we "wear" is as much shaped by our own desires, our own purposes, our own bodies, as by the intentions or bodies or desires of the people who first made it (1996, 237).

For West African Canadians, musical taste is similarly tied up with identity, and personal agency can be asserted through choices regarding music.

I begin this chapter by exploring the role of genres from the African American and Afro-Caribbean musical communities (such as hip hop and reggae) in the creation or representation of identity among West African Canadians. Through this process I highlight the complexity of cross currents and global flows when considering the popular music of Paul Gilroy's (1993) "Black Atlantic." I look at the way that musical styles have been adopted, contesting the overt hegemonic globalizing force of [American] popular culture as they are adapted and re-presented to respond to the local context, whether Canadian, French, West African, or elsewhere. I then focus on the role of music and musical taste in connection with religious identity. Here I emphasize the way that musical taste represents or is constrained by religious identity. The final section in this chapter looks at musical taste in an immigrant context, considering how music helps to build relationships and maintain connections with the home culture.

Slippage and Black youth culture

> Well in general I listen to different kind of music. I listen to so different kinds of music. Um, I listen to hip hop, I listen to hip life which is from Ghana. Um, I listen to, oh, I love our local, like, drumming and music in the village. Um, I listen to jazz, I listen to r&b, country. All that kind of stuff. Well, most of the time I listen to jazz when I want to relax, right, or I listen to country when I'm lying in my bed and I want to relax. Just tune into that internet video, sorry, internet radio and just listen to the kind of music I wanna listen to. So yeah, I listen to anything that sounds good (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

> What? Me? I adore reggae. As I say, every, every time that I've, that I come from listening to music, it's reggae. That's all I like. I like, the, the other musics, but it's more reggae. For me, it's, it's the

> music of God, like I said. For me it's the music of God. Yeah (Koné 2009)

In "Diaspora Moves: African Canadian Youth and Identity Formation," Jennifer Kelly notes a strong identification with black youth culture, specifically African-American youth culture (i.e. hip hop and reggae) among the Edmonton high school students in her study. These young African and Black Canadians include not only students with a first or second generation link to continental Africa, but to other countries in the diaspora as well. Even so, Kelly comments that, "students with close family links to the continent do not seem to use music or dress style as a source of identification with countries in Africa" (2008, 96) arguing that they instead link their identity to the widely available reggae, r&b and rap music, identifying themselves through such music with the transnational diasporan blackness dominated by African American cultural formations. She extends this further in *Borrowed Identities*, emphasizing the ready willingness of all of her participants to align themselves with a U.S. centered Black diaspora. Raising the issue of why few of her students regularly listened to music from continental Africa she contrasts accessibility and the locale of musical consumption, suggesting that such music is limited in its general availability, and confined to private spaces in comparison with rap, r&b, and reggae (2004, 51).

While many of my participants are fans of these genres, several going so far as to make their own rap or reggae, I disagree with Kelly's argument, both in terms of the lack of general availability of music from the

African continent, and her conclusion regarding affinity with the musical genres she mentions. All of my participants described some sense of connection to music from the African continent, and they did not have any great difficulty accessing this music. As we spoke, they described to me various methods they used to find the music they wanted to hear, even including sources that Kelly considered part of the public sphere, such as satellite television and radio. More significantly, I disagree with Kelly's generalizations and suggest that even when West African Canadians identity with African American or Afro-Caribbean music such as hip hop or reggae, this does not necessarily mean they are identifying with African American or Black youth culture. It is true that I was speaking with a different sample than Kelly, an older cohort who were mostly first generation Canadians as opposed to Kelly's mixed group of high school students. This is an area that needs further study, but the differences between our results argues that it is a complex issue. Drawing on my research participants' narratives, I explain how this music was already a part of their cultural experience before they came to Canada, and how hip hop and reggae are not only globalized, but "glocal" (Mitchell 2001), adapted and adopted to the West African context.

Hip hop and Reggae

As the quotations from the beginning of the chapter demonstrate, the popular genres that Kelly sees as a source of identification with black culture were frequently included among the musical choices of my many

research participants. Several even produce their own rap or reggae. In Montreal, a young anglophone woman named Aisha succinctly summed up the most common answer when she simply replied, “Hip hop, r&b, and reggae,” in response to my question on musical interests. Although most of my participants included these three genres, the two participants who originally came from Côte d’Ivoire specifically noted reggae as their music of choice. Kesseke, for example, explained that here in Canada, it is still reggae the is still his music of choice.

> Hmm, here in Canada, I think that it’s reggae that I love a lot. Going out to the Reggae Night... Well, often there is a DJ who puts together a reggae night. it’s at Legion Hall on Commercial Drive. Before it was Monday night, but now he has started to have it on Thursday evenings. So I really love to go there (Yeo 2009, my translation).[5]

For others, like Kofi who is quoted at the beginning of the chapter, or Canadian-born Suzy Pinnick, their musical interests are more diverse, while still emphasizing music that developed out of the African diaspora.

> What kind of music do I listen to? I'm a big music fan generally. I mean, if you ask one of my pastimes, one of my favourite pastimes, it’s definitely music, which is probably why I like dance so much. Um, the types of music I really like has grown over the years, it’s gotten bigger. But, um, jazz, rock—sometimes more of the old rock, you know, your older rock groups, reggae, dancehall and ska. Um, definitely the Nigerian music, I really enjoy. What's the other type? Ah, r&b. And, um, some hip hop. I used to love the hip hop groups more when I was growing up, you know. Like Public Enemy and stuff like that. Um, the new artists I'm not as big a fan of. So I can't say I listen to it as much. So I think those would be my big, and blues. Basically all of them, but, yeah. A whole spectrum. Yeah (Pinnick, 2009).

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[5] Although Kesseke did not mention it specifically, in this case it was likely reggae music in general rather than specifically Ivorian reggae that was played for these Vancouver reggae nights.

Suzy included a variety of “black” musical styles, not simply rap or reggae but also jazz, r&b and blues. Collins Boahen likewise spoke of blues and jazz before describing his interest in hip hop. A young man who came to Canada from Ghana with his family when was thirteen, he emphasized the importance of lyrics and the need for them to speak, to “make sense.”

> Ah, I have a lot of blues, and jazz. I'm a big fan of Louie Armstrong and Billy Holiday. I like, ah, hip [hop], I don't like a lot of the pop—anything that's on TV, chances are I won't like it, cause I feel they lack in, ah, the essence of it. it’s very watered down.
>
> *So MuchMusic really isn't your thing?* [6]
>
> MuchMusic, I don't know. But, it just, I feel like it could be better. Lyrics-wise, instrumentals, it’s just been very watered down, so I don't listen to a lot of that.
>
> *So not really the popular.*
>
> No. So I tend to more of the hip hop, and the spoke word. You know, music that makes sense (Boahen 2009)

Continental ties

There are two important points to add to this discussion. First, unlike Kelly’s students, many of my research participants also described a deep sense of connection to music from the African continent. This music included both traditional and “modern” African music, and participants were as likely to reference this music whether they had recently arrived, or been raised in Canada. For example, both Kofi and his brother Kwabla emphasized the importance of traditional Ewe drumming as part of their cultural identity alongside their strong affinity with hip hop and r&b:

> But like, when I go to the village and there's a funeral going on, or there's a ceremony going on, or maybe I go to the shrine or something like that, and they start hitting the drum-I love to dance, as

[6] My own voice in these quotations is always marked by italics.

> I already said... So honestly, it kind of moves me, I don't know, the rhythm of the drums. Like, that is not something that has been recorded, right. it's something that has been, it's coming out, like, original drumbeats and music and songs. And it's wonderful to me. I think it's awesome. I think it's awesome...
>
> *So then here now, when you're here in Canada, do you get much of a chance to hear that?*
>
> Well, not really. But, the fact is, my dad always rings it in your ears. Even though he doesn't do it intentionally. And he's that kinda person who's like, strictly, traditional kind of person. He's not into hip hop. No, my dad is **not** into hip hop. So he, he still sings, and he's good at the drumming and dancing, right. So he still sings (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

> But for me now, actually I do, I do hip hop, and I do African drumming. And I'm trying to mix the both together, cause I can't just leave them, cause I love all of them. And I can't choose one, and leave one out. So I'm trying to do both. Trying to mix all of them together sometimes, like, make it like African hip hop. Another style. And it's really happen now. You know?
> ...
> I take the African drumming also very seriously... And in Ghana you really...[y]ou go to the villages, that's where you'll find African drumming stuff. But here, it's all, you know, my dad teaches African drumming in schools and other stuff. So, and you have to learn it. Cause your dad does it, any time he's trying to rehearse a party for something, he wouldn't even let you go without learning it. That's it for sure (Kwabla Dunyo 2009).

This emphasis may not be surprising given Kofi and Kwabla's experience growing up. Although they attended school in urban centers, they joined the entire family in the village during the summers when their father returned to Ghana. What may be more surprising, however, is the similarities between their comments and those of Aisha, Suzy and Collins, who were either born in Canada, or emigrated when they were young teenagers. In the quote above, Suzy listed Nigerian music alongside diasporan genres when describing the music she enjoyed. Although Canadian-born, she was introduced to this music through her father, at

Nigerian community events and through her participation in a Nigerian dance group located in Edmonton. During our conversation she explained some of the musical elements that drew her in:

> Sometimes I remember when I was in the dance group there was a more very traditional, it was just drums and singing. And I loved it. There was something, I don't know if the words is rhythmic, but there was just something so moving about it. But I think I really like the jùjú music. Cause I like the heavy rhythms, the heavy bass. I love that... What also I like about the different Nigerian music, especially the jùjú, is how it switches. You'll have one rhythm and one pace and speed, and then it will change to a faster rhythm, and it gets faster! ...So I love that, and with highlife, it just, I think the highlife music, it has a lighter feel. It has more of a easy, kinda go-lucky feel, you know. And that's also nice, kind of what I like about that particular music. You know, so yeah, I guess the, like the heavy bass and drums. The talking drums, I love (Pinnick 2009).

Suzy's description emphasizes musical and rhythmic elements as her point of connection with the music, and she reiterated these points when I met with her a second time so that she could play some of her CDs for me. The lyrics do not play an important role in her identification with this music since she is Canadian born and raised, and does not understand the Yoruba words.

In contrast, Collins focused on the lyrics as an important element in the Ghanaian music that he enjoys. He left Ghana at thirteen, but explained that listening to music was a way for him to maintain cultural-linguistic ties. Although he enjoys some new music, Collins was particularly drawn to the older Ghanaian highlife which he downloaded off the internet using file-sharing applications such as torrent or soulseek:

> I've started collecting a lot of the old Highlife songs. Yeah. ...From, ah, Ghana. This was in the seventies. We, there was, there was

> music that either influenced or was very similar to a lot of the Cuban style type of music, right? So, there's, I have a couple of those. I also listen to Féla from Nigeria. He was also Afro Funk—Jazz fusion...
> When it comes to the Ghanaian highlife, um, there're more proverbs. They, it's a way of teaching, ah, the kids or what is listening, you know, certain beliefs, mannerisms, ah, customs, metaphors. Yeah. We have a lot of metaphors in Akan so all the songs just a way of passing it down. You know? So it's like going to school, but with very nice music. So it's enjoyable to learn. Right? (Boahen 2009)

For Collins, traditional music was also a source of ethnic identification by means of linguistic (through proverbs and metaphors) and cultural knowledge. His interest in traditional Akan drumming seems to stem from a similar desire to learn about his Akan ethnic background through the the proverbs and calls located in the drum language.

Even Aisha's initial response to my question of musical interests soon became more complex. She began with hip hop, r&b and reggae, but quickly shifted the focus of conversation from her favourite artists (Jah Cure and Kanye West) to an explanation of the close cultural ties (including music) between Senegal and Gambia. She demonstrated her cultural and musical knowledge as she explained about the traditional role of the griots, and then began describing popular music genres such as Senegalese *mbalax* and Gambian sister-genre of *ndaga*, which led to a discussion of Senegalese *mbalax* artist Youssou N'Dour.

> He had a song with Neneh Cherry. They play that on the radio too sometimes in Montreal. I've heard it like, many times. Yeah. And on Sundays on, a, Mix 96, they be playing songs, African music. So, I been hearing him (Aisha 2009).

Aisha was not simply talking here about music that she overheard, but music that she enjoyed and appreciated. This music was part of her current music collection, as she demonstrated at the end of the interview when she brought out her ipod so that I could listen to “Lang,” and suggested I look up Youssou N’Dour on YouTube.

These examples run counter to the response that Kelly documents in her study of Edmonton high school youth. Although my young participants identified with diasporan Black music such as rap or reggae, they also spoke of an alignment with music from the African continent. The references were present whether they were themselves recent immigrants, or whether they grew up in Canada. They also pointed to the accessibility of this music, countering Kelly’s suggestion that limited availability was responsible for her students’ lack of connection (2004, 51).

> And yes, I was gonna say, like, um, we have this satellite, that we have, we could watch TV from Africa, like from where I'm from. Yeah. So we could find, we could watch everything that's going on the news, music, shows, all that stuff. So we're not really missing anything (Aisha 2009).

As my participants explained, they found music on the radio, internet radio, specific websites, YouTube, mp3s, CDs (and previously LPs) mailed or brought back from West Africa, even satellite television. It may take a little more effort to access music from the African continent as opposed to popular rap, but it is possible. Some recordings are available in stores catering to the African community, and for select artists such as King Sunny Adé, Salif Keita or Alpha Blondy, they are internationally popular

Figure 9: Part of the African music section at Highlife World Music, a independent music store (photograph by Carinna Friesen, Vancouver 2009)

enough that their recordings can be found in independent (Figure 9) or even mainstream music stores.

"Americanization"?

The second point to make in response to Kelly's study is that although many of my participants strongly identify with hip hop and reggae, and enjoy r&b, these interests are not something that developed here in Canada as a way for them to connect with and participate in African-American or pan-diasporic culture. Their interest in these musical genres represents as much their West African identities (Ghanaian, Akan, Ivoirian) as it does a slippage towards American youth culture, or diasporan blackness. As Mitchell writes in his introduction to *Global noise: Rap and hip-hop outside the USA*,

> Hip-hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identities all over the world. Even as a universally recognized popular musical idiom, rap continues to provoke attention to local specificities. Rap and hip-hop outside the USA reveal the workings of popular music as a culture industry driven as much by local artists and their fans as by the demands of global capitalism and U.S. cultural domination (2001, 1,2)

Hip hop has been expanding into Europe, Africa and elsewhere since the early 1980s, and can no longer be viewed as simply an African American phenomenon. In France, for example, rap music has become a large success, and Durand describes the country as the second most important center for the genre after the United States (2002, xiv). It is most often practiced by young people whose family came from former French colonies in West and North Africa, but the fan-base includes mainstream white youth as well (Huq 2006, 17, 18). In addition, the influence of French hip hop has spread throughout *la francophonie*, an effect that can be seen and heard in both Canadian (Québecois) and West African rap (Durand 2002, xiv). Additional music scenes have been using hip hop to rework local identities elsewhere in the world, including countries such as Germany, Bulgaria, Japan, Korea, Australia, and even the Pacific Islands (Mitchell 2001).

