Community, Identity, Belonging, and Jazz: An Exploration of Montréal's Jazz Scene

An Autoethnographic Study

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Abstract

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This autoethnographic study examines the notions of identity, belonging, and community formation within the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. For my research, I understand Jazz as more than a genre that encompasses Hip-Hop, Blues, R&B, and other related styles, to develop an inclusive and holistic understanding of the musical and educational subcultures formed under the umbrella of Jazz. I employ music as a form of data collection, analysis, and discovery, by engaging in narrative discourse mixed with the visual and qualitative methodology of photography, field notes and music memoing and narrative vignettes. I used thematic analysis to explain themes that emerged throughout the research. The main findings of the study offer critical insights into how Jazz can transcend space, how self-exploration as a Black Anglophone provides a lens to understand belonging within the community, and how the improvisational nature of Jazz is connected to resilience, which has helped build and maintain the Black Anglophone community in Montreal.

Résumé

Cette étude autoethnographique examine les notions d'identité, d'appartenance et de formation communautaire au sein de la communauté noire anglophone de Montréal. Dans le cadre de ma recherche, je considère le Jazz comme plus qu'un genre englobant le hip-hop, le blues, le R&B et d'autres styles connexes, afin de développer une compréhension inclusive et holistique des sous-cultures musicales et éducatives qui se sont formées sous l'égide du Jazz. J'utilise la musique comme moyen de collecte, d'analyse et de découverte de données, en m'engageant dans un discours narratif mêlé à la méthodologie visuelle de la photographie, des notes de terrain, des mémos musicaux et des vignettes narratives. J'ai utilisé l'analyse thématique pour trianguler mes données et expliquer les thèmes qui ont émergé tout au long de la recherche. Les principales conclusions de l'étude offrent un éclairage essentiel sur la façon dont le Jazz peut transcender l'espace, comment l'exploration de soi en tant qu'anglophone noir offre une perspective pour comprendre l'appartenance à la communauté, et comment la nature improvisée du Jazz est corrélée à la résilience, ce qui a contribué à bâtir et à maintenir la communauté noire anglophone de Montréal.

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First of all, I am grateful for the experience and the cultural knowledge my mother Sonya has provided me in all my years of being alive, I would not be here today if it was not for her consistency in my wellbeing. Also, I would like to remember my Grandpa Matthew Herman Mullone, who always told me about my Creole history and made sure I was proud of who I am. Next, I give my uncle Don the gratitude for making sure that I could stay connected to our family and culture even though I am many miles away.

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I want to thank all my ancestors from past to present, I hope to honour you with my words.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Vignette 1: Who I Am

My musical journey has not always been straightforward, nor has it been a luxurious experience through and through. Across my musical career, I have encountered numerous obstacles, hoops, and loops. For example, I worked with some producers who were academically trained in Jazz; they felt the need to belittle me in studios and ostracize me, making me feel as if my knowledge was invalid and lacking, which created an uncomfortable hierarchy where I did not feel accepted or valuable. Luckily, I always knew music was how I wanted to express myself and I found value in myself.

As I traveled from state to state, province to province, I felt my history was consistently overlooked or not fully understood. I believed society only wanted to reduce me to their assigned colour and nothing more, which therefore made me question my very existence. Music gave me a chance to explore myself and the history of my culture. Not having a family to fall back on once I left Texas, my identity, in a sense, was lost, and although the stories of my grandparents still live with me, music allowed me to explore myself again.

Now, here I am, in Vieux Port, Montreal, on a rooftop, and it's early August. The summer is beginning to fade, and dusk comes earlier and earlier. I am releasing my first professional EP, *Unraveled Mind*, an exploration of vulnerability and introspection, blended with Jazzy, melancholic melodies. As I nervously pick up my guitar, all I can think is, do not forget your words and who you are. Imposter syndrome is setting in, and it is time for me to reveal myself to this audience. This is one of the first times in a long time that I can remove the mask of false perception and strip away the preconceived notions. Genres such as Jazz, Hip-Hop, Blues, R&B and many others I could name have always been "Black Music" to me. Since I was a

teenager, I have moved around extensively; there is no doubt that I have grown accustomed to other cultures and been introduced to variations of the world. But as I was performing, I wanted to be true to myself and represent the identity that I have always hidden from others. It was during that performance that I became part of a community, where the open ears and sharing of notes that encapsulated my identity were heard for the first time. I felt I was honouring my ancestors with my songs.

All my life I have been caught up in the middle of what it means to be Black in North America. As a person of Creole descent with deep roots in the South of the United States, it is inevitable that I have had to navigate multiple perceptions of being Black. Creole folk in the South are located somewhere in the middle of colour politics because depending on your skin tone and hair texture, Creole folks can be lumped into many different ethnicities, but we consider ourselves "Les gens de Couleur libre" (Bryan, 2000, p. 42).

Creole is native to Louisiana and "is like a famous gumbo of the state, a little bit of everything, making whole, delightfully flavored, quite distinctive, and wholly unique" (Dunbar-Nelson, 2000, p. 9). Black is an all-encompassing term in North America and complicates the cultural experience because racism denounces the unique ethnic formations and places of origins, reducing individuals to a colour (Ibrahim, 2017). Just as it has in the USA, being Black in Canada has conjured its own set of complex issues. As I write this I expand on Walcott's (2003) idea Blackness as fluid. As a Black American in Canada, the fluidity of my identity is contextual to both my history and lived experience.

This autoethnographic research utilizes Jazz music and my own educational experiences as lenses to gain a deeper understanding of identity, belonging, and community. I use my own experiences as data and aim to contribute to knowledge for myself and other Black Anglophones in Montreal. I am a guitarist, singer, and active musician in Montreal, Quebec. Important to my research is how I relate to Jazz as a pedagogy, meaning that it is "one of collectivity, calling in, and resistance to anti-Blackness and white-centric ways of doing and being" (Griffin et al., 2023, pg. 410). Jazz, in my experience, has been an educational intervention that has helped me understand Black North American culture while providing historical context for Black resistance to systemic oppression, all while helping me build community.

In Montreal, the Black Anglophone community has been systematically underrepresented in Montreal society (Williams, 1989). In recent years, celebrations of this history have come to the forefront of popular media, such as in the TV show *The Porter* which finally centers Black ambition on television (Parris, 2022) and *Dear Jackie,* a documentary that pays homage to the past contributions of the culturally rich historically Black neighbourhood of Little Burgundy (Lobo, 2022). These recent contributions center Jazz as a cornerstone of the cultural and social contributions of Black Anglophones whose legacies continue today. This research discusses the anti-Blackness that created imbalance for equal opportunity socially and politically, producing ideas that disrupt recognitions of achievements (Collins et al., 2023).

Through these connections and throughout my thesis, I examine how autoethnographic research in music has facilitated a deeper understanding of my sense of belonging, community and identity. I will move forward with explanation of my background and motivation that prompted me to do this thesis.

Musical Background and Motivation

Through the continuous process of understanding how others view me and how I view myself, I always wondered why it felt that the education systems I was and continue to be a part of underrepresented "Black[1]" cultures' contributions to society. Upon reflection, I realized that most of the knowledge I have acquired as a learner stems from being part of a community and learning alongside others. As a minority going to school, the lack of Black intellectual traditions subtly conveyed to me that my ancestors had not contributed significantly to society. Taken together, my complicated educational experiences have left me with a fragmented identity and a lack of belonging.

In Quebec, where I now live, the Black Anglophone community is historically considered to "occupy the lowest social place" (Williams & Walker, 2021, p. 3). Outside of Quebec, Comrie (2022) states that "Anti-Blackness has taken hold, leading many Black people (and communities) to internalize this sense of inferiority and question their worth, both as individuals and as a collective" (p. 76). I have been releasing music under the artist name MAZA since 2021 and have performed as an artist in Montreal since 2023. Prior to living in Montreal, I played guitar in many bands on the West Coast of Canada.

After spending about four months in Montreal, I received a grant from the Canadian Arts Council, which enabled me to develop a deeper connection to the community here. For instance, I set aside time to be active by forming relationships with musicians through frequenting jams,

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[1] Black is an umbrella term and not meant to take away from anyone's ethnicity.

musical workshops, designing performances, and creating a piece of tangible music available to the public, my first EP called *Unraveled Mind*. During this time, I also began volunteering and participating in community-based work with the Black Community Resource Center. I participated in a year-long research and writing project that led to me co-authoring a book entitled *Where They Stood: The Evolution of the Black Anglophone Community in Montreal.* Shortly after being accepted into the MA program in Education Studies at Concordia University, I received a SSHRC MA CGS to continue my research and music. Over the last two years, I have played over 70 shows in Montreal, went on a short tour across Canada, and had two musical residencies: one at the Dépanneur Café and the other at Super Condiments.

Dépanneur Café is a staple in the music scene, where musicians from all backgrounds perform. Super Condiments is a family-owned bistro that aims to become more involved in the community, and I was the first performer to introduce live music to this space. I share this background and experience because, as I discuss in the following pages, this autoethnographic research examines my own experiences of building community, fostering a sense of belonging, and how identity is shaped through community, as well as understanding how music serves as an educational tool in preserving history.

From my adolescence, I have grappled with my place in society. Music has been my guiding light, fueling my self-discovery, fostering a sense of belonging, and teaching me the art of community building. Whether it was in my homeland of Texas, the coasts of the Pacific, or the vibrant city of Montreal, music has been my constant companion, helping me make sense of who I am in relation to others and my place in the world. My research is a direct response to anti-Blackness in Quebec and elsewhere. Thus, not just seeing Jazz as a genre of music or

entertainment, but as a pedagogical tool in education. Jazz as pedagogy teaches the community to deeply value and understand the humanity and diversity of the Black community, not only as members of society but also as educators who center knowledge in love and humanity (Griffin et al., 2023). In this autoethnographic project, I position my community-based educational experiences to create research focusing on the historical relevance, community cohesion, and sense of belonging within the Black Anglophone community in Montreal, Quebec.

Thesis Outline

In this first chapter, I have briefly described my connection to Jazz music and community-based education. I have introduced my research topic and my relationship to the work I will be presenting throughout this thesis. I also presented my motivation, personal interests, as well as a brief summary of the literature. Later in this chapter, I will proceed to a literature review that focuses on various ways of understanding Jazz music in relation to belonging, community, and identity.

I open my literature review with a discussion of the history of Jazz and its origins. Next, the focus shifts to literature that outlines the history of Black Anglophone presence in Montreal, the historical communal connection to Jazz, and how it was used in Black Anglophone identity formation, as well as in creating a sense of belonging for the Black Anglophone community. I proceed with literature that sets the tone for understanding the displacement of Montreal's Jazz hub and the shift from Saint Antoine to Little Burgundy, followed by the historical relevance of racism in education. I will also present a brief introduction to my research design, methodology, and data analysis plan. Lastly, I will introduce my research questions leading up to Chapter Three.

In Chapter Two, I will introduce my methodology, including my methods of data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations that were taken throughout the research process. Moving into Chapter three, I will present my findings and analysis through vignettes and a musical memo/song based on my findings about community, belonging, and identity. Chapter four will offer a brief discussion and conclusion, where I highlight the relevance of my research in personal, political, and social ways. I now turn to my literature review to situate the importance of Jazz in Montreal, as well as what Jazz teaches. I use Jazz music as a binding construct to demonstrate how it has served as an alternative educational tool, helping Black Anglophones form their identities within communities.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I will examine key discourse that relates to the themes of my themes. I begin with a brief explanation of the origins of Jazz, move on to the history of the Black Anglophone community in Montreal, and discuss the pivotal roles both Black men and women played in preserving the culture. The following section will discuss the historical connection between Jazz and the Black Anglophone community of Little Burgundy. These sections of the literature review will enable me to document the history of Black Anglophone presence in Montreal as it pertains to community, belonging, and identity formation. In the following sections, I explore Montreal's history, music, and identity.

The Black Origins of Jazz

My literature review begins with an examination of how Montreal has become a meeting ground for a diverse range of cultures and ethnicities, where individuals from various lifestyles share space and understanding through different streams of cultural exchange. Music and Jazz have been and continue to be a driving force for the city. Montreal's International Jazz Festival is

a pillar for understanding the family tree of Jazz, as many evolutions have emerged from the Jazz genre (Deschênes, 2000). Although Montreal is recognized for preserving Jazz culture, this literature will first explore the origins of Jazz in the Black community.

The birthplace of Jazz was in New Orleans, Louisiana, with many different influences, including Creole songs, negro spirituals, Blues, Classical, and Ragtime. Jazz music was a style that merged with African rhythms. Charles "Buddy" Bolden, a trumpet player known as the "Jazz Father" (New, 2014), was able to encompass the diverse features of the New Orleans community. Unfortunately, Bolden did not record any music professionally (New, 2014), but other musicians maintained his legacy by recreating his music. This history is essential because it helps us realize the contributions of the past and build healthier relationships between communities. After all, cultures do not just exist; they are a continuation of our past. Thus, the past provides a lens to help us recognize harmful patterns that may seem invisible due to our ignorance of the past. Corfield (2008) says, "History allows people to build, and as may well be necessary, also to change, upon a secure foundation. Neither of these options can be undertaken well without understanding the context and starting points" (p. 2). History is embedded in the customs of cultures, and through music, Jazz culture maintains the Black Anglophone community identity in Montreal. As Jazz evolves, we begin to see the development of Jazz as a pedagogy. This political history of resistance to anti-Black oppression, its evolution, and major theoretical/musical underpinnings can teach us much about the pedagogical practices that support anti-racist practices, providing a foundation for equality (Griffin et al., 2023). Jazz musicians and the music itself have typically been centered around community, allowing the Black community to find positive release from the societal pressures imposed by white supremacy.