This is what Kwabla meant when he told me about his interest in making music, and how "when I was in Ghana, I do hip hop, I do r&b a lot. I do all type of music. And I still play my African drum." He went on to explain that,

> Like, there's a lot of reggaes in Ghana that you can find. There's Reggaeton, in Ghana, and that's ours too. And there's hip hop. Hip hop is also done in Ghana. You find that almost every music in Ghana. And the Reggaeton, and Black Prophet (Kwabla Dunyo 2009).

Aisha likewise described how she would listen to the same musical genres as a teenage in Gambia that now enjoys in Canada.

> In the club we're playing pop and, you know, r&b, reggae—all kind of musics. And now I will, our music too. I like to listen to this too. That, because it's like you're in the background where everybody speaks it too. And then everybody's, you know, vibe'ing to it, and enjoying it. That's what makes it interesting. Yeah (Aisha 2009).

> Like I listen to hip hop and and r&b ever since, and Gambian reggae. Like there's, you wouldn't believe it, it's like Jamaica in Gambia.
>
> *It's like Jamaica.*
>
> Yeah, they have the dreads. Yeah, so much reggae. The guys, for example, like reggae somba. And there's also this too, this is our music, and culture. We keep it in. Like, growing (Aisha 2009).

These comments reiterate reggae's transnational movement and "feedback" story, but perhaps more importantly, in terms of constructing and representing identity through music, the rap and reggae that my participants referred to was music that was adopted and adapted by (frequently urban) young people as an expression of their struggles and experiences. Mitchell points out that although

> [i]n its initial stages, appropriations of rap and hip-hop outside the USA often mimicked U.S. models, ...in most countries where rap has taken root, hip-hop scenes have rapidly developed from an adoption to an adaptation of U.S. musical forms and idioms. This has involved an increasing syncretism and incorporation of local linguistic and musical features (2001, 11).

This was also the case for West Africa. Kassorio spoke to both the local adaptation, and the sense of shared history when he described the reggae scene back in Côte d'Ivoire:

> Because all the artists from back home, you will see, they will always put some djembé or some things, or some African drums, they put that in the reggae. ...whether it's reggae, or jazz or whatever, all this, they've all got an African origin. So it's for that, in the United States, they are all, they are very much into jazz, blues. It was the melodies of the slaves, they sang their distress, they worked, yeah. ...It's that all these musics were created in their struggle, to sing their sadness,

> to also sing, um, the days they were happy. There you go, it was born out of that. Today we have given different shades to the thing. That, it had to pass, but today we bring other colours to these things (Koné 2009, my translation).

These different colours that Kassorio mentioned relate to both musical/ textural and textual features. For example, Kesseke described the famous Ivoirian singer Alpha Blondy, who sang "in all the languages of Côte d'Ivoire," while Aisha agreed that in Gambia,

> [w]e have that type of thing too, like when you, when you seen rappers, they take the American beat, you know, twist it, and then they be rapping in our language, which is called Wolof. Yeah. Basically. Or they will just take a beat and then remix it somehow and then you know, modify it a little bit and then, you know, singing it, put a little bit of *ndaga*, something like that (Aisha 2009).

In Ghana the adaptation of hip hop has led to an entirely new urban youth genre, a hybrid of hip hop, reggae or soul, with Ghanaian highlife, called hiplife.

> Mostly it's Ghanaian language. And it blends, right? So we have specific, like, artistes who were recognized for their kind of languages, right? Cause there's this new artiste who, yeah, who also came and is called 'Edem.' And, yeah, Edem is an Ewe name, right? And he raps in Ewe most of the time. So then he, basically he's an Ewe rap, rap star or something. Yeah, and we have Tinny. He's a Ga, and I don't know why he go the name Tinny, but he's a Ga artiste. And we have the Kwaw Kese guy I was telling you about. Kwaw Kese is, like.. he mostly raps in Twi, right. But the fact is, even though, like, most of these guys rap in local dialect, they still add, like English to it (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

> And in the hip life, most of them, like, they're very creative. Hip life music, can be hip hop, can be um, R&B, can be blues. Any music you want. They just fuse it together. Like, Nigerian music? People always trying to bring, everybody's bringing his or style. You know? (Kwabla Dunyo 2009).

> So yeah, they, they do the same thing, the blend, the local dialect. They blend English with the local dialect song. So that's how it is.

> But the fact is, they do it a lot. Like, they, majority of what they say is not English. Is like, local dialects. So that's really good. Um, like, how do you call it, now Ghanaian music is really, really good. They are very tough, man. They do hip life. In Ghana it's hip life they are always to, but now they trying, everybody's trying to go international, so they're mixing with the English and that stuff (Kwabla Dunyo 2009).

What is interesting here is that for these young people, the indexical connections made through hip hop or reggae can go in several directions. For example, hip hop in Ghana consists of imported music, as well as locally contextualized music that nonetheless maintains stylistic links to North America. African American culture (or Afro-Caribbean culture in the case of reggae) has been assimilated into the local context, and thus when the music is listened to again in Canada, it has become for them (although not for the wider audience) an index of "home" and even Africanness. Kofi emphasized this when I spoke with him about the connections or feelings that he felt when he listened to music that he had first heard in Ghana, even when this music was not actually Ghanaian music.

> *Even music that's not from Ghana but you might have heard back there?*
>
> Yeah, exactly!
>
> *Or, like, if you're listening to hip hop, for example, cause, you know.*
>
> Lemme say, there's this, there's this music that I have on my PSB [his portable music player], right? And, that then is, before, right, I got it. The same music in Ghana, right? And I recorded it on my, on a CD and I used to play it in my dad's car. And sometimes I'm taking my dad's car for a ride, I play it and all that stuff. So it just reminds... So honestly, it kinda connects me. And sometimes, listen to some kind of hip hop here, reminds me of something that happen, or a scene from back home. So yeah, music kind of takes me, like, it takes me so many places (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

This indexical connection may also have developed not only because they first heard the music, and danced to it, or produced it while still in Africa, but also because of the music's perceived link to Africa despite it being a globalized and Western phenomenon. The significance of this perceived link can be seen in Kesseke's response to my question about the success of Michael Jackson in Côte d'Ivoire, who was popular even though he sang in English.

> Well, it was his manner of dancing. Well, you can maybe say "breakdancing." Me, in my opinion, breakdancing comes from Africa. Yeah, but what he danced, it was like breakdance, those things there, but I know that it was not him who was the creator, it was, James Brown? Everyone loved James Brown in Côte d'Ivoire. So then when Michael came, everyone was behind him...
>
> *Did people breakdance there? In Côte d'Ivoire?*
>
> Yes, in Côte d'Ivoire we did this. Yes. When it became the fashion [in the late 1980s] ...the young people walked around in a "posse," with radios in the street. Yeah, we did that. I also di[d] this genre, yeah, I was part of these dance competitions too. Yeah (Yeo 2009).

Here breakdancing is described as coming from Africa, and through this link it was able to add meaning to the indexical qualities of artists and music associated with the dance genre, adding to their popularity. It was likely these same African ties that helped breakdancing became popular among young Ivoirians in the late 1980s.

Lyrics, language and "having fun"

The lyrics are frequently important in this type of adaptation. Many of my participants emphasized how the music spoke about real life

situations, the struggles of their lived experiences, or provided social and political commentary. As Kesseke explained,

> ...reggae is a music, it's like a traditional music. So these are artists who do not keep/abstain (*jeûne*) from saying what they see, what they hear. They are truly aware/clear about society, all the world really, what happens in the world. They truly try to say look, this is what is happening. Look, this is what we need to do, so we must work together to make it happen. Yes, the world, the country. Yeah. So me, I really love reggae. It doesn't hide anything and all (Yeo 2009, my translation).

Growing out of the African diasporic tradition, hip hop (and reggae) has maintained the tradition of speaking out against society that is a common feature of West African music. In this way it describes the harsh realities of marginalization and becomes a form of resistance and youth protest. It is these realities that some of my research participants identify with, and draw upon when they listen to rap, whether U.S.-based or African. Kwabla described this role of speaking out against society in the domain of hiplife in reference to Kwame Asare Obeng (A-Plus), a hiplife artist known for his social and political commentary.

> ...Like this artiste, um, A-Plus! Is a very, very good artiste, funny. And they always talk positive. Related to Ghana, they talk about politics. Yeah. And if you president—you know, there is freedom of speech in Ghana—and if you president and you're not doing the right thing, bet you the artist will just bring you down. An artist in Ghana is very, very important, and so special to the standard, cause anything they say, it goes out very fast to the country. And even to the world, because people still make, um people are still on YouTube, like artists from Ghana are still on YouTube (Kwabla Dunyo 2009).

Pulling up a video of Sidney's "Africa Money"[7] on YouTube, Kwabla continued to explain how Ghanaian artists comment on the harsh realities of society:

> ...and there's this guy, Sydney. Yeah...he's always talking about [uncertain], like life, how the world is. ...This one is talking money, the way the government is spending our money. The African government is spending the African money. In his case, in Ghana, he claims in Africa, the rich people, that's what we call *agah*. Yeah. They are the people spending the money. And they like, they leaving the poors to suffer. In Ghana is like when you're rich, um, you become more rich. And the poor become more poor. So you have to have a stand. Know somebody who is with you before you make your stand in Ghana. it's not easy to be poor and make it in Ghana, or in Africa. So he just talked about the way big men spend the money anyhow they want. Including especially the ministers that what he's talking about (Kwabla Dunyo 2009).

Yet music is not enjoyed only as a form of vocalizing resistance. As Kelly points out, part of the way meaning is represented in music, and thus managed or expressed as the creation and expression of identity, is in the response to the music itself, not just to the lyrics (2004, 67). Here she is referring to the pleasure involved in listening to the music and embodying or experiencing it. Thus drawing on social theory discourse surrounding hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles, she writes of "the production and regulation of desire" as important to the construction of meaning, and suggests that "[t]he ways in which the body becomes both the subject and object of pleasure are important" (Kelly 2004, 68). Lyrics are part of it, but here I want to emphasize the pleasure of listening to music or the power of musical performance that is in the physical

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[7] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqeC9jcg7NA for the music video of "Africa Money."

experience of the music (which includes music/beat and lyrics) and frequently elicits a physical response. Again I draw on Frith (1996b, 203, 204) and suggest that both music making as well as music listening can be described as performance—for ourselves if for no one else.

Several of my participants described the way that they respond physically to music by dancing, and emphasized the ability to dance to particular musical genres as important factors in their identification with those styles or with music in general. Kofi (Figure 10) frequently brought up the importance of rhythm and beat over the lyrics or melody, and at times he listened to music even though he did not approve of the lyrics, but simply because it had a good beat.

Figure 10: Kofi and Kwabla Dunyo dancing at Toronto's weekly drum circle (photograph by Carinna Friesen, Toronto, 2009).

> Most of the time I don't really care about the lyrics, right, cause hip hop like, specifically, doesn't really talk, like doesn't really talk so much like good, or reasonable lyrics in it. They don't really so much like reasonable lyrics. But I think the rhythm of the music, or the beats really wants like, makes me, I love it, cause it makes me wanna dance. And I love dancing also. So. As long as something want, makes me wanna dance, or makes me relax, that is good. So that's what I listen to so many kind of. But things I don't listen to are, like, rock 'n roll and I don't [know] why, I just don't listen to stuff like that (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

Kofi's definition of music is specifically something that will make him want to dance.

Dance also plays an important social function, particularly at cultural events. Thomas spoke to me about the role of music and dance at various celebrations or functions put on by the Liberian association in Edmonton and emphasized the need for events to include "good music" so that people would dance.

> Music is part of the celebration. ...music that we play is the major event on the celebration. Music, yeah. Wanna listen to music from back home, and dance the music from back home and as a result, is...the major part of the celebration. it's not only food and other event, but music. For example, if you have a program going on and you don't have good music, people will leave. They will complain. And next time if your organizing programs, you probably not gonna get many people showing up, because of what happened in the past.
>
> *What is good music?*
>
> Oh, good music is mostly music that majority of people like. Music that is really emotional, music that have good inspiration songs. Songs of meaning and sometimes the rhythm. People like the rhythm of the music, to go along with the message. Yeah, those are kind of songs. Most of the time people like, on the, like, on the occasions, people dance, dance to music that life is actually, have a meaning. You know, for somebody, some artist will make a music about your prosperity. "Anything you do, is up to you." Songs, I mean, things like that. ...Once people hear this kind of thing, they really, ...They actually move with those kind of wording (Bumbeh 2009).

Music and dancing, in this case, are key to the way the members of this community come together social events, building the community and their social relationships as they interact with the music and each other.

Dancing is a way to physically respond to the music, to embody it, and perhaps, as Frith suggests, it is even a heightened and more

enhanced form of listening (1996b, 223). What does this mean in the discussion of music and identity? Does dancing to a particular music tie the listener more closely to the music, and thus provide the music with more representative or expressive power? As Kelly analyses her participants' narratives, she writes of the experience of "going off," which was used as "a metaphor to describe and explain the emotional elements attached to listening to music" (2004, 76). Kelly continues, explaining that this could be experienced collectively, such as in a dancehall, but also "while listening alone on a headset." She suggests that it

> implies a way of acting that is reliant upon previous knowledge and experience of a song. In some ways, it implies a social knowledge and familiarity that can lead to heightened pleasure. In fact the latter reinforces recent poststructuralist literature...wherein the body has been identified as a site of meaning, as a form of language that plays a role in the politics of representation. The way in which the body interacts with the sound of music comes to be represented as a sign of pleasure or displeasure (2004, 76).

One example of this from my own research came when I spoke with Kassorio. At one point he admitted to me that he would sometimes play music videos on his computer and simply let himself go, dancing by himself in his Montreal apartment.

> Like me, I put that [YouTube video] on and then I dance by myself at home as if I was in Côte d'Ivoire. I let myself go, you see. Yes, I put it on the computer and then I begin to dance. Ah yes, at home we love the music that makes you dance. Ah yes. Me, I put music from Côte d'Ivoire on the computer. And then I begin to dance (Koné 2009, my translation).

It was a way for him to regroup and reconnect (physically as well as mentally or emotionally) with the music from Côte d'Ivoire, creating a

temporary experience of the familiar within the struggles of his new life in Montreal. Kassorio used the music to make a virtual, yet social connection—even though he was alone, he was reconnecting with others through the temporary space created by music, video and dance.

Along with the physical aspect, the embodiment involved in dance, there is also a sense of fun surrounding music that is meant for dance. There are undercurrents of this aspect in the previous quotes from both Kassorio and Kofi, however Kofi also raised this issue specifically.

> I would like, sometimes I'd sit down, think about my, like, what I do and stuff like that. Why I listen to this kind of music. And I realize I know. The words don't really, sometimes the words, like, saying the words and listening to the rhythm kinda makes the music more fun to listen to. Most of the time it's the rhythm that, or the beats that make me wanna listen to the music, yeah. ...And I'm not really, I'm not a good dancer by the way. I just, I just love it (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

The emphasis in this music is enjoyment, rather than serious, deep lyrics that emphasize language and speak to social needs or ills. When explaining to me about Ghanaian hiplife, Collins divided Ghanaian hiplife into different types.