Highlighting some of the many cultural aspects and values of Black people in New Orleans and the Southern United States during the late 1800s, the history of Jazz retains its relevance because it documents and represents the Black community. In the infancy of Jazz, white Americans constructed an idea of Jazz as a defiance of the hegemonic social order. Some white people even attempted to portray a negative image of the music by denouncing Jazz as a plagiarism of classical music (High, 2022). However, Jazz did the opposite, becoming a stepping stone to the Black community's renewal. For example, the Harlem Renaissance, a notable literary and artistic movement of the Jazz Age, gained significance due to its connection to civil rights (Kachua, 2021). The Harlem renaissance was a precursor to what was to come in Montreal.

The Black community across North America has historically used Jazz as a bridge, connecting communities and forming a language. From old traditions, African drum patterns help facilitate communication between people, allowing individuals to bond over creative sounds rather than relying on typical forms of language (Schuller, 1986). Prouty (2012) makes the statement, "Jazz tradition was oral, reflecting the African American music history of passing down songs from generation to generation, group to group, and person to person" (pg. 48). For the Black community, there was a lack of opportunity to communicate and spread wisdom and cultural knowledge. Slavery and segregation halted access to education and historical knowledge, creating high illiteracy rates in Black communities.

Jazz music helped humanize the Black community by bringing individuals together and representing Black history through the fusion of rhythms from the ancestral past. Jazz utilized this rhythmic phenomenon and drew on the spirit of African ancestors to create a new, sophisticated form of music (Schuller, 1986), allowing Black Americans to redefine their

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relationship with the African heritage that was once lost or hidden due to slavery. Jazz music enables society to understand the complexity of the history of Black people, especially during an era when the history of Black people was being erased or washed over. Society can indirectly experience the tribulations of the Black Community through Jazz music because it provides an informal setting for knowledge transformation and offers examples of lived experiences within the community.

Jazz was making its way through the Southern United States during an era when slavery and racial segregation were the norm, which influenced migration from the United States of America to Canada. The documentation of Jazz music offers a lens for understanding the effects of colonialism, migration, and the history of the Black community, as well as the transfer of knowledge among individuals in their quest for liberation. The history of the Black Anglophone community in Montreal highlights how alternative lenses, such as music and Jazz, help understand how the community is built and how they maintain their identity.

Preserving the Black Anglophone Community of Montreal

Before Montreal became a Black community hub, Black people arrived in Canada during the early trans-Atlantic slave trade, initially arriving around 1763 (Williams & Walker, 2021). Unfortunately, the initial arrival of Black people was not by choice but by forceful relocation. Although many homesteads were established, this did not make it easier for Black people to migrate and live in Canada. In the 1800s, the Canadian railway played a significant role in facilitating the migration of West Indians and Southern Americans to Montreal. Completing the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 1800s benefited the city's socio-economic growth (Este et al., 2017), bringing a technological change that Canada still benefits from today.

The Canadian railway system was integral to Canada's growth and, in many ways, initiated the country into modern society (Mathieu, 2010). Canada's one-track mind to modernity embodied ideals of capitalism and the exploitation of minority groups while pursuing this new railway technology. The railway was thought to provide dreams of freedom and prosperity for the Black community. However, Black porters were portrayed as peddlers of Jazz and drugs, which was supposed to disrupt the perfect image of white morality (Mathieu, 2010). Governments in North America conflated drug use and Jazz to perpetuate white fear surrounding the Black community and Jazz music (Singer & Mirhej, 2006). The influx of Black Anglophones integrating into Montreal was met with resistance, but this did not deter them from building a community and making a home in the neighborhood that was then called the West End (High, 2022) and is now known as Little Burgundy.

Little Burgundy, a predominantly Black Anglophone neighborhood in the 1900s, provided an opportunity for the continuation of the Black Anglophone community in Montreal during a time when racial segregation was prevalent throughout North America in the early 20th century. For Black men, regardless of their education level, becoming a train porter was the job that allowed Black families to give back to their community. While Black men were on the trains, women continued to be the backbone of society by creating many organizations, such as the Colored Women's Club and the Union United Church (Mathieu, 2010). The porter job became synonymous with Black men and became a convenient way to keep them in a servant role, where they catered to the needs of white people (Mathieu, 2010). Black men were subject to every need of the white passenger. The train companies knew that Black men were less likely to combat the barbarous conditions of the porter's life and form unions, unlike many white men in the same situation. Further, tips were used as a psychological tactic in attempts to keep Black

men in subservient roles (Carson, 2002). The tipping system reinforced the nature of service, undermining the porters and keeping them dependent while reinforcing the hierarchy between the white man and the Black man. This tactic was one of the many ways that white supremacy was creating systems that upheld its stature as the hegemonic rule, simply by taking advantage of individuals who had no other choices. The Black community was persistent and determined to make positive changes in their lives, refusing to be seen as anything less than human.

The Black Anglophone community utilized the railway to support themselves. Through their labour, porters were able to invest financially in their communities (Williams, 2021). Railway and porter jobs played a crucial role in the Black community in Canada, allowing ideas and imagination to flourish and providing opportunities for community development that transcended borders (Carson, 2002). Black men saw an opportunity to share ideas about politics, culture, identity, belonging, and music on the trains, helping to foster transnationalism among many Black communities. As some Black men migrated from the South during the Great Migration, Jazz music served as a binding point in maintaining their connection to their identity, laying the foundation for community building in Montreal. Jazz shaped the identity of Little Burgundy and became a positive outlet that allowed Black Anglophones to feel a sense of belonging in society (Williams, 1989).

Like Black men, Black women provided community services that engaged in advocacy, expanded employment, and helped educate youth. Porter's wives founded the Colored Women's Club (CWC) in Little Burgundy in 1902 (Este et al., 2017). While Canada attempted to keep the Black community out of the dominion of Canada, the CWC laid a foundation of networking and challenged racism within the community through educational and social development. They used

their experiences as Black women to critique racism and gendered oppression, providing further analysis of how power and privilege are manifested. CWC and Jazz musicians were a significant part of the socio-economic development of Little Burgundy, providing opportunities that shaped the Black experience.

The CWC used oppression as a catalyst and as an opportunity, rather than a roadblock, providing something new to the community of Black anglophones in Quebec. This was salvation, communication, and understanding, which were lacking in the lives of individuals in the Black community. Thus, it created a space where youth, men, and women from diverse backgrounds came together and unleashed an unprecedented power during that time. The Jazz music scene of Little Burgundy played a crucial role in breaking down racial barriers and served as a form of resistance to segregation. However, this could not have been achieved without the CWC's support and assistance in pushing for better socio-economic development. The CWC utilizes the public pedagogy of Jazz and transformed space. Saraydarian (2021) explains public pedagogy as the process of changing ways of thinking, identifying, recovering, and creating material spaces and places that teach us to reinhabit our environments, thus employing decolonial practices that do not exploit. Jazz, as I have experienced and interacted with it, is a form of public pedagogy.