> Ah, okay. So there's, there's the one that's made for dancing, generally. Right? If you're trying to get like, wisdom from above, or anything, there's certain ones that you wouldn't listen to because it's just, it's just to have fun and music and shake and you know? And then there's other parts that, like I was saying, they relate more to the older proverbs and, you know. it's still having fun, but it's some sense in it, right? it's, you get some knowledge out of its. So it, it depends on what mood I'm in, I mean if I'm going out to party at a Ghanaian, I'm not going to expect, like, some lectures and, right? (Boahen 2009)

Collins also suggested that this type of "fun" hiplife or other "modern stuff" was preferred among Canadian-born, or Canadian-raised youth. Perhaps

this was because the music is still “Ghanaian” in sound, but lacks the emphasis on deep lyrics. As such it signifies Ghana and represents ethnic identity, but appreciating this style does not necessarily require the same language and cultural skills as traditional music or even the older highlife where the lyrics are an important focus.

Music and religious identity

Musical taste and musical choice also come into play when looking at religion and religious identity. Music is a means of representing identity, an external expression that codes a particular identity, yet musical choice can also be constrained by that very identity, since this identity provides an understanding of the meaning behind the music, and explains why certain musical choices are appropriate or not. This was discussed most clearly by my participants who adhered to a very strong religious identity that also affected other aspects of their lives. In some cases the religious identity provided a framework to maintain a cultural identity, and contest external hegemonic forces.

I first met Thomas at Holyrood Mennonite church, where he sometimes plays the drum when the African Canadian women lead the congregation in singing West African gospel songs. We later spoke about his interest in music and his experience at Holyrood. While he did not speak specifically to the place of music in relation to cultural or religious identity, the importance of his Christian identity was expressed in subtle ways throughout our conversation, providing a context for his discussion of

gospel music. One example of these subtle emphases can be found in his choice of descriptors which suggest internal categories consistently dividing music into two spheres—gospel and secular:

> Oh yes, I do like to listen to music. I listen to a lot of music, actually. But majority of my music, actually, you know, gospel music. I listen to mostly gospel music. And like, on the radio, sometimes I listen to other, ah, music, as well. Like, ah, secular music if I may say that. I sometimes listen to those as well. But, because even if you are listening to the news, sometimes there must be a break, they gonna play at that time music, so I wouldn't turn the radio off, because they are playing different music. So, I gonna listen to that (Bumbeh 2009).

Although Thomas included some American contemporary gospel singers like Ken Franklin when listing favourite artists, most of his music came from West Africa, especially his home country, Liberia. As he explained,

> I actually listen to a mix of music from back home, from Africa in general. It's not only Liberia and Sierra Leone, though Liberia and Sierra Leone dominate among my music, but I like most of the African music, actually. Yeah. In terms of gospel. And though I listen to some America too, but I have very few of them. Not that I can't afford it, but I have more interest in the African music, the rhythm and type of instruments that are played. It reminds me it exactly reminds me about the instrument that we play and the one that we used to play. So I actually have most of, majority of those that are from back home (Bumbeh 2009).

Thus for Thomas, his music provided an expression of both religious and cultural identity expressed through a mixture of the sound, with its references to "back home," and the words or texts that provided him with a source of inspiration and direction. Together they express and help create (through their exhortation) his Christian identity.

> Well, I think, pretty much as far as I know about music, music is really inspirational, and music I think is a way of communicating. ...if you are in the church, and they make music about the kind of lifestyle that Christians should live. You know, like I'm saying now are churches, in

> my country back home? Most of these music is like a sermon, is like a message, it's like a preaching. Yeah, because they quote scriptures in them, and they give advices, like "This is the kind of life a Christian should live."
> ...
> So, yeah. Music is, I mean, I can say music break down sometimes tensions in your, it break down tension in your life. For example, if you are somehow in down in a certain thing, certain situation you find yourself in maybe you're in a very tough situation, a very difficult situation at the time, and if you are lucky to have the music, to find the music that I could suit that message, actually suit the encouragement that you need, you gonna find a lot of inspiration. You'll find the courage and you will gain back your lifestyle because of that particular music (Bumbeh 2009).

In contrast to Thomas' subtle emphasis, Collins was very clear on how his musical choices helped to express (and even create) a religious identity, one that constrained him from other musical or even religious choices. When I asked him whether he liked Ghanaian gospel music,[8] he was very definitive:

> Gospel music I don't usually listen to. No. Because I'm not a Christian, so. Again, it comes with keeping with the tradition. If you understand where all the stuff is coming from, then you're aware of this history, what has happened, how the gospel came about and all that. It becomes kinda difficult to try and keep on the drumming tradition and culture and at the same time, you know, keep in with Christianity and that type of thing. Cause with the *adowa* [a traditional Akan drum/dance] and the things that we do, there are some things that it kinda contradict, it conflicts with each other, right? Cause playing drums like I was saying, there's some pieces that you're doing something specifically, like something that might not be allowed in the Christian religion, right? (Boahen 2009).

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[8] Gospel music is popular throughout Ghana and other countries in West Africa (see Collins 2004 for a discussion of its place in the contemporary music scene). When I was in Ghana conducting fieldwork in 2007, I recall hearing the music played in public buses, blasting out of stores, and sold in the markets. Several of my other participants suggested a similar public sphere for gospel music in parts of Nigeria, Togo and Liberia.

For Collins then, religious identity constrained, and was constrained by musical choices. He did not listen to Ghanaian gospel, because he was not a Christian. His second point, that you could not keep the drumming tradition and still be a Christian, is one that I had heard in Ghana as well, but it is somewhat contested. When I conducted fieldwork in Ghana, exploring the relationship between traditional music and the churches, I discovered several contrasting perspectives. As I spoke with church leaders and choir directors, I learned that although originally there were strongly negative attitudes towards traditional music practices, these changed over time. By 2007 when I was conducting my fieldwork traditional drum rhythms and instruments were frequently incorporated into worship services of even mainline churches. I also interviewed Novor, an Ewe poet-composer who writes songs in the traditional *kinka* and *singa* styles. He likewise agreed that there was nothing wrong with Christians performing these genres, and described for me several songs he had written to that effect (Afornorfe 2007).

In contrast, Collins suggested that it not possible to be a traditional drummer and a Christian, since there are practices involved that conflict with each other. What is important to realize however, is that here he was not simply talking about drumming per se, but about a set of practices; practices connected with the traditional music that are deeply rooted in African indigenous religion. The difficulty and conflict lies in the question of whether it is possible to separate the music, the particular drum

rhythms, from the socioreligious context in which they were originally located. Christians who incorporate this music into their Christian worship say that it can be separated, or they consciously choose music that is not as deeply tied to the traditional religious practices. Collins and his teacher, Kwasi, argue that this is not truly possible. For them, the music is linked with both cultural and religious practices, a tie too deep and strong to be altered by Christianity. In fact, the ties of cultural and religious practices are so tightly woven that performance of these practices (through traditional drumming) then becomes a form of agency, a means of maintaining a cultural and religious identity in the face of the hegemonic forces of globalization.

It was these different forces that Kwasi was talking about when he explained to me his perspective on how Ghana has been influenced by the West, and how traditional music, combined with its associated cultural and religious practices, provides a means of reasserting identity. His reference to Christianity needs to be understood as directly tied to the West and colonialism, a link he made earlier in the conversation.

> Yeah, in the cities especially. So, they think their own culture is not valued. So, they say they are Christians, so it's Christianity, I mean, pushed them back. They are going backward, they become backward people, but they don't know. In Ghana they think they are going forward, but when they come here, before they realize no, they are far behind. ...[learning drumming] will show to them that your culture is your identity. You don't have to leave your culture behind and call yourself a human being. When you leave your culture behind, that means you leave your identity behind. So you really don't know whether you are bat or animal or bird. You see, a bat doesn't know whether he's animal, or bird. That is bat. So that is how the

> Ghanaians who really come behind feel. That is what I think. That is how I feel about them.
>
> *And you think that music is one way?*
>
> Music is the, I mean, the greater way, not one way. The greater way. Because if you realize your music, and you have a feeling for your music, that shows your identity...So, I think it is always very essential to show what you are, whom you are. Mhmm. That is your identity... Yeah. Definitely if they really live traditionally, as a traditionalist, they must know their own music, they must! (Kwasi Dunyo 2009)

Collins also provided a very pointed explanation of how drumming and the associated cultural and religious practices help him to assert his identity in the face of globalizing forces.

> They understand the need why it is important for us to keep drumming, keep practicing, keep playing our culture. Just to maintain it. Cause, you know, we're going against the entire of globalization is just all over the place, you know? Everyone's wearing Nike, Coke, Pepsi—you know all that type of. So, it's a difficult battle, but because it's music, it's ah, it's easy. Right? Cause we enjoy what we're doing, right?
> Its like going to a battlefield but you're marching to your music and you don't really care about what's gonna happen, you just, you're bringing your music to it, you know? You're playing the best of your abilities, and you have faith in that, right? So, that's what it is. There's a saying that I actually learned from Kwasi during my class, and that's that for the Ashantis, especially with the *adowa*, we would believe that when God first created everything, he created the drummer first.
> ...Its important to be conscious of what's going on, right? So that's, personally that's why I really, I've taken up on myself to keep drumming. Yeah. it's an identity thing too, right? You know, we all can't be wearing jeans all the time. Otherwise it just become very boring. You know, it's like a big marginalized world. God didn't make us, the Creator didn't make us that way. We're all different, so I think we should all be able to express ourselves (Boahen 2009).

Here Collins speaks of music as a means of asserting difference, of separating himself from mainstream culture, and building connections with his Ghanaian roots. These issues return in the next section as I explore

the role of music in a specifically immigrant context.

Music in an immigrant context: Connections and relationships

I focus again on the relationship between music and identity in an immigrant context, drawing further on Turino's discussion of Peircian semiotic processes. For example, Kofi described the connection he feels with someone because of a shared taste in music:

> Exactly. Like, meeting a guy here from Ghana. Okay, that's great, he's from Ghana. But what makes you connect to that person? As you said, music is a very good way, cause I might bring up a song like, "Have you heard this new song? Or have you heard this song?" And he's gonna be like, "Yeah!" and he starts singing with me, it's gonna be like, *Oh man! That is awesome!!* So it's gonna be a different feeling from when I met him and he's like, he's a Ghanaian too. Now he's singing the same song with me, and we all kinda like the song (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

This example refers back to the idea of music as an indexical sign, which, as I mentioned earlier, helps explain different responses among individuals to a particular piece of music. Thus shared reactions or responses to the music themselves become an index of similarity and identity between people as the social connection itself is enhanced through the existential yet shared experience of the music. For Kofi this music helps to construct and maintain a social relationship as indexical quality of music creates a bond that is stronger than a shared cultural or national identity.

Turino also notes a kind of semantic snowballing effect as repeated experiences with the same index become associated with experiences in our own lives, thus "contributing to the rich polysemy and ambiguity of indexical signs for the same individual" (2004, 11). This semantic

snowballing is a part of how music is used to construct identity, and may explain how it is used by West African Canadians to maintain connections with their "home" cultures back in Africa. For example, a song or genre of music that comes to index a particular event or relationship in West Africa, develops a particular emotional salience, and then later, in Canada, it continues to evoke those memories, but also takes on additional objects or associations regarding the new context:

> And sometimes listen[ing] to some kind of hip hop here, reminds me of something that happen, or a scene from back home. ...Cause when I even came here, when I even came to Canada, there at first, I am like, there are a couple of songs that came out. Hip hop songs that came out. And it was different feeling when I came here, right. it's not like the way I'm feeling right now. ...And I listen to a couple of songs at that time, and any time I listen to those songs, like, those songs right now, and I really put myself into the songs, I remember the way I felt from, like, the way I felt when I came, like here, first. So, yeah, music takes me so many places (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

These associations might include nostalgia and loss along with a sense of unity among the diaspora community, or identification or pride in one's culture.

When I spoke with my participants, many of them describe this connection that they feel with music from "back home." Philomina, a professor at the University of Alberta, explained to me how after coming to Canada she developed a yearning for the music from her childhood in the village, and even now, when she listens to this Nigerian music, its adages and proverbs express for her core values of Nigerian culture. As a youth in Nigeria she listened to a lot of Western music, but then,

> [s]omething happened when I came to Canada. I came and, for a

> while, maybe for first one year, regarding the enjoyment of having so many songs at my fingertips...but for some reason I started to yearn for um, for traditional music. ...And now, I tend to listen to both styles of music. Sometimes, if I'm going to bed, I probably will like to listen to Western romantic songs. But if I'm driving in my car, or people come to visit me, especially Nigerians, I would want to play the traditional songs. I yearn so much for them, because I now am beginning to value a little bit of what they say, they adages are so deep (Okeke 2009).

Philomina's description is complex because it refers to several different levels of meaning in the music. Although there is an iconic element, as the traditional music becomes a sign of Nigerian culture, Philomina's surrounding narrative emphasized the indexical relations, the affective quality of the music and its emotional associations that link back to her childhood in the village. At the same time, she draws attention to the lyrics, and heightens their importance in creating musical meaning. These lyrics are themselves full of iconic, indexical and symbolic language, referred to by Philomina as the "deep" proverbs and adages.

Aisha also alluded to these cultural associations and music's ability to help maintain and construct identity when she explained how, "...if you listen to it, it reinforces, you know, what you really are, where you came from, and, you know, keeps everything intact, I think. Personally, that's what I believe" (Aisha 2009). Aisha's comment suggests that the indexical associations and meanings found in music help remind the listener of their roots and providing a cohesive yet permeable boundary to help maintain their subjective identity.

Figure 11: Okey Atchivi pulling up Togolese gospel music on his laptop (photograph by Carinna Friesen, Edmonton, 2009).

Through my conversation with Okey (Figure 11), a young man who came to Edmonton from Togo, I learned that music provides him with a similar source of cultural fortitude. Okey just arrived in Edmonton a year ago, bringing with him CDs as well as recordings "sur ma clé," on his memory stick. He is living with his brother while working and studying English, but unlike his brother, he does not plan to remain in Canada. We talked awhile about music and cultural differences between Togo and Canada, and he emphasized for me the connection he feels with "la musique traditionnelle de chez moi." It is part of his culture he explained, a part of his identity.

> Often when I listen to traditional music, it gives me a sense of identity, it gives me the desire, for example, to return and stay, and that gives me a sense of identity. It gives me a certain strength, whether African or Togolese (Atchivi 2009).

This music provides him with a sense of identity, along with the strength and the desire to return to Togo.

The use of music as a strategy for coping with stress (whether social or psychological) is another element that comes out of the way music helps construct and maintain a sense of connection to the "home" culture. In these quotes, my participants have mentioned how music provides a break from the stresses of the new environment and helps them develop a strength or sense of self from which to interact with mainstream Canada. Philomina's discussion of traditional Nigerian songs seems to suggest this role, marking the value she has come to place in the music, while Aisha and Okey both emphasized the strengthening aspect of listening to music from Gambia or Togo. Speaking in particular about Christian music, Thomas also referenced music's ability to help him cope with the stresses of life in Canada when he spoke of how music can "break down tension," providing inspiration and courage.

> So, yeah. Music is, I mean, I can say music break down sometimes tensions in your, it break down tension in your life. For example, if you are somehow in down in a certain thing, certain situation you find yourself in maybe you're in a very tough situation, a very difficult situation at the time, and if you are lucky to have the music, to find the music that I could suit that message, actually suit the encouragement that you need, you gonna find a lot of inspiration. You'll find the courage and you will gain back your lifestyle because of that particular music (Bumbeh 2009).

Although many of my research participants spoke of musical ties that assisted in the production of an identity linked with the home culture, several of them explained that this is not an automatic connection. Kofi

emphasized the need to experience where the music is coming from, in order for it to have meaning and help convey identity.

> Music is gonna be tough. With a kid who lives here for pretty much a long time, it's gonna be hard for them to understand the kind of music that is from back home, unless they go there and experience what it is. ...So they have to go experience it, feel the hot weather, hot sun, eat the kind of food, walk on bare ground. ...Experience some things. ...Music is just like actions, is just like our everyday life. Right, everything we do everyday. Let's say, Aku's kids, when they came to Ghana went for walks, we did this and that and stuff like that. So when I came here, they're like, "Hey Uncle Kofi, Uncle!" "Hey you guys, how're you doing?" [he speaks the children's lines in falsetto] "Did you remember when you did this?" And, like, "Yeah, I remember when I did that then you did this." And so you see, it's just like everyday actions. When we do things. Even if it's not imprinted in our minds, as long as it's different, and they hear it here, they gonna recognize it, that "Yeah, this is the song that I heard in Ghana." Cause it's not like everything they hear here, right? Here they listen to hip hop, jazz, country, r&b, rock 'n roll, metal, whatever. Yeah. Right, so *that* is gonna be something different, and so it's gonna take them back. Like, it's seriously gonna take them back. ...I think that's one really good way kids can relate to where they're from (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

Speaking about the Canadian-born children of his cousin Aku, he suggested that they needed to visit Ghana and experience daily life before Ghanaian songs can have meaning for them in a way that connects them with a Ghanaian or an Ewe cultural identity.

As a mother with adolescent children born and raised here in Canada, Philomina made a similar statement. Her children listen to North American music, particularly Christian pop from the United States, and she does not think they connect with the traditional Nigerian music that she herself appreciates, nor even Nigerian gospel or hip hop. She blames this on two things, first of all the language barrier, but also the lack of context:

> So if you don't have the language, you wouldn't understand the background. You really cannot situate yourself within a medium to enjoy their music. It's a language thing.
> ...My kids haven't shown a whole lot [of interest in the music]. And it might be because they don't understand the English that is being spoken. ...It could also be that the kind of things that is being said has no context here. If somebody is talking about, singing about the African leaders, "They are taking all our money." Even a five year old in Nigeria knows about these people taking our money, and all the rich people who make us poor. The government is blamed for everything, so a five year old understands. When they say things like, you know, "The gold it goes to the wife, it go here." So you see, the typical five year on the side, he will start doing, "Goes to the wife, the gold, my shirt, it goes to the wife." (laughs) My daughter will not understand, something about Stephen Harper taking my shirt (Okeke 2009).

On the other hand, in some cases the music as a sign can develop new meaning based on the experience of this music here in Canada, and associations that it develops in a diasporic context. Proximity allows Suzy to maintain a close and physical connection to her mother's Black Albertan community, but she described music as being a key way of maintaining connections to her father's Nigeria roots, along with food, their names, and communication or visits from family:

> Um, the music, well, he played, like King Sunny Adé, and Féla and Rex Lawson, which was highlife music. And we listened to that on our way to church as kids in the morning, he'd put in highlife music, Rex Lawson. So you'd hear that music, and you enjoyed it. You really got into it. Plus my grandparents would also come down...and then, the functions that were here we'd go to. And the friends that he had, who were Nigerian and come over and stuff. And then of course our middle names are all Nigerian. So it was always exposed too. And the food, you know? And my mom learned how to cook the different Nigerian dishes. So, I think that's how he kept us connected. And plus, the family over there, you know? Calling and stuff. So you always felt somewhat connected to that culture (Pinnick 2009).

Suzy also spoke of attending events put on by the Nigerian association,

such as dances for Independence Day, or birthday parties and other life cycle events, which became another locale for her to hear Nigerian music and develop associations that helped her connect with her Nigerian identity. Although she could not understand the lyrics, this was not a significant barrier as others would help translate for her:

> ...So I don't understand all of it, but sometimes he'll tell me what they're saying or tell us what they're saying. Or if there's someone else who's Nigerian and they're around, they'll say, you know, if I say, "So, what are they saying?" And they'll tell you the story. Especially if it's kind of funny, what they're talking about. Or whatever. People share it (Pinnick 2009).

For Suzy, Nigerian music is still a way of asserting her identity, but the associations, the semantic snowballing that contributes to the meaning of the music, have developed in a different way. Her father's Nigerian highlife is bound up with the Nigerian food her mother learned to make, and the connections she has built with others at Nigerian association dances. As with Philomina's children, language is a barrier, denying her one of the layers that her father or other immigrants may experience. However, that very barrier provides her with the opportunity to interact with others from the Nigerian community, people who shares the musical experience with her, listening, translating, and helping create that cultural experience. In a sense, the music still develops indexical meaning, but differently than for those who have been able to accumulate such meanings through extended sojourns in the "home" country. For Suzy and others who have been raised in the diaspora, the music may still be a means of identification, and evoke nostalgia towards the "home" culture,

but this meaning or mode of meaning has shifted and the indexical quality has developed differently. Associations and meaning still gathered through repeated experience mediated by memory, but for Suzy these originally come out of listening to the music with her father, his Nigerian friends, and in the context of the Nigerian community in Edmonton.

This interaction relates to how Simon Frith views music as a cultural activity that constructs identity through the experience, of the body, time, and sociability, that is then placed in shared cultural narratives (1996a, 124). Music is at the same time something subjective and personal, as well as being a shared, cultural experience. Gerry Bloustein describes it as, “a subjective sense of being sociable” (2003, 222).

Kwabla Dunyo, a case study

I interviewed Kwabla Dunyo in the basement of his father’s home in Toronto, where he showed me how he put together his beats, and played for me tracks of his favourite artists (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Kwabla Dunyo in his studio (photograph by Carinna Friesen, Toronto, 2009).

Kwabla aspires to be a famous artist. After less than a year in Canada, he already had his EPK (electronic press kit), music videos and recordings up

on the internet. He has his own website, space on showcaseyourmusic.com, videos on YouTube, and a Facebook page[9]. He had already begun putting together tracks and beats in Ghana, and when I spoke with him, Kwabla was still excited about the equipment he had to work with in Toronto. Kwabla's narrative and his use of technology and communication media demonstrate the complexity of the question of identification, identity and popular music.

Although I have argued against Kelly's suggestions that African Canadians "slip" into an African-American identity, through their identification with the music and cultural media of black youth culture, I begin by recognizing Kwabla's strong identification with hip hop (Figure 13). From the first time that I met him in Ghana, Kwabla incorporated hip hop language into

Figure 13: Gh CALI, Me Maself n I (<http://www.showcaseyourmusic.com/ghcali>).

[9] See <http://ghcali.webs.com/>, <http://www.myspace.com/ghcali>, <http://www.showcaseyourmusic.com/ghcali>, <http://www.youtube.com/user/caliproduction>, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=77179072154&ref=ts> for examples of GhCali online.

his vocabulary, and he frequently dressed in baggy pants with an oversized t-shirt and a baseball cap on backwards. A brief glance at his videos and accompanying photos supports these comments: Kwabla "chillin'" with his friends; casual summer shots of Kwabla in oversized and baggy clothes; a winter shot of Kwabla in a skater jacket, bling around his neck and his NY baseball cap (Figure 14); photo-shopped promotional pictures of and the big city—Kwabla adjusting his baseball cap or sitting shirtless in an easy chair, tuque on his head, baggy jeans and inscriptions "GHCali" (his artistic name), the phrase "Me Maself N I" and "Cali Productions" in the corner (Figure 13); the inscription "African American" drifting by in a video, use of African American slang and hip hop expressions in his EPK; even his reference to Akon, Lil Wayn, T pain and Tupac among his favourite musicians.

Figure 14: Kwabla Dunyo with both "bling" and Ghanaian necklace (Gh CALI album, Kwabla Dunyo personal facebook page, used with permission).

Yet as I mention earlier in this chapter, there is a deeper complexity that runs both within, and counter to Kwabla's affiliation with American hip hop culture. As much as he wears hip hop clothes and incorporates African

American slang, Kwabla's narrative links rap, r&b and reggae into a single thread that is tied to both the African diaspora and the continent. This is not simply the matter of his having been introduced to the music back in Ghana, but that it was already mixed up with Ghanaian music and culture. Like hiplife, or Ghanian/West African gospel, both of which fuse Ghanaian languages, rhythms and sounds with styles originating in the diaspora, Kwabla uses his triple taste in hip hop, r&b and reggae to create a musical identity that blends together elements of the diaspora with his Ghanaian identity, placed within a specific Toronto locale.

Kelly (2004) writes of music and media culture as means of representing identity, a term with double meaning in light of hip hop, where rap artists present themselves as they "represent" themselves, their lives or their neighbourhood through their lyrics and their style. Kwabla likewise represents himself, both visually and aurally. In the very photographs that I used to emphasize his identification with hip hop, there are elements that point to this blend of identities. For example the winter shot (Figure 14) of Kwabla in a skater jacket was taken from the roof of a building in Toronto, likely his father's house. What is more important, is that along with the NY baseball cap and the "bling," a large silver chain with an oversize pendant, he is prominently wearing a Ghanaian necklace of chunky glass beads. This necklace reappears in several other photos as well. He likewise chose to begin his EPK[10] with stills of Toronto (the CN tower, a

[10] Online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnerlYDR8VM>.

recognizable landmark) and scenes from his home village back in Ghana. Another video, “Stacks on Deck” which he put together with Lil Pizo, incorporates stills of the two of them around Toronto, with the inscription “Canada Toronto” on one of the slides. My own photos from our interview highlight the different elements that Kwabla ties together into his identity. The interconnection of his computer, sound system and recording equipment with his father’s traditional Ewe drums and portrait on the wall (Figures 15 and 16) provide a vivid example of Kwabla’s blended identity.

Figure 15: Kwabla Dunyo’s studio in his father’s basement. Ewe drums function as both mousepad and mic stand (photograph by Carinna Friesen, Toronto, 2009).

The photographs also reminds me of the way that Kwabla represents himself aurally and textually as well as visually. Through the interview he spoke of his various interests and played for me tracks of hiplife and hip hop artists as well as some of his own music. Although Kwabla sings in English rather that Ewe or Twi, there are musical similarities between his tracks and the Ghanian hiplife. As Kwabla explains, “in the hip life, most of them, like, they're very creative. Hip life music, can be hip hop, can be r&b, can be blues—any music you want. They just fuse it together. Like, Nigerian music? People always trying to bring, everybody's bringing his or style. You know?” In his own music, Kwabla likewise shifts easily from one genre to another (rap, club dance, reggae and r&b) without really differentiating between them, and often makes use of a light, synthesizer based sound to create the beat.

Figure 16: Painting of Kwasi Dunyo wearing traditional dress (photograph by Carinna Friesen,Toronto, 2009).

On his main website, <http://ghcali.webs.com/>, Kwabla styles himself as “GhCALI, the young talented Hiphop, R nB, Reggae [sic],

Classical artist and also does African drumming and teaching." Similarly he describes the "About Me" sections of his YouTube channel, Caliproduction, as:

> Hiphop African, African hiphop, Toronto's new breed, Funny videos, New Artist of the year, Ghana most porpular [sic]. Other musicians we love-Eminem, Micheal jackson, Akon, Lil wayn, Beyonce,Keri Hilson, Sakodie, Yaa Pono, 2 face, 2 pac, Notoriuse B i G [sic], Winter Sleep (Caliproductions).

As Kwabla explains in his electronic press kit, his stage name is GhCali, since:

> GH simply stands for Ghana, cause I was born in Ghana. Where I came from. And I'm now in Canada, trying to be a Canadian, so. Simply you can call me an African American if you want. So, Gh Cali come live in the world of music. The word 'Cali' is spelled c-a-l-i-i (sic), that is "Come And Live In the world of music." That's the main reason why I took that name. And I really love it cause calling me by that name really makes me happy (Caliproductions).

These communication media, his recording and editing technology and online sites provide Kwabla with the means and the space to present himself as GhCali, who is, as fellow rapper DJ DNice puts it, "Representin' from the T-Dot." Yet Kwabla's use of these technologies and global media is not simply a way for him to represent himself as part of hip hop culture. It is a more complex tool that allows him to express multiple aspects of his identity—reaching out to mainstream hip hop, r&b and reggae, making ties with the music scene in Toronto, but also connecting with hip life and his friends and family back in Ghana. I recall him sitting there at his computer during our interview, with his keyboard and recording equipment, and yet surrounded by his father's Ewe drums, both signs of the music that he

used to create and express his identity. Blending together his interest in traditional and popular music, with links to Ghana, the United States and the Caribbean, Kwabla places himself in a specific Canadian locale. When I spoke with him, he had only been in Canada a few months, not necessarily long enough to really begin to develop a Canadian identity, yet he explained to me how he is trying to adjust and find his place as a Canadian, because he is here to stay.

> "Home sweet home," as they always say. Where I actually came from, I'll sure go back there one day. But still go and visit. I'll still come back, to others places. But now, I'm here, I'm trying to be a Canadian.
> ...So you just have to know how to adjust. Now I'm in Canada and I have to know how to do with this culture, cause there's proverb that says, "When you go to Rome, do what the Romans do," you know? So now I'm here. I have to adjust to Canadian culture. That's what I'm, yeah (Kwabla Dunyo 2009).

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed how musical taste has become intrinsically tied up with identity in the experience of my West African Canadian participants. Popular musical styles play a key role in these negotiations of identity, however it is important to recall the cross-currents and flows in the development of these musical genres. I have argued that for my participants, identification with genres (such as hip hop or reggae) originating in the African diaspora does not necessarily imply an identification with a black identity (African American or Afro-Caribbean youth culture). For my research participants, these genres contain associations not only with the diaspora, but indexical allusions to the African continent (West Africa) as well. Religious identification also enters

into my participants' narratives, adding another element to the associations and identifications between music and identity. Drawing further on Peircian semiotics, I have explored how music is used to build social relationships and maintain connections between West African Canadians and their "home" culture back in Africa. Music enables these connections or associations not only among West African immigrants, but among their Canadian-born or raised children as well. Yet while West African music indexes the "home" culture for both first and second generation Canadians, the processes and mechanisms for these indexical relationships develop differently.

Chapter 6: Diasporic Performance

In this chapter I look at some of the ways that music and performance relate to identity. This includes looking at group identity, as well as the representations of identity through performance. In a communal situation like Holyrood Mennonite Church, music plays a role in group identity through the creation and maintenance of boundaries as well as the transformative, communal creative force of performance itself. This act of performance reappears in the discussion of traditional drumming and dance ensembles, where I consider the representation and transmission of tradition through the experiences of both instructors and members of such groups.