Jazz music was born out of resistance to colonialism and evolved into a form of protest (Griffin et al., 2023). The CWC utilized the movement and ushered in a new thought that could benefit the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. Transnational pride continued to develop among the individuals of the African diaspora in Montreal (Williams, 1989). The Black Anglophone community has become a genuine establishment and a force to be reckoned with,

continuing to provide opportunities for Black youth across Montreal. This information shows that community formation was parallel to the Jazz era and provided the building blocks to maintain diverse cultures that continue in the communities we share today. The resilience of the Black Anglophone community is exemplified by how CWC and Jazz were used as a binding construct for creating space for cultural transformation, fostering a sense of belonging, and building up the local community. Montreal, as a municipality, had other plans for modernizing, and in these urban processes, it has overlooked the contributions of the Black Anglophone community and persists in finding ways to dismantle their vibrant community.

Jazz In Montreal

Jazz served as a gateway to building and maintaining tradition and community while preserving identity, contributing to the resistance against white supremacist ideologies. The tribulations of the Black Anglophone Montreal community led to it becoming the mecca for innovation in the world Jazz scene, producing some world-class musicians, such as Oliver Jones, Oscar Peterson, and Joe Sealy, to name a few[2]. Jazz clubs like Cafe St. Michel and Rockhead's Paradise helped blur the socially constructed colour lines, bringing individuals from all backgrounds and neighbourhoods under one roof. The Jazz club Rockhead's Paradise provided a sanctuary for many Black artists in Montreal in the 1960s (Williams, 2021).

Historically Jazz provided opportunities for youth in Little Burgundy. The Jazz music scene worked in tandem with many different organizations such as the CWC and others that are

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[2] Oscar Peterson is widely recognized pianist from Montreal, most influential in the postwar era (Hale, 2006). Oliver Jones is Montreal pianist who learned under Daisy Peterson (Oscar Peterson's sister) (Jadidi, 2024). Joe Sealy is also a recognized pianist, organist, and composer (Lightstone, 2021).

mentioned above to provide the Black Anglophone community to preserve their culture and remember their history. Socially, Jazz music provided opportunities for Black Anglophone community members to tell their stories and provided relief from anti-Black rhetoric that was used to oppress the community (Reynolds, 2018).

Displacement of Montreal's Jazz Hub: The Shift from Saint Antoine to Little Burgundy

Having reviewed the Black origins of Jazz, I now shift to examining Montreal's displacements of the Black Anglophone and Jazz community. Montreal was undergoing considerable changes that would inevitably displace the community under Mayor Jean Drapeau. Under the guise of modernization, the community once known as the West End then known as Saint Antoine and now known as Little Burgundy was dismantled, and the Black community was displaced to make way for white suburbanites to access the city's heart (High, 2022). Now that Montreal had expropriated marginalized Black communities and deindustrialized neighborhoods to build highways, metro stations, and parking lots (Lever, 1991), there were also attempts to eradicate the relevance of the Black Anglophone community by removing Black neighborhood establishments that provided a community sanctuary.

The decline in manufacturing employment and the creation of highways during modernization affected train travel, which in turn impacted the jobs of porters. Hundreds were laid off, and a significant shift to cars and trucks led to the spatial reorganization of the city. Thus, creating political tension and racializing the space created easier access for white suburbanites to move freely in and out of the town. High (2022) explains, "The geographic dispersal of the Black Anglophone community, and the undermining of Black-owned businesses and institutions, weakened their contemporary link to Little Burgundy just as its historical

presence finally became firmly established in public consciousness" (p. 25), displacing Black communities in Little Burgundy. The shift from the renaming of Little Burgundy to deindustrialization is understood in Montreal through a neo-nationalist lens, where a linguistic binary between English and French is seen as the primary cause of disparity.

Some scholars, such as Blais-Tremblay (2018), note that French-Canadian culture was vulnerable to *américanéité*, sought to preserve the idea of Québécois, and harbored anxieties surrounding Quebec's modernity. The Montreal municipal government failed to recognize the intersectionality of race and class, thus submerging any recognition of underlying racial discrimination or even the Black presence. Montreal had demolished over 28,000 homes and chose not to discuss the racial diversity of Little Burgundy; instead, the municipality decided that the neighborhood was not of value, and it was better to rebuild. To justify their rebuild, the government led the public to believe it was an underused part of town. Deindustrialization displaced the Black Anglophone community by literally demolishing the community spaces that once thrived and provided opportunities to share history, identity, belonging, and knowledge.

The Quebec government's expropriation of the Black Anglophone community in Little Burgundy along with other racialized and lower-income neighbourhoods (e.g., Chinatown) was an attempt to dismantle its identity and contributions to Montreal society (High, 2019. Williams (2021) states that urban renewal controlled who could live in the area, creating vacancies for several years, thereby diminishing the essence of the Black Anglophone community. By declaring Little Burgundy an urban slum, Montreal created an opportunity to remove a lower-income tax base with hopes of replacing it with a more profitable one (McLarnon, 2021). Further, in the contemporary era, French-protectionist language laws are playing a significant

role in dismantling the history of Anglophone minorities in Montreal. Bill 101 *(Charte de la langue française)* forces students of all backgrounds to learn French and focus on French-related history (Behiels & Hudon, 2023).

Currently, little academic information is available about the modern Black Anglophone community and its continued contributions to the scope of Jazz in Montreal. Due to the dismantling of community history, the historical context has been systematically erased, leaving a new generation of Black Anglophones unaware of the significant impacts from what was known as the golden era of Jazz in Montreal (Williams, 2021). By highlighting diverse past contributions, we can address the systematic erasure through deindustrialization and the destruction of historical Black neighborhoods. Jazz music plays a significant role in maintaining the identity and sense of belonging for the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. Jazz thrives through the continuation of jams, workshops, and performances.

The literature above bridges the past to the present by examining the foundation of the Black Anglophone community, Jazz, and the systemic displacement of both, offering a clear picture of how the community has created its identity and established its place within Montreal's society. This will become relevant as I discuss my involvement in the Black Community and how I can shape my contemporary identity through being part of today's Black Anglophone community.

Education, Music, and Identity: History of Racism in Education

This section will address how educational institutions have systematically attempted to disrupt the Black identity by separating the Black community from their art, self, and others. Education is dominated by hegemonic powers that control what knowledge is considered

legitimate, thereby maintaining political power and social-cultural dominance. Zirkel and Johnson (2016) state that in educational institutions, the Black identity is "dangerous" (p.1), and it is better for Black people to adopt white attitudes to excel. Society must rethink how we create our educational system and reconfigure the holders of knowledge in society. According to Kitcher (2023), education is meant to help a community continue and should improve society more broadly, as well as the individual lives of those who make up society. To rethink educational systems, society must think beyond the walls of institutions and understand that knowledge transformation can also occur in public spaces. The possible exchanges in informal learning spaces can foster a culture of freedom and openness (Berman, 2020).

Unfortunately, education has often been used as a tool for enforcing colonial systems (Mbembe, 2015). Academic institutions create structures that form a colonial framework of knowledge, using pedagogies that have systematically developed a hierarchy of knowledge and class (Mbembe, 2015). The educational system serves as a foundation for transforming whiteness into cultural capital, thereby transmitting cultural knowledge that is perceived as high art. The colonial framework of education positions individuals into internal conflict, by racializing the body and colonizing the mind, becoming institutionalized, and forming a dependency on the system to feel validated within their identity. Thus, creating internalized racism (Mbembe, 2015), which is needed to maintain the imbalance in power that benefits white colonial agendas.

The racialized body and the colonized mind become institutionalized, forming a dependency on the system to feel validated within their identity. Kenji Haakon Tokawa (2013) states that white dominant culture purposely (mis)represents and racializes the Black body to construct a narrative that justifies superiority. In the context of Black culture in the U.S. and

Canada, Black people are not inheritors of their own culture; instead, it is appropriated by the white educational system. There are contemporary attempts to resist the systematic oppression in education. For example, Kaba and Almeida (2025) explore the creation of the Freedom School, an idea initially born in the USA, based on political education and community organizing spaces created for Black youth during the Civil Rights Movement.

In Little Burgundy, Freedom Schools provide a space for Black youth to take pride in and maintain their identity within an educational environment. Similar to the Freedom School in Montreal, Jazz creates an informal learning environment that encourages Black people to preserve their identity while exchanging knowledge. Moreover, Critical Race Theory (CRT) offers an alternative educational lens for understanding the malpractices and lack of professionalism within institutions, thereby perpetuating a racial hierarchy of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2005). CRT creates a discourse that aligns with Jazz pedagogy by using narrative. Ladson-Billings (2005) interprets storytelling in CRT as providing details that are more powerful in context.

Jazz provided an alternative perspective on knowledge accumulation and educational transformation, offering an alternate history and understanding of community development and prosperity. Furthermore, Jazz spaces, such as clubs, allowed individuals to develop their identities and relationships with their environments, providing a sense of liberation. In alignment with Lozenski's (2016) understanding of how a sociocultural location manifests in political, social, and intellectual spaces, a revaluation of self-conceptions of identity is presented.

Academia has contributed to the decline in the consumption and understanding of Jazz, which was historically associated with nightclubs in the Black community but eventually shifted

from the community to the classroom. In the documentary *"Who Killed Jazz",* Purnell Steen (Makinen, 2024) notes that middle-class white America uses the academy to remove the Blues from Jazz, thereby moving away from the very essence of its origins. Academics took the individual out of the art or created an environment that represents capitalistic values, displacing Black people from the art they created. The cultural elite hijacked the art form to protect their power by removing the identity from the music, thereby preserving the power of who could create high art. This approach was adopted by academia, which treated Jazz similarly to classical music, by theorizing, creating ensembles, and holding competitions (Marquis, 1998). Marquis (1998) notes that the Black community was not supportive of Jazz in academia, because it inevitably changed the audience who participated in Jazz culture. As a result, Jazz shifted from its roots as an art form of peaceful protest that once gave a voice to the Black community that also made space for a diverse community.

The literature provided here is meant to connect to how educational systems have been used as a form of oppression for the Black community, and how controlling Jazz has become an institutional art, creating barriers that disrupt the Black identity. As mentioned before, through understanding Jazz as pedagogy and its link with CRT, there is an intended shift that provides alternate understandings of knowledge that preserve community, uphold identity, and allow individuals to belong to something bigger than themselves. Although there is an extensive history of the golden era of Jazz in Montreal, the lack of contemporary knowledge about the Black Anglophone community is where an autoethnographic narrative can provide further context for current examples of Jazz as a means of resilience against a racially organized hierarchy that results in the preservation of identity, community, and belonging.

Research Questions

Throughout the literature review, there have been themes of displacement, cultural appropriation, and expropriation. Therefore, my research question will be a direct response to address those themes. This research also focuses on the broad themes of identity, belonging, and community, and recognize and reiterate the importance of informal and community-based education in honouring the cultural and historical contributions of the Black community in Montreal. In the coming chapters, I outline my research design and then respond to the following research questions:

1. In which ways does Jazz music provide community-based educational opportunities?

2. How can autoethnography and music be used to understand belonging, community/and identity formation in the context of Montreal Jazz cultures?

3. How might autoethnography help explain the significance of Jazz music to identity formation, sense of belonging, and connection to the Black Anglophone community in Montreal?

Chapter 2: Methodology

Overall, this research has used the literature described above as a foundation that allowed me to understand my experience where I discovered in depth the concepts of identity, belonging, and forming a community within the Montreal Jazz scene. The literature review offered a history of Jazz in the Black Anglophone community in Montreal, highlighting how white ideologies and education have co-opted the understanding of Jazz to devalue the contributions and identity of the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. By rethinking how education is exchanged and the educational structures that exist, Jazz as pedagogy brings forth an alternate lens of inquiry. Lucas Du (2024) notes that "Jazz served as a barrier against American racism" (p. 1), highlighting the positive impact of music in fostering a sense of belonging, community, and identity within the Black Anglophone community. This research employed an autoethnographic method. I used photo documentation, and music as data collection and generation methods to serve as a contemporary historical reference point for Black Anglophones in Montreal's Jazz scene.

This section outlines my selected methodology, data collection methods, data analysis, and research timeline. This research has explored my experiences of belonging, identity, and community building. I designed this research using autoethnography, which can be oversimplified as a combination of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2010). Furthermore, as argued by Adams et al. (2014), the qualitative method of autoethnography is a response to concerns about colonialism, which can recognize social differences and identities, providing alternative perspectives. As a Jazz musician, I inevitably used Jazz as a lens to understand my perspective on identity formation. Furthermore, the photography used as a data collection method provided in-depth insights to inform my analysis. Autoethnography gives

ground to using the "personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience and making characteristics of culture familiar for insiders and outsiders" (Ellis et. al, 2011, p. 4).

Autoethnography

In this chapter, I present autoethnography as my methodology and show how it has been used to dismantle traditional forms of cultural research. Ellis and Bochner (2011) define autoethnography as, "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze through writing (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) to understand cultural experience (*ethno*) (p.1). As a review of autoethnographic literature to help position my study, I included music, field notes, reflexive journals and photography as forms of data collection. Autoethnography and visual methodologies have been used to illustrate how I understood belonging and identity within the Montreal Black Anglophone community. Bochner and Ellis (2003) theorize autoethnography by focusing on the ethnographic aspects of personal, social, and cultural experiences. I used my personal and cultural experiences to reach broader audiences by displaying my personal narratives.