Identity, music and religion

As I mention earlier, religion often plays a key role in providing spaces and communities where immigrants can maintain and develop social identities. Drawing on recent studies of immigrants and their own ethnographic research among immigrants across a range of African faith traditions, (including Islam, African indigenous religions, and various Christian traditions), Olupona and Gemignani describe how religious communities among African immigrants in the United States are "emerging as sites for a vital expression and agency with aims to establish one's place in a multicultural America" (2009, 336). They are a source of community and belonging, a source of strength when coping with the stresses of immigration and a new environment.

In these religious communities, as in other subcultures (particularly youth subcultures), music enters into the picture and helps shape identity. Providing examples from their own research, Olupona and Gemignani note the importance of music and dance in the religious experience of both Christian worship and communities practicing African indigenous religions. They also point to educational programs that include classes in African languages, dance and drumming to help build and maintain identity in an American environment (338, 339).

The importance of religion and its relationship to music and identity emerges as a theme in my research as well. This triple connection is a significant thread that runs through the narratives of several of my

research participants. I found the connection between music and religion most strongly emphasized in relation to Christianity, briefly mentioned by practitioners of African indigenous religions, and never mentioned by my few Muslim research participants. This may have been due to several factors, most significantly the role of religious beliefs in their life and its importance to their sense of self. For example, Okey and Thomas both emphasized their Christian identity and highlighted the role it played in their musical choices, as did Suzy and Philomina to a lesser extent. Collins and Kwasi both noted the relationship between certain of their musical practices and their adherence to African indigenous religious beliefs and practices, but they also framed the discussion in response to Christianity. The only time music and religion came up in regards to Islam was when Kassorio explained how he came from a Muslim family, but has gone his own way in part because his aunt and others were against the music.

Connection and rupture: Holyrood Mennonite Church

It is the offertory on Sunday morning at Shalom Chapel in Akatse, Ghana and we sing "praises" or "Ghanaian gospel music." The music is loud and very lively, the singing accompanied by the worship band on an electric guitar, a drum set, some congas, and a tambourine. A male vocalist leads the singing from the front. He and his back-up singers (all women) each have their own microphone to amplify their voices over the sound of the instruments and the congregation. After the offering (collected in baskets at the front), the singing continues. During the songs several women come to the front to dance in their traditional agbadza movements. The songs are call and response, with multiple stanzas and refrains. The large congregation enthusiastically joins with the worship team singing in Ewe, or Ga, and at times even a stanza or section in English. There is movement, loud music, clapping and dancing as they sing together. The

experience is communal, embodied within the congregation (excerpt from fieldnotes, Akatse Ghana, July 22, 2007).

Contrast this with another church, another Sunday morning:

Several African women dressed in fine outfits, complete with elaborate headwraps, lead the congregation in call-and-response songs of praise. The leader sings out a line or a stanza, while the others lead the congregation in the response. The women are full of energy, embodying the music as they move and sing together accompanied by a drum or drumset, and perhaps an electric guitar...

Yet there is something different about this experience at Holyrood Mennonite Church in comparison with the service at Shalom Chapel—the congregational response is more tentative, less vibrant, and less responsive.

...Most of the congregation stands, but there is little movement, and only some of the members of the congregation join in with the singing. The others are somewhat stiff and motionless, hesitant to sing because they seem uncertain, confused, even lost. Even so, after the service members of the congregation express words of appreciation to the African music team (excerpt from fieldnotes, Edmonton Canada, May 9, 2009).

Jacob Olupona and Regina Gemignani's study regarding the role of religious affiliation in African immigrant identity highlights the idea that "religion is central to immigrants' search for community and belonging" (2009, 336). They note how religious affiliation shapes African immigrant identity through shared beliefs, values and forms of social interaction. They also emphasize religious performance, such as Christian worship, as an important and essential element, explaining how, "in many African immigrant congregations, music and dance are integral to this religious experience and to the understanding and experience of community" (338).

I would like to draw attention here to the emphasis on worship—especially music and dance—as integral to the religious experience and thus to religious (and communal, individual) identity. Olupona and Gemignani incorporate Martin Stoke's argument that, particularly for immigrants, music defines "a moral and political community in relation to the world in which they find themselves," and that "music is a significant contributor to identity formation, as it 'evokes and organizes collective memories and present experience of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity'" (339, quoting from Stokes 1994, 3). This emphasis on the indexical quality, with its ability to gather associations and meanings is an important part of music's contribution to identity formation. In the context of Christian worship, there is also a performative element to both music and identity, which Katie Graber brings into her discussion of music and Mennonite identity. In her essay "Identity and the Hymnal: Can Music make a Person Mennonite?" she notes the interconnections between performance and enacting,

> ...each time we call singing "Mennonite" we are able to experience it as such, and each time we experience singing as Mennonite we are able to label it accordingly. The alignment of designations and actions results in—or perhaps is caused by—the performance of Identity. When people sing in a way they have designated Mennonite, they are performing their Mennonite-ness (2005, 66).

In the previously mentioned studies on African immigrants and the development of communal identity through religion (and religious music), Olupona and Gemignani, Kwakye-Nuako, Agbali and other scholars describe the role of specifically African immigrant churches in the lives of

their members. However West African Canadian Christians do not always worship separately from their Canadian-born counterparts.

Two of my research participants attend the same Mennonite Church in Edmonton, and their experiences provides the opportunity to consider this issue.

Approximately eight years ago, Jonathan Dueck conducted research in Holyrood Mennonite Church for his 2003 dissertation on Mennonite Churches in Edmonton (Dueck 2003). Drawing on this experience, he writes that, "[m]usic is an important part of Holyrood's congregational life, and a complex area in which relationships between and the needs of diverse parts of the congregation are expressed and met" (166). He describes the diversity of the congregation in both ethnicity and musical style, and how the blended worship service was seen to embody inclusivity and tolerance. As Dueck explains, "the singing of these diverse repertoires of music corporately allowed for a sense of group identity including the identities of many subgroups to emerge, which was strongly valued by participants" (198).

Yet since his research in 2003, there has been a demographic shift in the congregation. At that time, the church contained members from several distinct religio-cultural backgrounds—Swiss Mennonite, Russian Mennonite, and non "ethnic" Mennonites or Mennonite by choice, including a sizable group of French-speaking Africans (165, 166), but while there continues to be a sizable African membership in the congregation, many of

the French-speaking contingent Dueck mentioned are no longer active members at Holyrood. Instead the congregations includes forty to fifty English-speaking West Africans, many of whom were Liberian refugees officially or unofficially sponsored by the congregation. This shift has led to some changes in various aspects of church life and administration, including the church's musical practice as the diversity that Dueck mentioned has become extended even further, creating a complex situation that raises some questions about whether the worship practices continue to draw the congregation together. For example, drawing on Graber's discussion of Mennonite music and Mennonite-ness, what happens if there is a disjuncture between the musical experience and its indexical associations? Can a communal identity be created and managed if group members do not all feel represented in corporate worship, or participate in the musical performance? Why might two of my research participants respond so differently to the same experience?

Near the beginning of this chapter I included ethnographic descriptions of two separate church services. The music described in both worship services is similar, but the context is different. In Holyrood Mennonite Church, many of the Euro-Canadian church members find themselves at loss during the Sundays when the African music team leads worship, or if one of the women spontaneously leads into a song during the time set aside for "joys and concerns," a time of sharing by members of the congregation. At the same time, as Dueck points out, the

congregation is trying to find meaningful ways for all members to participate and find their place in the congregation, a place from which to both contribute to the congregation and fully participate in worship (197). Dueck's participants suggested that tolerance of diverse musical styles allows for members to find their place in the congregation, a place from which to both contribute to the congregation and fully participate in worship (197). This remains part of the official and individual attitude today, but how well it works seems to depend on a variety of factors.

Thomas expressed this perspective when I met with him at his office where he works as a real estate agent. As a refugee from Liberia, he lived in various countries throughout West Africa before coming to Canada eight years ago. He is now a Canadian citizen, married, with an infant son. Thomas is very involved with Holyrood, and often helps with the music by playing the (African) drum or helping with singing. This music is sometimes hymns, or "traditional songs from back home," but more often what he called "contemporary Gospel songs." We discussed this in our interview.

> Almost all is, almost all the songs that we sing here at Holyrood are actually, are, ah, in English. English songs, because they actually want us to write them. Sometime we even have to write them, sketch them out and put them on the overhead, or we put them in the bulletin. So at least they can understand.
>
> *That way maybe they can join in?*
>
> That's right. And as a result they always, most of the time they join, also sing along with everybody. Because want them to actually be part of the singing. Yeah (Bumbeh 2009).

In this excerpt Thomas spoke of tolerance and inclusion in Holyrood, a response that connects with Dueck's understanding of the congregation. Thus while the West African demographic is included as part of the congregation and their particular identity embodied through musical performance, they also seek to draw in the rest of the church community. For this reason English is the main language of performance, and sometimes texts of these call-and-response songs are written out, "So at least they can understand...because we want them to actually be part of the singing." But how involved is the congregation, and does this really help create a communal identity? Similarly, is this music enough to draw in and unify the diverse groups within the congregation?

While Thomas seemed to suggest a strong congregational involvement, with the idea that, "most of the time they [the rest of the congregation] join, also sing along with everybody," this was not what I observed during my first visit to Holyrood last spring. It was an African-led worship Sunday, which meant that rather than singing predominantly hymns and choruses, the music was call and response West African gospel songs. As I describe earlier in the ethnographic description several women gathered at the front to lead the singing. The period of singing included several different songs, (each with repeated sections) flowing smoothly from one song to the next. Each section or change was announced by the leader's call, which directed how the chorus (and thus the congregation) was to respond. One of the songs was written out (text

only) in the bulletin, but it was still nuanced by the song leader as she repeated certain sections rather than singing it in a straightforward strophic manner. For someone familiar with this style of music leading, her intentions were clear and easy to follow—both the women at the front and the rest of the African contingent were able to join in the music with ease—however others in the congregation were much more hesitant and uncertain. Some did not even sing at all.

This experience demonstrates that while there may be a tolerance of diverse musical styles within Holyrood Mennonite Church, this does not mean that everyone understands and participates in these styles. What may provide the opportunity for one contingent to express and perform certain aspects of their identity may not resonate with others. It may even create barriers for the unifying communal identity that is sought by the congregation as a whole. Thomas has found his niche in Holyrood, where joining the women on the African-led worship Sundays provides him the opportunity to play the drum and join in singing the songs that are important to him as a Liberian-Canadian. This is enough for him to become a part of the congregation, to feel accepted and able to express different registers of his identity with the Holyrood community. For Okey, the situation is different.

I met Okey Atchivi during my second visit to Holyrood Mennonite Church. While my first visit was on a Sunday when a group of West African women led the music, during the second visit the music was

similar to that found in many Mennonite churches throughout North America—mostly hymns and songs from the *Hymnal a Worship Book*, accompanied by the piano. During our interview Okey contrasted this style of worship with the music in his home church back in Togo:

> Well, the music in the church is very different from the music that takes place, for example, here in Canada, it's very different. ...in Africa, when we play music, everyone dances. You see? But here, when we play music, everyone goes like this: (claps hands slowly). But in Africa, when, for example, you play the djembé or you play the drumset, and then the songs, it's the songs that we sing a little faster. It's not like here, we sing softly. That, no. ...in Africa, most of the music is active ("movementé"). ...And if you are taken away by the glory of God, really, you will begin by dancing with the music that we sing. It's kind of amazing. ...when you see this, its, its like you are happy and you dance for your God. You glorify your God by dancing, singing, jumping. Its kind of amazing. But here, everything is a little listless ["mou"]...me as well, for us in Africa it is different (Atchivi 2009, my translation).

Okey located a significant difference between the music here in Canada and that in his home congregation back in Togo. He described the music in Holyrood as "mou," meaning feeble or listless. It does not have the energy that is an important part of Togolese Christian worship, an energy so uplifting that "even after you even finish church, you are happy" (Atchivi 2009).

These views are not simply Okey's isolated experience; they are shared by other African immigrants as well. As Kwasi Kwakye-Nuako's discussion of African immigrant response to mainline churches in North America notes:

> [w]hile some liked the preaching or teaching ministries in these churches, most Africans considered the services very cold. They were of the view that the churches did not provide any space for the

> celebratory aspect of the faith, including drumming and dancing, and that the services did not uplift their spirits. The hymns and other songs were rather monotonous, and worship services were less involving of the congregations that the ones they knew in their respective countries (124).

These opinions resonate with Okey's attitude towards Holyrood, but it is important to remember that Thomas' experience has been different. There may be several explanations for these diverse perspectives. To begin with, Okey has only been in Canada for about a year, while Thomas has already been able to settle down and develop roots in the community. Coming from English speaking Liberia via Ghana, Thomas did not have the French/English language barrier, and was able to join with the other Liberian refugees to form a distinct subgroup within the congregation. He has found a place, a niche to express himself as both Liberian and Christian. In contrast Okey has only learned English since he arrived, and while he frequently played djembé in his church back in Togo, he has not yet had the opportunity to become involved in accompanying the music at Holyrood. Thus even though he may enjoy the periodic gospel music led by Thomas and the West African women, he feels on the edge of the communal experience.

Although he expressed discontentment, and the sense of something lacking in the worship service, Okey does not sever the connections that he has made at Holyrood. He recognizes that going to church here in Canada is not the same as in Africa, and that he must make allowances. He also recognizes that these musical styles are part of

the cultural identity of Holyrood, and create the opportunity for him to experience a different aspect of Christianity. Yet there is something missing, and since he cannot experience and express it through the music in Holyrood, Okey creates an alternative musical space outside of church. Through personal performance singing at home, along with listening choices and the use of recorded musical performance, Okey strengthens aspects of his identity that he is not able to express through his involvement at Holyrood:

> That's why sometimes, when I'm by myself at home, I sing the songs, from Africa, for example. ...When I sing those songs there, it's like I'm at home in Togo. But it's a little different here, when I see, I see myself like I'm home in Togo.
>
> *The songs took you?*
>
> Yes, when I sing this, it's like I'm at home (Atchivi 2009, my translation).

At home Okey is able to listen to his own music, music that speaks to him and touches him most deeply. As he listens to Togolese gospel he is energized, both mentally and, he believes, spiritually as well. At one point, after playing his favourite song by John Starr, Okey explained that it was his favourite song because when he is so tired he cannot pray, he listens to the song and finds rest. Or else he sings along, and through singing is able to pray and strengthen his soul. Listening to traditional Togolese music similarly sustains him and provides him with the strength to continue and the desire to return to Togo. Through listening and singing along to the recordings, he emphasizes both a Christian and a Togolese identity, an emphasis that he is not able to find at Holyrood.

Summary

Musical performance is powerfully intertwined with identity. Through indexical associations, this performed music reflects and marks aspects of individual identity, while in a communal space it plays a role in group identity through the creation and maintenance of boundaries as well as the transformative, communal creative force of performance itself. For West African Christians in a Canadian context, these different elements join together in a complex web of conjuncture and rupture. The inclusivity and tolerance for musical diversity at Holyrood create a space for some members of the West African demographic to fully participate, and through performance, create a unified, corporate identity. For others the attempt at diversity is simply an attempt that falls short of its desired goals. In this case the music itself causes a barrier between individual and communal identity.