Autoethnography uses methodological tools and research literature to analyze experiences, making cultural characteristics familiar to insiders and outsiders, through comparing and contrasting personal experiences against existing research (Ellis & Adams, 2011). Further, autoethnographic writing provided an avenue for the lived experiences to employ an anticolonial framework (Bochner & Ellis, 2003). Narration in autoethnography helps build consensus and gain a better understanding of commonalities in culture. As Delgado (1989) says, "narratives are a powerful means for destroying mindset" (p. 2414). Providing an alternative to the hegemonic narrative about the Black community dismantles outdated notions, offering context for current

contributions to society. As autoethnography encourages critical self-reflection, it emphasizes the lived reality within the research. In relation to my study, I used autoethnography to combine multiple datasets such as personal journals, field notes, photos, and music, which allowed me to be more holistic in the research findings.

Music Memoing

Music used was as a binding thread throughout the thesis because of how it can promote societal change and shape identity. Here I introduce the idea of *musical memoing* (Boyle & Butler-Kisber, 2019), which refers to moments of knowledge preservation through music. Music has become a way of social expression that can maintain the pre-existing identities of ancestors (Lidskog, 2016) as it has done for me as an individual who is a part of Montreal's Black Anglophone community and who has similar migration patterns as others within the community. Music is a political act, embodying the tensions of history (Bohlman, 1993). The wide lens of ethnography focuses on social and cultural aspects of personal experiences, exposing the variability of the self, providing alternative interpretations, community building, and identity formation (Ellis et. al, 2010). Bull and Cobussen (2020) state that music is empathy, imagination, and embodied knowledge activated in human experiences. Therefore, autoethnographies and music, both centered on human experiences, provide depth in understanding the nuances of community.

Visual Methodology

In addition to music, field notes, and journals, I employ visual methods in the form of photography. McLarnon (2021) contributes to the understanding of visual methodologies, arguing that photography and visual artifacts serve as instruments for social change. As a researcher and musician, I used photographs to capture experiences of performances and

community-oriented interactions. Photos are another form of data collection that enhance and provide specific details, situating the study in an environment (Kuttel, 2021). Photos and videos are considered visual methodologies and are perfect for analysis within autoethnography for social change. I employed a version of an artist-based method of photo documentation, which Tahir and Bidin (2019) describe as "photography allows us to record behavior in its situational context" (p. 267). Photographs become a historical time stamp that can situate a reader in the past and illuminate particular research findings (McLarnon, 2024). The photos visually represented the process, that offered context for objects typically described as adjectives, creating a symbiotic relationship with the method of autoethnography, which provided depth in research. Photographic documentation will be examined in greater detail in the later chapters as the photos I displayed have provide in-depth context.

Furthermore, Tahir and Bidin (2019) describe photographic documentation in qualitative research as a mode of data collection that warrants further exploration, as it represents a novel and intriguing approach. The researcher can use this real-time approach to obtain research data that can further help the researcher become familiar with their setting, which brings out further analysis (Tahir & Bidin, 2019). Autoethnographers understand that learning is an individual's act resulting from experiences within a sociocultural context (Manovski, 2014). Alongside visual methodologies as data collection, music in social science research is a methodology that helps researchers "access, illuminate, describe and explain that which is often rendered invisible by other research practices" (Leavy, 2020, p.128). Music, being inherently social, can provide a cultural context of community and identity (Leavy, 2020).

Culture is fluid and ever-changing, manipulating the past to create the present. Narratives and storytelling give meaning to identities, relationships, and experiences, connecting the past and present, researchers and participants, writers and readers, and providing holistic accounts (Adams et al., 2014). I employed this methodology which provided an alternative perspective on the cultural significance of the Black Anglophone connection, as well as my personal experiences within broader aspects of community building, belonging, and identity.

Data Collection

In this section, I describe how my data collection activities unfolded. In my autoethnographic study, I have taken an idiosyncratic approach that draws on my interests and expertise. I have combined a myriad of data collection techniques to produce a complex visualization of my experiences. Recall that I documented my experiences attending musical education workshops designed to be inclusive for all ages and people, as well as community events such as performances and musical jams, informal conversations about these experiences, and my involvement in academia. Data collection in my study included field notes, reflective journaling, music, and photography.

My data collection started in January 2023, Where I begin collecting field notes on the jam sessions, performances and workshops I attended as a musician and community member. Jam sessions are when a group of individuals get together and improvise music and create a song performed with and audience. Cameron (1954) describes as a form of instruction and inculcation that are both technical education and expression sacred to culture. In these jam sessions, I was community member, participant and listener. There were three different jam organizations I attended over the course of two years. I would go to the jam session about once a week choosing

one or the other or some weeks I would go to two, this depended on my schedule and timing. I attended roughly 60-70 jam session from Fall 2023 to Winter 2025.

Two of the jams were in bars: one was called *Mesh* and the other was called *Saint. Mesh's* jam session was started by both Jazz students and non-Jazz students but typically had a diverse audience and higher caliber of musicians. *Saint* which also took place in a bar was geared more toward novice players, or less serious musicians, which brought more non-formally trained musicians. The last jam I attended was held in a house and called *Apartment,* formed out of a combination of both jams. As members of the musical community were often looking to be in environments where jams were not always a performance but an exchange of community. Further, the *Apartment* jams were an informal setting to work on songs and often used to find potential bandmates in lower-pressure environments.

Furthermore, there was one main workshop I attended during from September 2024 to March 2025 called *La Recette. La Recette* was a workshop that was led by a formally trained musician, and the attendees were mostly non-trained musicians looking for informal mode of receiving technical music education. The workshop focus was to learn theory in an informal setting, and it would become typical place of exchange of cultural knowledge centred on Jazz. I often took field notes at the jam sessions. These notes typically were focused on the description of the space, the people, in addition to myself in relation to the space, the demographic of individuals and the main style of music that was being played.

I used my field notes to inform my reflective journals which led to me writing my vignettes that are presented later in my analysis. Humphreys (2005) emphasizes that autoethnographic vignettes "enrich the story" while simultaneously playing a key role in

"enhancing the reflexivity" (p. 853) of qualitative methodologies. As I shifted through the workshops and participated in the jams, I had to come to terms with my vulnerabilities as a musician and researcher. Since this is a document of my lived experience, there were instances where I needed to reflect on the preconceived notions and biases that may have arisen in the moment, and this research demonstrates those. The power in the stories that will be illustrated later in this thesis is meant to be reflexive, which includes both acknowledging and critiquing my own privilege in society and using the stories to address the power, relationships, cultural taboos, suppressed experiences (Ellis et al., 2015) that have led me to my understanding of community belonging and identity.

There were times of uncertainty within my data because of the very nature of how personal the information is to me and the places that I frequented. I established a thin line for what should be considered personal and used it as the driving force for the academic research. I aligned myself with the goals of Ellis et. al (2015) that are reflective and utilize the personal narrative to reflect on culture and identity. During the field work from winter 2023 to the summer of 2025 I performed roughly 40 times. I typically found it difficult to write field notes during the night of the performances and relied more on reflective journals. This is simply because after a performance I have used most of my brain power to focus on the task at hand rather than the research. Since there was a bit of a high from being on stage that needed to settle before having a critical thought on the subject of my inquiry.

Autoethnography aims to produce a thick description of culture, interpersonal experiences, and personal experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2010). To best represent my experiences, I have also used photography as visual methodology to document different phases

of my research process and findings. Other than photos of myself, the images included do not feature individuals. Scholars such as Burkholder et. al (2024) are using visual methods to engage in and promote social change as part of the research process. I used photography as a visual methodology in a similar fashion in the context of the Black Anglophone community, where I provide visual representations of spaces and their transformation that allow social change. I took over 50 photos with two different mediums, a cellphone and a film camera. Also, I used photos that were captured of me by different people as I believe this would allow for further analysis.

Goddard-Durant et. al. (2022) highlight the historical factors between research and Black communities, highlighting the deception that has once been used as a method to reinforce harmful rhetoric in research about Black communities. I used photos of myself within my visual methodologies as a direct anticolonial practice through highlighting the positive aspects of performances in the community. The photos used are meant to help visualize the spaces. I often took photos of venues, stages, streets, and instruments, that provided a holistic illustration of the research. Photography as part of the research process encourages the exploration of oneself reflectively and reflexively (McLarnon, 2024), enriching the autoethnography that is the main methodology of this research.

For example, in Figure 1, I showcased the outline of the setup I used before one of the performances I participated in. The photos depict instruments that illustrated the hard work required from multiple community members to create a space where individuals can display their identities and belong to a community.

Figure 1. Image of the MAZA performance setup in Montreal

Mullone, M. (2024). Maza Show. [Cell Photo].

In addition to photography, I have also translated my autoethnographic insight into musical memos (Boyle & Butler-Kisber, 2019). I used the musical memos as inspiration to help make intuitive understandings concrete and increased the embodiment of the overall message of the research (Boyle & Butler-Kisber, 2019). I used the information I acquired through experience and transformed it into music, illuminating cultural identity and sharing knowledge within a community.

In addition to the above, I also created a song as part of the data collected for this research. The song "Sharing Notes" was created through interpretations of my reflexive journals

but also simultaneously used as a form a data collection. "Sharing Notes" will be presented at the beginning of Chapter 3 with an accompanying textual description.

Music-based research is socially integrated into culture and inherently social (Leavy, 2020); it becomes a tool for accessing truth within the community. In other words, I have created music based on my experiences and relationships with my environment, which I documented as part of my data collection. Since Jazz is at the center of the research and has "political roots" (Leavy, 2020, p. 130), music in this context has examined the relationship between economic and political power within the community (Leavy, 2020). I have captured the essence of my journey through the data collection of field notes, reflexive journals, photography and music creation.

Data Analysis

To understand and analyze my dataset, I have employed thematic analysis, a form that acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis transforms data, such as field notes and reflective journals, into insights based on patterns of experience (Nowell et al., 2017). I used thematic analysis, a powerful and flexible tool which helped me analyze my experiences, thoughts, and behaviours (Kieger & Varpio, 2020). I produced themes that are centered in community, belonging, and identity.

The first theme I address is the idea of community and the limits imposed on the Black Anglophone community by white-dominated spaces and environments and how space is transformed through Jazz music. Next, I explore how Jazz facilitates an educational experience by revisiting historical connections. Lastly, I look at how the improvisational nature of Jazz has built resilience.

I employed thematic analysis to triangulate my data, which ensures a hands-on approach that propelled a deep and detailed correlation between my data set (Al Fattal & Singh, 2025). Thematic analysis enabled me to generate initial codes, group them into themes, and refine these themes, as it is an analytic approach used to uncover patterns in behavior that help us understand how people respond to situations and their environments (Nowell et al., 2017). Since thematic analysis is not bound to a particular paradigmatic orientation (Kiger & Varpio, 2020), it allows for greater flexibility, emphasizing the social, cultural, and structural contexts that influence individuals' experiences, providing context for how knowledge is constructed through interactions with the environment and others.

This flexibility is essential for the research as it focuses on identity formation and community through the lens of Jazz music. Thematic analysis allowed me to examine the emotional and cultural contexts surrounding music, thus exploring how music evokes specific emotions, expresses cultural identity, or communicates social messages. My emotions during the analytic process can be correlated to the experience of wonder, which MacLure (2013) argues informs the coding process through relational processes emanating from both data sources such as my photographs, field notes, and journals, as well as from my own affective reactions.

My data was conducted in stages, First, I took my field notes and placed them into categories of places, (i.e. parks, apartments, venues). Then I further categorized into themes that provoked emotions of belonging, ideas of community, and where I spoke about my existence within the spaces I have mentioned, which correlated with identity. The next stage would be formatted into reflexive journals because I frequented jam session and workshops often. I began to become more reflexive in my approaches and created reflexive journals that were sparked by

my original field notes and experiences. Braun and Clarke (2019) elaborate on how reflexivity informs the analysis because of the position of oneself, and this approach allowed for me to unpack my assumptions or pre-convinced notions, as I triangulated my data.

The photos I took were then coded into categories of places, such as streets, venues, musical instruments and the colour of backgrounds. Then I further categorized these places into larger themes of emotions around belonging, community, and identity. Further I used my field notes and my photos in conjunction to inform many more of my reflexive journals. Next, I used music as a form analysis, by correlating my reflexive journals and used them as inspiration informing the song "Sharing Notes." Kenny (1999) theorizes music as a cognitive process, and through this process I have used music as a form of analysis and as an approach to forming the "Sharing Notes," which will be explored more in Chapter 3.

The song itself I coded into three themes: identity, belonging, and community building. I wrote the song with a loose structure to incorporate improvisation. As Kenny (1999) explains "Improvisation depends, in fact, on thinkers having absorbed a broad base of musical knowledge, including myriad conventions that contribute to formulating ideas logically during the recording" (p.58). The improvising of the song highlighted the collective knowledge, our identities and the communities of which we felt a part of, which will be presented in Chapter 4 as a form of analysis.

Ethics

This autoethnography focuses solely on me and my environment to understand concepts of belonging, community, and identity. Autoethnography, as stated by Lapadat (2017), "reflexively positions the researcher within the study, in that the author of an autoethnography is

both subject and researcher" (p.1). The moral aim is to conduct research with the community in mind, prioritizing ethical care and human dignity. Seeking understanding through reciprocity and community well-being is central and essential (Lapadat, 2017). I have informed all parties involved in the interactions and experiences I am writing about to ensure I am making proper ethical considerations. The song "Sharing Notes," was a collaboration with a bass player and drummer, who have received monetary compensation for their time and artistic contributions. I have also received permission to use the images in this thesis, taken of me by the photographer.