Performing culture and re-presenting tradition

Another thread that developed out of my participants narratives has to do with the relationship between music and identity in the performance of culture by traditional music and dance ensembles. Here I focus on two individuals who are both performers and instructors of West African music and dance. I also consider the experience of several of my participants who have become involved as members in such groups. Through these examples I explore the representation and transmission of tradition, and thus identity, through their narratives and activities.

This discussion develops out of the larger discourse surrounding multiculturalism in Canada. As I mention earlier, critics suggest that multicultural discourse tends to oversimplify narratives of origins, for example Petropoulos (2006) draws together cautions from Kambourelli (2000), Walcott (1997) and Hade (1997) to suggest that,

> [a]s heritage festivals that celebrate ethnic food and dress tend to qualify for multicultural funding, this leads to the commodification and fetishization of ethnicity as a site of exotic otherness to be displayed and consumed. By privileging superficial elements of culture, this process turns ethnicity into a stable and commodifiable sign, thus erasing issues related to sociocultural histories, difference (in and among various cultural groups), and personal and political agency (111).

Puplampu and Tettey likewise criticize these "so-called ethnic festivals," especially when they are presented as a means of breaking down intercultural barriers. While African groups have organized festivals and events such as Independence Day celebrations to showcase their history and cultural heritage, Puplampu and Tettey argue that such events "only tend to reinforce their otherness, as those who attend focus on the *strange* and *exotic* performance and cuisine" (2005, 42).

Although these critics may have a valid point, I suggest that traditional West African drumming and dance ensembles do create a space for cultural transmission (both intra- and intercultural) and identity formation. I begin by focusing in depth on Kwasi Dunyo and Kesseke Yeo. They are both West African immigrants who came to Canada in a large part because of Canada's multicultural policies. They are performers and instructors of West African music and dance, and as such, they make

strategic use of the very festivals Puplampu and Tettey criticize, while also providing opportunities for more in-depth intercultural learning and understanding. As transnational performers of traditional genres, they have been directly influenced by globalization and changes caused by commodification and new modes of production and have had to adapt themselves to a new performance context. I follow this discussion of performers and instructors with a look at the experience of young West African Canadians who have participated in such groups, and the role their participation has played in their identity formation and maintenance.

Kwasi Dunyo: Re-presenting Tradition

Frederick Kwasi Dunyo[11] spent his childhood in Ewe village of Dagbamate in the Volta Region of Ghana where traditional Ewe music was a significant part of his sociocultural context—he grew up playing the drums for social occasions and traditional African religious events, even though the strict Christian schoolteachers of the late colonial era discouraged such practice. This experience continues to have an impact on his approach to music as he performs and teaches in an international context.

For Kwasi, as he calls himself, music is intrinsically tied up with culture, since learning about or practicing one automatically includes the other, and he shifted between the two terms as we talked during my interview with him at his house in Toronto. We spoke about his work,

[11] See Kwasi's personal website at < http://www.dunyo.com/>.

teaching Ghanaian music (and culture) in Ghana and North America, and as we reminisced about the time I spent in his village in 2007, I was reminded of how my own supervisor, Dr. Michael Frishkopf had met him years earlier while conducting fieldwork in 1988. At that time Kwasi was the lead drummer of the drumming society with which my supervisor was affiliated and where he was conducting research. What it significant is that in those days, everyone knew him as “Fred” (which some family members still call him), but years later, it is “Kwasi” that presents himself as master drummer and teacher in Canada and Ghana. While there were likely many factors involved in this name change, through his use of an Ewe name Kwasi embodies a sense of “tradition” and Ghanaian (Ewe) culture.

During our interview Kwasi spoke strongly against Western influence on Ghanian culture, whether colonial (particularly Christian missionary influence) in origin, or coming out of American cultural imperialism, and stressed the importance of what he considered true Ghanian culture, traditional culture, even for immigrants here in Canada. He suggested that seeing mainstream Canadians interested in Ewe music has drawn Ghanaians to it as well.

> Mmm, they are now getting interested. First, when I came here, many of them don't show interest. But when they've seen that even the, I mean, that Westerners doing their own thing which they cannot do, I think they feel being left behind, so now they have a lot of interest in it (Kwasi Dunyo 2009).

This was important to him, that Ghanaians look to their cultural roots, their identity, even if it meant that some of his Western students are teaching

Ghanaians. Through an unquestioned convergence of music and culture, he was also able to link the two with identity, identity rooted in traditional culture.

> Because [it] will show to them that your culture is your identity. You don't have to leave your culture behind and call yourself a human being. When you leave your culture behind, that means you leave your identity behind. Music is the, I mean, the greater way, not one way. The greater way. Because if you realize your music, and you have a feeling for your music, that shows your identity.
> ...So, I think it is always very essential to show what you are, whom you are. Mhmm. That is you identity (Kwasi Dunyo 2009).

I previously included this excerpt in a longer quotation during my discussion on music and religion, but I include again because it expresses the point I am making regarding the convergence of music and culture through performance. In a sense Kwasi is speaking of the performative aspect of identity described by Stokes. As Ghanaian immigrants express their culture through traditional musical performance, they *become* African.

> Because, Africa in general, everybody's a musician. Because you've seen it. We go as a community. We drum together. Even if you're not playing drum, you're singing, you are dancing, you are clapping, you are doing something, you see, so you are participating. So by participating, your soul is feeling happy that particular time. That is the reason why at our funerals, we play drums to, I mean, may relieve the agony, the sadness, the pain the family is feeling. We reduce it through music—singing, dancing, drumming. That what we do in Africa (Kwasi Dunyo 2009).

Transplanted into a Canadian context, the process of performance, collective performance, transforms Western-influenced West African immigrants as they embody cultural values within their newfound context.

Besides performing for various festivals and events, especially those connected to the Ghanaian community, Kwasi also teaches. His students

are varied—Canadians of different backgrounds, Asian (international) students, African immigrants or their children, but Kwasi maintains that through music he is teaching his culture. Performance is more than simply the exotic display criticized by Puplampu and Tettey, rather Kwasi suggests that,

> The music is a way of life of a particular group. And when you enter into that way of life with them, you understand them better. That's how it is. ...Those people, they are learning the way of Africans, and when they learn that ways, the way they appreciate the music, ...they will have a different mind towards those people whose culture he knows.
> ...[Music is] a doorway to understand one another, or to understand other person. And to know music, shows you the behaviour of the people, the life of the people. You will get it more through music, than just people talking to you.

This metaphor of a doorway references the idea of borders and the boundaries of identity. It recognizes the boundaries, yet also, through performance, provides a way to pass through the boundaries to explore identity and culture. Simon Frith draws on a similar metaphor in his essay "Music and Identity," where he notes that, "what makes music special—what makes it special for identity—is that it defines a space without boundaries (a game without frontiers). Music is thus the cultural form best able to cross borders—sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races and nations" (1996a, 125).

Yet Kwasi's discussion of music, culture and identity is not unproblematic. He unquestioningly speaks of "traditional" music and culture without addressing the contextual changes that have taken place, changes that affect not only his representation of traditional Ewe culture

here in Canada, but also in the “authentic” village locale in Ghana. Traditional Ewe music is no longer the only music performed in Dagbamate, if indeed it ever was. I saw an example of this during funeral celebrations while on a research trip to Ghana in 2007. On one side of the village the drums were set up for the traditional *agbadza* drumming, dancing and singing that remained a significant part of the event, but on the other side I noticed a computer and loudspeakers. After dark the village youth gathered in the village square and spent the night dancing to the rap and reggae inspired hiplife music presented by a local DJ. Kwasi’s own children, although they claim Dagbamate as their home town, are more comfortable in Ashaiman (an urban, shantytown-like suburb of Accra) than the village, and with their father living most of the year in Canada, this same hiplife has become as much a part of their musical culture as the sound and rhythm of the drums playing at the shrine.

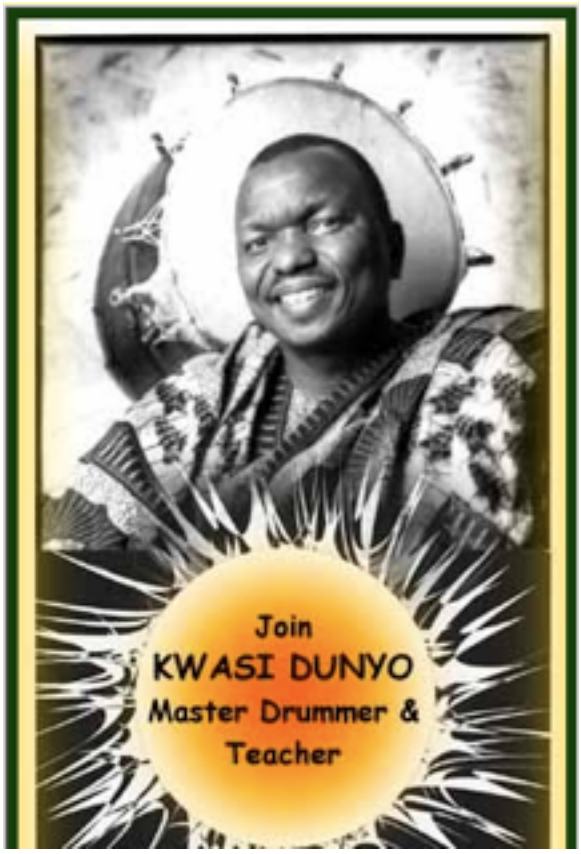

Figure 17: Kwasi Dunyo (<http://www.dunyo.com/>).

Here in Canada the context is shifted even further,

but Kwasi continues to suggest that he represents authentic tradition. He maintains many of his cultural behaviours through food, dress, music and religious beliefs, and presents himself as a traditional master drummer (Figure 17). Through a creative shift in emphasis, this unproblematized statement may be the correct way to describe Kwasi Dunyo, that he represents authentic tradition. Through his behaviour, his choice of wearing "cloth" (traditional Ewe attire) in performance, his very choice to go by his Ewe name "Kwasi" rather than the Western and Christian name, "Frederick," Kwasi represents, he *re*-presents himself as "authentic tradition." According to Dr. Michael Frishkopf (personal communication), this shift took place after Kwasi immigrated to Canada. He suggests this was when Kwasi realized the extent of cultural loss and his ability to respond to this loss by transforming himself into a self-conscious champion of traditional culture.

Kesseke Yeo - Cultural Performance: A window to the world

Like Kwasi, Kesseke[12] was born and raised in West Africa before coming to Canada to teach traditional West African music, but in our conversation he did not present himself as the same source of timeless authenticity as Kwasi. Through references to national and international artists who sing of the present-day ills of society, Kesseke placed his biographical narrative in a larger, globalized, historical context. He referred back to traditional music and culture, but demonstrated an

[12] See Kesseke's personal website at <http://sites.google.com/site/kissofafrica/> or <http://masabo-fana-soro.blogspot.com/> for Masabo Culture Company.

awareness that these these were not simply static or ahistorical. One example of this was when he explained how traditional music was being used as a framework by young musicians in Côte d'Ivoire's contemporary music scene.

There could be several reasons why Kesseke grounded himself historically in this manner. Perhaps the difference was generational, or else due to their experiences growing up in the late colonial Ghana versus post-independence Côte d'Ivoire, with the additional differences between ex-French and ex-British colonial attitudes to culture.

It may have been Kesseke's experience in the *Ballet Nationale* and similar troupes that provided this alternative perspective. Moving to the capital city at a young age, and participating in the cosmopolitan environment of a traveling ensemble would also have shaped his perspective. Kwasi, in contrast, did not leave his village until he was an adult, and his CV does not include international activities until 1992. In addition, Kesseke's experience in the Ballet Nationale and similar troupes consisted of performances that already created cultural hybrids, blending Western performance ideals with music from Côte d'Ivoire's many ethnic groups. Writing about popular music in francophone West Africa, Flemming Harrev refers to such troupes, suggesting that, "an important influence on the modernization of traditional music still affecting the ideas of many musicians has been the formation of a national ballet and its experiments with rearranging traditional music, dances, tales, and costumes into stage

shows for the concert hall" (1992, 217). In a brief anecdote about his childhood, Kesseke described a similar openness to adapting tradition when he mentioned how the very dance which won him his championship was altered from its original form to make the movements more acrobatic (Yeo 2009).

The creation of a national music and dance ensemble was common to the progressive nationalistic cultural policies of many post-independence African countries. Together with regional and national festivals, they served to unify and institutionalize national arts and folklore. As part of the nationalist agenda,

> "[s]tate ballets staged the folklore of the nation, or that of a region or other administrative sub-unit. They intended to construct the identities of these entities and to present them to the citizens, to foreign representatives and to the world public in general...State ballets have been crucial to the building of African national identities after independence in the late 1950s and 1960s" (Polak 2000, 11).

Martin Stokes also notes the role of music in the development of nationalist identities, citing in particular the role of the media in creating a shared aural space (1994, 11), much like Benedict Anderson's imagined communities. The state ballet was also a school, of sorts, for budding transnationalists, since the development of global markets at festivals and World Music concerts, meant that it often serves as a "springboard" for those members who want to make it in the international market, providing them with contacts and experience (Polak 2000, 13).

Here in Canada, Kesseke remains proud of his African heritage and he is proud of being black. At the same time he chose to come to Canada,

"...it's because I loved the country that I am here, to change something for me, to learn something new. That is the reason I am here." A permanent resident, he plans to remain in Canada, perhaps returning to the Côte d'Ivoire for a visit. This desire to find his space in Canada does not mean that he has lost his African identity. He does not really think this is possible. As he explained,

> Well, you know, even if you throw the dry wood into the water, it will never become an alligator. Because you were born in Africa, you learned everything over there before coming here, you can never really change everything. You cannot really change everything. You can claim to do the same thing as them, but at times it, it pulls you back, to return again to your tradition, what you understand better (Yeo 2009, my translation).

One way that he maintains these connections is through music, his collection of CDs by artists from Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and beyond. It is a collection that he brings with him wherever he goes. Through music's ability to gather associations and meanings, listening to these recordings helps Kesseke reconnect with aspects of his African identity. This music that he referred to is the popular music, "la musque moderne" that is based in tradition but speaks to contemporary society. Kesseke explained to me how it has different roles. On one hand, it is simply entertaining, "the youth really entertain themselves, even though there are problems in Africa, but [the music] makes people forget what is happening, like the war, you know? It enlivens the country." On the other hand, this music speaks to the societal ills, and attempts to draw people together to change society and create a communal identity, "So they also try to sing so that

the whole world sings, so that we come back together. Be all the same, yes. And not really black or white, we are the same."

In a similar vein, Kesseke sees his own work as a way of drawing people together by introducing them to his cultural identity and opening a window to the world. As he introduces the children or other participants to music and dance, he opens them up to West African culture. "We are like the birds, sent all over," he told me,

> [and]...the day that that person finds himself in Africa like that...it is not new for him, you know? He has already learned it. Even if it is not really the *true*, that really what he learned here, when he arrives [there] he says, "Oh, this song there, I think I already heard it with that person in Canada. I've already heard this song, or this dance." You see? (Yeo 2009, my translation).

Kesseke recognized that he does not, he cannot teach the fullness of African culture, but he suggests that through his teaching, by learning music and dance, he creates a bridge for his students and a way for them to develop greater understanding and awareness of West African culture.

Drumming and Dance Ensembles in the Diaspora

While Kesseke and Kwasi were the only instructors, several of my other research participants mentioned their involvement in African music and dance ensembles. Suzy was a member of Okoto Dancers, a Nigerian dance group, while Collins, Kofi and Kwabla were all involved on one or more of Kwasi's Ghanaian drumming and dance groups. Another young man, Paul Powoe even created his own pan-African band when he felt like there were not enough opportunities to hear live African music. As they described their experience in these groups, many of them alluded to the

use of music to build a bridge with mainstream Canadian society, much like Kwasi and Kesseke suggested. They also referred to these ensembles or related music practices as helping them maintain and express aspects of their own identity.

Collins spoke to these issues most clearly as he told me about his participation in the African Dance Ensemble at York University in Toronto. This ensemble performs at various Toronto festivals, for community events and for public schools. Collins appreciates being exposed to different musical cultures at these events, and suggested that for both the members of the audience and the ensemble, these performances were an opportunity to learn not only about the music, but also the culture and community that creates it.

> We had a show yesterday, at a public school. It was a celebration of culture all over the world, and yeah, it was great. You get to go to these shows, you see other people's stuff, right. So you're not, right away you realize you're not the main attraction. I mean, there's other cultures and things to be exposed to. That's what comes with being in a music group, right? You get to see all these... Well, not just your own culture, but other people's culture, right? Cause, ah, yesterday I think there were, I saw them, there was something from Poland. Was it from Poland? But it was this, ah, a different perspective on the music. For us, depending on where we're playing, it has specific tempo, rhythm, but them you hear someone else's, and it's a different take on, on. It might be the same bell that they're hitting, but it's a different pattern or timing of it, right? So, you just, it broadens your, your horizon, with different perspectives on culture, on communities, on everything. Everyone brings different take to it. So that's just another (Boahen 2009).

Although critics have suggested that these types of performances offer only superficial encounters with various cultures, actual participation in the ensemble is different. These university ensembles, for example, include

not only Ghanaians and a few other West Africans, but students from other ethnic backgrounds as well.

> I sorta saying, I meet, I meet different kinda, like race or orientation, backgrounds when you go to class, right? Um, Chinese, Jamaicans, some Ghanaians are also in the class. Canadians, like, so many people from different places. Like, people from the Caribbeans and stuff like that, right? Yeah, so it's really awesome, and sometimes some students just get it easily, and some find it tough. And then, one wonderful thing, even though they find it tough, they try hard to get it right. Right? (Kofi Dunyo 2009).

Together these students learn about Ghanian culture through music and dance. Even the basic learning process increases awareness and understanding of Ewe society, as the pedagogical methods emphasize aural learning and the communal nature of the music and dance events. Through participation in the ensemble, students of diverse backgrounds are able to learn about Ghanaian culture. Burns provides an example of this when he writes of Pierrette's experience as a Ghanaian dance instructor at Binghamton University in New York state. Drawing on Slobin's notion of subculture and superculture in relation to diasporan and mainstream musical cultures, he suggests diasporic musicians "actually enrich the superculture by increasing knowledge and awareness of other performing styles and practices" (2009, 138). He then illustrates this by describing Pierrette's experience teaching the university's Harpur Chorale how to accompany one of the dance performances. Rather than agreeing to the director and students' request for a set convention regarding the form of the call-and-response song she was leading, Pierrette countered

by suggested they listen to the line that she led with and sing the appropriate response. Thus Burns notes that,

> [by] teaching them the essence of Ewe antiphonal singing, Pierrette increased the musical knowledge and ability of the Harpur Chorale members. The experience reveals how diasporic musicians like Pierrette can affect the superculture by increasing knowledge and awareness of important world music traditions, while simultaneously improving musicianship and critical introspection toward their own musical traditions (138, 139).

Research participants who were themselves part of West African music and/or dance ensembles also alluded to role of these ensembles and related music practices in their own identity maintenance and expression. This was not always clearly expressed. Suzy, for example, simply noted that her Okoto Dancers performed dances from various regions in Nigeria, "Nigerian mostly, because we're mostly Nigerians." But at the same time there was something about the music that spoke to her.

> Um, I think each [unclear] is a different. Sometimes I, I remember when I was in the dance group there was a more very traditional. It was just drums and singing. And I loved it. There was something, I don't know if the words is rhythmic, but there was just something so moving about it (Pinnick 2009).

Although Suzy simply noticed something moving in the music, other participants were more articulate about how learning music and participation in these ensembles provided them with a space to negotiate their multiple, often hybrid identities. Collins spoke to this most clearly. As he explained to me, joining the African Dance Ensemble has provided him with a space to bring together his life experiences. It is a place for him to

recognize his Ghanaian heritage, emphasize it, and share it with the other members of the ensemble, whatever their background may be.

> And that's exactly what the group does. A lot of us that's been there for a while, that's what we have in common, right? We realize, you know, we're in Canada, great place, but, the hybrid part of it, it's very easy for one to overlap the other. And although I'm a proud Canadian, at the same time I realize I also have something that I'm bringing to Canada. Something to make it the multicultural place that we have. So it, it's important to maintain that part of it. I feel it's helpful to everybody, it's music. If we were to get out there and start playing drums, I'm sure a couple of people [unclear] enjoying Canadian lifestyle. Yeah, it's important to definitely keep people like that around you, keep ah, that type of music. That way you, you could add to the other types of music in society (Boahen 2009).

Although many young Ghanaian Canadians may find ensemble's the traditional music old fashioned, or as Collins phrased it, "slided down," and "devalued," Collins himself has been able to use traditional music as a means of learning about his Ghanaian cultural heritage and asserting this aspect of his own identity. He feels it is crucial to remember and integrate his life experiences.

> *Have you gone back to Ghana at all since then?*
>
> No, and that's why I'm very glad that I found Kwasi. Yeah, cause if it wasn't for that I don't know how else I could've, you know. Cause it's it's a different culture here, it's a different way of doing things here right? So, even when my, my language that I speak, because been such a long time that I've been in here, I have, ah, there's this tendency where we speak the language but we mix it with English (Boahen 2009).

Although Kwasi is himself Ewe, and teaches Ewe drumming and dance in the university ensemble, he is familiar with the drumming of many different ethnic traditions in Ghana. For this reason Collins took private lessons with Kwasi, to learn more about the traditional drumming from his own

Ashante ethnic tradition. He suggested that these lessons helped him gain a deeper understanding of the Twi language and Ashante customs.

> It's, it's fun actually, because the thing is, with music, it transcend. I feel it transcends over the language barrier, right? And especially where Kwasi, um, he's Ewe, but he can play on any type of music. ...Yeah. Yeah. I have actually, um, learned, I had a private class with him just, you know, this winter. And I, I learned how to play the *adowa* which is the Ashanti talking drums. ...So he actually taught me that. And, it's impressive because although he's Ewe, that's some very old Twi language and traditions, and you know? So, that like I was saying, it goes past, you know, where we're from, right? The music is just, if you enjoy it it's a universal thing (Boahen 2009).

Even though he may consider music to be generally "a universal thing," for Collins traditional music is intrinsically tied up with culture and identity. When I asked him about the role that music might play if he had children here in Canada, he linked music alongside language as one of the tools he would use to give them a sense of their Ghanaian heritage.

> It would play a huge role. Because if, if I have kids here, ah, we're all staying here, it's, I can't show them Ghana in the way of if we were in Ghana. It would be different. The tools I would have at my disposal would be the language, the music. And that's my kids would be forced to play music. It's the only way for them to have an understanding of, you know?
>
> *The traditional music as well?*
>
> Yup. Definitely traditional. That's where they have to start. (laughs) (Boahen 2009).

Thus for Collins, the traditional music is more than simply a means of representing identity, but also a means of maintaining, or even creating a sense of Ghanaian identity.

Summary

West African drumming and dance has played a significant role in the lives of many of my research participants. Through this connection

between traditional music ensembles and cultural identity, music develops not only as a means to represent cultural identity, but to maintain or even create these elements in the diasporic context. Groups such as York University's African Dance Ensemble, Okoto Dancers and Masabo Culture Company provide the opportunity for West African Canadians to negotiate their life experiences and explore their multiple, often hybrid identities. This is the case for both those who performed while still in their "home" cultures, along with others who learned traditional music and dance in the diasporan context, where music performance is not simply an exotic display of the Other, but provides an opportunity for immigrants to reclaim their identities and share their culture with fellow Canadians.

Kente: The woven cloth

Chapter 7: Conclusions

In this final chapter I return to the my guiding questions, and draw together the issues that they raised for the West African Canadians with whom I spoke. Again I would like to raise the metaphor of *kente* fabric. I have mentioned its relationship to cultural heritage and identity in Ghana, with its connection to royalty and formal occasions. Over the past decades however, the very years since my participants have arrived in Canada, Doran Ross points out that this "royal cloth" has been "increasingly recognized as 'African' by peoples of all colors, and it has come to symbolize African identity in the Diaspora" (Ross 193). It seems fitting, therefore, that I now draw on *kente* as a metaphor to look at music and identity among the one section of the new African diaspora in Canada. Yet unlike the *kente* cloth, which has now been appropriated and used in a "catchall design" (200) for a homogenized Africa-as-Motherland (adorning hats and bags and greeting cards), the relationship between music and identity remains complex and linked to transnational ties between Canada and other "host" and "home" communities.

Musical taste, performance and identity

Canadians often pose questions of identity. Given the multicultural nature of this country, and the imposing presence of the United States with its effect on Canadian culture and media, the formation of a Canadian identity is no simple endeavor. In the discourse of multiculturalism,

Canada is described as a “cultural mosaic” (against the U.S. “melting pot”), recognizing and validating Canadians’ different backgrounds and cultural heritage (Pabst 2008). Yet this emphasis on cultural heritage, on ethnicity and being “from” somewhere takes on an almost hegemonic force. There is at times an insistence on ethnic affiliation, and although the tenet is to promote all cultures equally, there is a certain hierarchy within Canadian society (Fleras 2010, 121, James 2003, 210-211). Indeed, even the recognition of ethnic and cultural background through “hyphenated identities” builds this point. These identities are celebrated, but unequally applied (for example it is rare to find European-Canadians) and so it leads to “distinguishing *real* Canadians from *mere* Canadians” (Puplampu and Tettey 2005, 40). The expectation of an ethnic affiliation among Canadians has other ramifications, including economical consequences. For example, through this emphasis on cultural heritage, there may develop the commodification of cultural practices, and performance or transmission of these practices becomes a profession, as is the case with Kwasi Dunyo. Thus West African Canadians find themselves in this complex situation as they negotiate their own identities in connection with the diaspora and their new country. Music provides one means of navigating this rocky terrain, and, when used by the scholar or researcher, music is a tool for sociocultural understanding.

The connection between music and identity is not straightforward. Listening to a particular song or piece of music does not automatically

create identity and shape the person listening to that music. Yet at the same time, it does play a role in the creation of identity, the representation of self, and the individual's sense of connection to others with shared musical tastes. The associations that are carried by the music, the way music acts as an icon and index provide an explanation of how this takes place. Music also provides a discourse, a language and material culture with which individuals can express themselves.

For the participants that I spoke with in this study, music was a key signifier of their identity and a means through which they could express aspects of their identity. Many of them saw music as a means of maintaining connections with their home cultures, whether the songs were linked with their own memories or created new insights into contemporary life in the home cultures. Music can both express and help create these connections.

Music is also a way to help forge social bonds and create a sense of community here in Canada. These social bonds develop not only within ethnic or national communities, but also more broadly among West African Canadians, other African Canadians, or society in general. Through musical performance along with the other activities hosted by various African related associations (during dinners, festivals, celebrations etc.) social bonds develop between individuals who otherwise might never have met, due to differences in class, ethnicity, religion and spacial proximity in the home country. In other contexts music helps (or sometimes hinders)

to develop a sense of community between West African Canadians and Canadians generally. Here music provides the first step towards an exchange of cultural understanding, particularly in the case of music and dance ensembles that include participants from a variety of different backgrounds. Decisions regarding the music at Holyrood Mennonite Church are likewise attempts to help create a sense of community within the members. Music places a role in this conscious effort, even when it does not always succeed in its purpose.

One significant point that has emerged from this study relates to West African Canadian identification with popular musical styles, such hip hop, reggae, or even gospel, as well as the deliberate representation of cultural identity through traditional music ensembles. African American or Afro-Caribbean music holds an ambiguous status for members of the "New" African diaspora in Canada. This music part of the global culture and thus has also been adapted and used in their "home" cultures, but although the music is still tied to the diasporic experience in the United States and the Caribbean, there a perception that the roots are in Africa. Although many of my participants enjoy and identify with popular music genres that have developed out of the African diaspora, I have suggested that identification with these musics does not directly imply an identification with the African American or Afro-Caribbean cultural identities from which they originated. Rather, I point to instances of how the music is used to refer back to West Africa, to maintain connections with my

participants' home cultures and even create a sense of Nigeria or Ghanaian or Ashante identity.

This "referring back" has implications for broader Canadian culture as well, since music from the United States plays a large role in popular media. It is true that the ambiguity does not translate outside of the African context, but if hip hop and reggae reference recent developments and incarnations from West Africa along with their African American or Afro-Caribbean origins, then similar experiences and associations may develop among Canadian young people when they adapt and adopt this music for their own purposes.

The question that remains is how these representations relate to a sense of being Canadian. This is not a new question, even in an African Canadian context. Kelly raises these issues in connection with mediazation and identity among Black Canadian youth (2004, 195), while Walcott (1997) and Clarke (1996) also question what it means to be African Canadian. In response to her own question, Kelly acknowledges the commonsense homogenization of Black among the high school youths in her study, but points out that "when analysis of their discourse is undertaken, they position themselves within a variety of subjectivities and identities. Their understandings of blackness within a Canadian social context are hybrid rather than unified; a hybridity that recognizes the heterogeneity of blackness" (2004, 197).

In the West African Canadian context, I recognize a similar hybridity that has developed out of my research participants' individual experiences. They must position themselves in a multicultural society where experiences of immigration and life in a new society are shared not only with others from their own diasporic communities, but with other communities as well. Some of them, such as other African or Caribbean (and Black) communities share issues of blackness, although this is only one framework or discourse of identity that ought to be addressed. Yet it is in these experiences from within diasporic communities that I see my participants using music to negotiate their identities. Here hybridity is a useful term since the music itself becomes hybrid, a fusion of different elements. This fusion is foregrounded in some situations, such as Kwabla's rap video with its distinct aural and visual representations of Ghana, Toronto and elements of Black youth culture, but the blending of music and culture is present in other examples as well. Thomas must find ways to incorporate Liberian gospel music into a Canadian Mennonite church context, while Kwasi and Kesseke teach and perform their traditional music with Canadians from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. I am even reminded of an ensemble in Edmonton called Wajjo Drummers that draws together diverse cultures from Ghana and Scotland, through what as been described as "an unlikely collaboration of traditional African drums and bagpipe" (Dart 2010).

Future research

Yet while I emphasize and foreground the contemporary, Canadian context of my research participants, there remains the need to consider their story in the broader context of Africans and Blacks in Canada, which must nonetheless make reference to the United States. As Pabst suggests,

> [b]ecause Canadians are frequently exposed to American (U.S.) and black American discourses and ideologies, and because those discourses and ideologies often use the term black as a stand-in for black American, what arose was a notion of blackness as an American phenomenon (2008, 121).

This notion of American blackness is also important when considering the experience of West Africans in the United States, an avenue for further study that would compliment this research. Although there has not been focused attention on the matter of musical taste or performance and identity, I believe that there are several issues that would play an important role in such a discussion.

One key factor in this discussion of identity in the United States has to do with race and racial identity with the ensuing tensions due to contemporary and historical racism. Clark points out that this issue has emerged as a critical factor in American society. She also notes that except for Black Americans there has been recognition and validation of the different ethnic and cultural groups that make up racial groups in the United States (2009, 257). Clark recognizes that until recently there has

been little need to distinguish between race and ethnicity among the Black community in the United States, but suggests that

> African Americans, as they are perceived today, are not a race, but an ethnic group within the Black/African race. The unique characteristic of the African American community is that African Americans started out as a racial group...Through the years and the generations, memories of Africa progressively faded and a new group emerged, based on both an African past and an American reality. During this process, African Americans were transformed from a racial group with whose plural identity had given birth to a distinctive and unique culture (259, 260).

Another issue, as I mention earlier, is that the context for African immigration to the United States is different than that of Canada. Given the large numbers of African Americans and Black immigrants from the Caribbean, members of the "New" African diaspora have been nearly invisible (Arthur 2000; Takyi & Boate 2006), but at the same time, the growth of this new diaspora, along with immigrants from the Caribbean and their families has led to a questions about African American identity, blackness, and what it means to be a true African American (Blyden and Akiwumi 2009; Wellington 2008; Hollinger 2008; Clark 2009). How might this affect the role of musical taste and identity among West Africans in the United States? Studies on specific West African communities in the United States do note the use of West African music at cultural events or in their practice of cultural traditions (see Canon 2005; Olupona and Gemignani 2009), but others point to the strong pull in affiliating with African American culture, particularly among the youth. Waters (1994) and Forman (2002) discuss this in relation to young West Indian and Somalian

immigrants and their children. They suggest that both fitting in and responding to discrimination are key factors in this identification.

Here in Canada, we often suggest that race and racism are not Canadian problems, in part because the racial inequalities in the United States are so overt and, as Pabst describes it, “shockingly obvious” (2008, 118). Yet it may be all the more difficult to deal with because it is so subtle. The issue of racism did not enter into my discussions with my research participants, and so I do not discuss it at length. However it is an issue that I must recognize as being present nonetheless, underneath my discussions and providing a backdrop to the struggles that some of my participants have gone through here in Canada, whether related to work or stereotypes and cultural Othering. It may be that my own background as Euro-Canadian affects both my own leading of the discussion, as well as my participants’ responses in this area, and this issue ought to be addressed in further research.

One key point that has developed out of this study, and likewise should be pursued in future research, is the way that music is able to express identity and help form or maintain connections not only for first generation West African Canadians, who have memories of the “homeland” on which to build musical associations, but for the second generation as well. The difference seems to be how these indexical identity associations are developed and expressed. Perhaps this is also a process of “ethnicization,” and ought to be addressed within the discourse

of Canadian multiculturalism. As Suzy's experience points out, the lack of language and cultural skills does not inhibit her identification with Nigerian music, she simply focuses on elements that are more musical rather than textual. Yet at the same time, Philomina and Kofi do make valid points that young people born and raised in Canada lack some of the cultural and experiential references that are key to way they, as first generation West African Canadians, are able to formulate their identity through music. There may be a shared sense of nostalgia and emotional ties to the "homeland" between the first and second generations, but the cause, the memory that catalyzes the indexical associations come from their different experiences. These are intriguing questions for further study among second generation Canadians, or young people who have truly grown up here in Canada.

There remain other questions as well that lead to further study in this area, adding to the research on music and identity among West Africans in Canada and discussion of music in diasporic contexts. This was a focused study on a sampling of West African Canadians, and as such suggests several key areas to consider in future research. Given my limitations in regards to participant selection, I cannot speak in great detail to issues of gender and the experience of women in connection with musical taste. Their experience should not be ignored, particularly because they are likely to play a key role in how their children respond to West African music growing up. I similarly have little information about

older West African Canadians who have been in Canada for an extended period of time. My interviews with Suzy and Philomina have alluded to the many changes in technology that have occurred during the past thirty years, and it would be interesting to focus attention on role of media in the case of music and identity. Additionally, it would be helpful to see how expressions of musical taste surface in music-cultural activities. For example further exploration of the role of drumming and dance ensembles, could note pedagogical approaches taken by the instructors and whether there is a deliberate consciousness in regards to cultural transmission. Similarly, research at cultural events and celebrations to could take place to see how participants interact with music in a social setting, while attention to ipods, personal music players and other musical collections would confirm the relationship between participants' listening habits and the music they discuss.

As I conclude this discussion, let me return to my kente metaphor. The coloured threads have been woven into strips and sewn together, but although it is handwoven and unique, there are other pieces of fabric out there, sharing colours, patterns or of characteristics. This thesis is likewise a part of the broader discourse on music and identity. As research continues in this area, this thesis will join other works to become part of the greater understanding of music and identity among West Africans in Canada, the United States, others from the "new" African diaspora or even other diasporic groups.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Introductory Interview Questions/Topics

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? (How long you have been in Canada?/Where you are from? or Where is your family from? (nationality/ethnicity/language maybe)

    Also:

- Where did you live before coming to Canada? (urban/rural? refugee? multiple places?)
- Family (married/not, children?, parents? siblings etc)
    - Where do they live?
- If I were to ask you about who you are, how would you describe yourself? How do you see yourself? What are the most important aspects of your identity?/who you are?

2. Tell me about your relationship with music:

- Do you perform/sing/play? What? What kind of music?
    - Why do you perform this music? How does it make you feel?
    - What languages do you perform in? What instruments do you play?
    - How did you learn this music? Where do you perform? Why?
- What music do you like to listen to? How often do you listen to music?
    - What genres/kinds of music do you like to listen to?
    - Why do you like this music?
- How much of the music you listen to comes from W. Africa?
    - What genres or musicians/performers do you listen to? Why do you like them?
    - How do you listen to this music? Where do you hear this music? (Dances? At home/car? Cultural events?) When? Do you go to live performances? Do you listen to recordings? Where/How do you get these recordings? Do you listen by yourself? With friends? Family?
    - How would you describe the W. African music that you listen to? What kind of music is it? (traditional/cosmopolitan/urban?) What languages are used in this music? What instruments?
    - Why do you like this music?
    - Where does it come from? Does it help you make a statement about who you are or how you see yourself?

3. Do you think that the music that you listen to relates to who you are, and how you see yourself? Some people suggest that the arts, in particular music, can create cultural ties and relate to how people understand their identity. What do you think about this? Do you agree? What is your own experience?

Appendix B: Key popular music genres

Highlife

Highlife first developed in the urban centers of Ghana in through a fusion of indigenous African, European, and African diasporic elements. As Collins (2005) explains, the term was coined in the 1920s to describe the "highlife," or high-class life of those who were able to attend the elite venues of early dance bands that orchestrated local melodies and street music for European orchestras. The term then became a generic name for several early varieties of Ghanaian popular music. In the 1950s and 60s the E.T. Mensah's dance-band the Tempos developed a jazz and calypsos influenced style that became very popular (136). In the following decades technical innovations and the influence of other musical styles led to the creation of developments such 'Burgher' highlife in the 1980s, with a disco sound and the use of drum machines and synthesizer horns. By the 1990s this newer sound also incorporated vernacular rap, reggae and techno-pop hybrids. The lyrics of these newer styles emphasize the topic of romantic love rather than the philosophical and social commentary of the older highlife (138).

Related Websites:[13]

West African Highlife Band <http://www.africanmusicsource.com/>

Highlife Haven <http://highlifehaven.blogspot.com/>

Ghana Music Videos: Highlife <http://www.ghanamv.com/category.php?cat=highlife>

YouTube examples:

"Classic Highlife" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xyTYDNdTz8>

AfroBeat

Nigerian Fela Anikulapo-Kuti developed Afro-beat in the late 1960s as a fusion of jazz, soul, and West African highlife music. He was strongly influenced by a trip to the United States in 1969 where he met black militants and was introduced to many African American artists. Returning to Nigeria he developed the Afro-beat style, blending African rhythms with a large jazz horn section and politicized lyrics that spoke of black consciousness, the colonial heritage, government corruption and events in contemporary society. His Pan-African approach and his music have become famous throughout Nigeria and Africa. By the late 1980s, it had become one of the dominant styles in contemporary Nigerian music (Stapleton 1987, 63-67; Collins 1992, 69-77).

Related Websites:

Afropop Worldwide: Afrobeat <http://www.afropop.org/explore/style_info/ID/24/Afrobeat/>

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[13] All websites were active as of April 12, 2010.

YouTube examples:

"Classic AfroBeat" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqq9KXzDjMY>

"Fela in Performance (1971)" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-SQH94Pifc>

Jùjú

Jùjú is on of the dominant styles of contemporary Yoruba popular music in Nigeria. The sound is more relaxed than highlife, with a guitar-band dance music sound. It combines the traditional functions of praise songs and social dance music that became popular in the 1970s after the Nigerian civil war, and remained a significant genre until the 1990s. As a popular musical style, it is disseminated through mass media, but is also performed in urban clubs and at the many life cycle events hosted throughout southwestern Nigeria (Waterman 1990a, 82; 1990b, 372). As Stapleton points out, "the style demonstrates Africa's ability to absorb Western ideas and then rechannel them in a purely African fashion" (1987, 78). King Sunny Adé and his band, the African Beats, was one of the most popular jùjú musicians. Like all jùjú music, his songs "[have] a strong religious and moral bias," with the lyrics frequently speaking to contemporary events and "the happenings in society" (Collins 1992, 89).

Related Websites:

Afropop Worldwide: Juju
<http://www.afropop.org/explore/style_info/ID/18/Juju/>

YouTube examples:

"King Sunny Ade - Jealousy (side 1) <http://www.youtube.com/user/groovemonzter#p/u/7/bzzjrhz6wQM>

Reggae

Reggae emerged in the 1970s onto the international pop music scene, a form of Jamaican pop music that developed out of a fusion of earlier Jamaican musical styles, African drumming techniques, and American rhythm and blues, soul, gospel and rock music (Savishinsky 1994, 21). As part of the Rastafari socioreligious movement, reggae borrows from pan-Africanism and serves as "a...symbol and expression of defiance, independence, racial pride and solidarity" among Black youth (20). With Bob Marley as one of the most enduring and influential musical and ideological influences, reggae has had a significant impact on urban popular music in many West African countries, both francophone as well as anglophone. Although their music was originally very similar to the Jamaican prototype, West African musicians such as Alpha Blondy "have created a totally new form of syncretic African pop music, singing for the most part in their own local languages and employing indigenous African instruments, melodies and rhythms in their mix" (25).

Related Websites:

African Reggae
<http://www.african-reggae.com/>

African Reggae: An Overview
<http://www.rootsworld.com/reggae/reggaeafrica.html>
YouTube examples:
"Alpha Blondy - Journalistes en danger"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ss-2UpUdFcI>
"Black Prophet - Mama Africa"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjIFst9kY_4>

Mbalax
For many years the Senegalese popular music scene drew on Afro-Cuban music, a modern cosmopolitan sound that nonetheless shared a history with Africa. It was not until the 1970s that Senegalese musicians developed a modern popular music genre that incorporated their own languages and musical styles. Mbalax, as this new genre was called, was "dominated by Wolof rhythms and percussion instruments," (Collins 1992 239) in a fusion of the Latin dance orchestra sound and the musical traditions of rural Senegal sabar drumming. Youssou N'Dour was the forerunner of these developments, and through his emphasis on religious as well as provocative sociopolitical themes, he continues to "present himself as an electronic griot, firmly grounded in 'local' networks of clientage and praise singing" (Shain 2002, 99). As Tang points out, "the incorporation of Wolof percussion & song texts reflecting traditional values and topical social issues such as Islam, polygamy, and unemployment, this music had a specifically Senegalese sound and meaning" (2007, 157). Ndaga is the name given to a similar genre in neighbouring Gambia (Aisha 2009).
Related Websites:
Youssou N'Dour Official Site
<http://www.youssou.com/>
Afropop Worldwide: Senegal
<http://www.afropop.org/explore/country_info/ID/6/Senegal/>
YouTube examples:
"Youssou N'Dour: au nom d'Afrique"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYMRWoJaqdM>
"Viviane - Yaako Tay - Bataclan Café LIVE!"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIwHIiEAWic>

Hiplife
Over the past twenty years hip hop has become the leading global youth culture. As with reggae, it arrived in West Africa as part of the cross-fertilization of music between the African diaspora and the continent, and began to be adapted and altered by musicians to speak to their local context. In Ghana this developed into "hip life," a hybrid of rap or sometimes reggae, with highlife. A blog on the genre explains that "while hiplife began as simply Twi lyrics over hip-hop beats, it has evolved (especially in the last five years or so) into a music that in most cases

includes highlife and/or palmwine rhythms, melodic/harmonic movements, and vocal styles (through the use of characteristic phrasing, timbre, and cadence)" (thursdayborn 2005) One of my participants explained to me that the lyrics are often serious; like many other traditional and popular music styles in West Africa, they speak to the contemporary sociopolitical situation, deliberately singing in local languages such as Ewe, Ga or Twi, as well as English and pidgin, or switching freely between them. The music may also be simply for entertainment, with songs about relationships or money.

Related Websites:

the hiplife complex <http://thehiplifecomplex.blogspot.com/>

African Hip hop <http://www.africanhiphop.com/>

Hiplife lovers <http://www.hiplifelovers.com/>

Ghana Music Videos: Hiplife
<http://www.ghanamv.com/category.php?cat=hiplife>

YouTube examples:

"Praye - efie ne fie"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnKWaaPBo4A>

Gospel

West African gospel music developed out of a complex interplay between the Christian church music, West African popular music and Western musical genres. Gospel comes in a variety of different musical styles, using similar instrumentation and music as popular music genre, but with religious lyrics. (Bumbeh 2009, Collins 2004, 420). The lyrics often relate to the adoration and glorification of God, and with language shifting between vernacular languages, French, and English depending on the country of origin. Some songs are inspirational, or didactic in that they speak of how Christians should live their lives (Bumbeh 2009). Collins also points to large percentage of female singers, suggesting that their performance of gospel music was more acceptable than if they were to simply sing in popular music genres (2004, 420).

Related Websites:

Ghana Music Videos: Gospel
<http://www.ghanamv.com/category.php?cat=gospel>

YouTube Examples:

Kanve "You Will Carry My Load"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PF-yJcM8ck>

"Togo - John Star"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyFRCBU6hAY>

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