Birt et. al (2016) illustrate how member checking validates qualitative research and provides a credible relationship between parties. I have checked in with the musicians who helped me create the song for my thesis. Furthermore, regarding the photos I have included in my thesis, it is essential to note that I have not anonymized the location, which necessitates careful consideration of ethical implications. I subscribe to McLarnon (2024), who argue that not anonymizing the place can raise awareness about the good work taking place in the different communities where their research was conducted. I have added photos that others have taken of me with their permission. I show these images because they highlight my relation to the community and depict me in real-time as a participant in the culture. The photos allow for a depth and insight that help bring my findings into view.

Closing

In the sections above, I outlined my methodology, highlighting how autoethnography serves as the guiding framework for this study and the strategic use of visual and musical methods to enhance the depth and understanding of themes related to belonging, identity, and community. I use my experiences to create a narrative around the themes with critical thinking

that is linked to my research questions. Although this approach comes with its own set of limitations, dividing oneself from community members to research and recognizing the gray area of ethics, it is the reflexivity of the narratives in honesty that hones this research, giving validity and bringing out the humanity that is needed to understand concepts of identity, belonging, and community. Moving forward, Chapter 3 will open with the song "Sharing Notes" and the textual description, then leading into a vignette and a photo that highlights the experiences of how I came to understand myself in relation to Jazz music and the Black anglophone community in Montreal.

Chapter 3: Findings

This autoethnography argues that Jazz culture is capable of transcending space to provides informal educational opportunities in community, centered in history and preservation of tradition. Self-exploration as a Black Anglophone in Montreal provided me a lens to see Jazz a one of the many building blocks of community. Thus, expanding on Kenny's (1999) idea of that "Jazz improvisation requires a lifetime of preparation" (p.58) which I believe is what made the Black Anglophone community resilient. Before I move forward with the themes, I present a song called "Sharing Notes." I believe that the song is central to all the themes I have mentioned because not only is the song a form of data collection and analysis, but also a recording of my lived experience in conjunction with Jazz and Black Anglophone community. The music is a binding thread that lives beyond words; therefore, the song is also a representation of the findings. I extend Boyle and Butler-Kisber's (2019) idea of music providing new ways to think about data while discovering nuances that may not always be linear. Thus, "Sharing Notes" inspires the vignettes and vice versa creating a paradoxical thread through the themes of belonging, identity and community formation.

"Sharing Notes"

I present the song "Sharing Notes" *as* a form of data representation of this thesis. The song itself is an incorporation of the musical style of Jazz and how I interact with it in the setting of Montreal. I worked with two other musicians who are aware of the thesis and its intentions. I have chosen to leave out their names intentionally because of ethical considerations. As I wrote this song, I focused on the aspects of my identity that allowed me to belong to the Montreal Black Anglophone community through Jazz. As mentioned, I am a guitar player, so the song is

guitar centric. I intentionally did not use lyrics in the song because I wanted the music to be both interpretation and a form of analysis.

Furthermore, the song is loosely based on a chord progression that I wrote; however, the recording itself is a full improvisation, incorporating various unrehearsed time signatures, changes, and solo ideas. It is essential to note that a sub-theme that emerges is affiliated with community, identity, and belonging, which I observed when I was a musician; regardless of their training, they do not necessarily call themselves Jazz musicians. The concept of Jazz, from my perspective, is loosely associated with what I call "academic Jazz."

During this recording session, we undoubtedly have our influences from Jazz due to the improvisational nature of the song. This improvisational nature allowed us to bond and create the song in a cohesive manner that fit us at the time of recording, enabling them to showcase their identity through their playing style, which was formed within the shared community and their sense of belonging to it. Bauer (2000) states that "music to mirror the social world, present or historical, that produces and consumes it." (p.4). As we mirror our version of the world through *Sharing Notes,* we become analysts with our interpretations of the sounds we are collectively gathering in the moment. We access our memories to convey our stories through the music creation process. Musical ideas are borrowed, recreated, and developed into something new (Bauer, 2000), just as we did. The song represents a forming community; the notes shared in the song are used to establish a sense of belonging to the community, and the technique of improvisation adds a unique identity that comes from each individual musician who helped complete the song.

"Sharing Notes" brings forth how identity unfolds, and community is built through a shared sound. I now move forward with two vignettes and photos to explicate the themes of belonging, identity and community formation. I will use the vignettes to set the tone and providing context through lived experience. Thus, expanding Humphreys' (2005) notion of performative vignettes that display emotion and bring the research to life.

Vignette 2: Transcending Space

Sitting in the park on a beautiful spring day, like one that could have been mistaken for summer. The skies were blue, and the park was filled with a diverse crowd looking to shake off the winter blues. As I sit here with a few of my musician friends and we drift from conversation to conversation amongst ourselves, I happen to overhear from my friends at the table next to me, "What is Jazz music, and how do we define it?'. My ears perked up like a flower after a nice rainfall. As I listen, I hear them exploring a multitude of ideas and various interpretations of what Jazz could mean. To provide further context, one was a PhD student in Music, and the other was a professional touring musician with numerous accolades to his name, having toured extensively across various genres. I sit there, pondering the coincidences, as this is a central focus of my thesis, and I have been asking myself this question for a long time. However, it was at this moment that I found clarity. As the conversation becomes more interesting, I chime in and say,

> Well, Jazz is more than just a formation of notes that we share, more than just Bebop, Swing, Modal, or even Bossa Nova. It is a historical timestamp that has helped preserve the history of a group of individuals and has been used to break racial barriers, providing space for interactions that facilitate the transfer of knowledge. Simply, it's more than just music.

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I feel that in this moment, we are continuing the essence of what I think Jazz intends to do, which is to bind individuals through history, knowledge, and culture.

Later that week I was invited to play a closed jam session that supported a local coffee roaster at Café Got Soul. The café, a space I would typically go to get some work done in other day is now transformed into community exchange centered around evolution of Jazz music. As I make my way through the streets with my headphones in, Lighting Hopkins playing the familiar sounds of the south. Walking through the modernized Little Burgundy, surrounded by fancy restaurants, expensive coffees and clothing stores. I am struck with the history on the walls in this neighborhood. I see the familiar faces educating me in the form of murals of the Jazz legends Oliver Jones and Oscar Peterson who once walked the same streets as I did that day. I pretend as if it's me walking to Rockheads Paradise to share the same notes that legends around me once have.

In Vignette 2, I provide context for what Jazz music is and its importance in my lived experience, which has helped me feel at home in Montreal. This second vignette aims to answer my first research question, *In which ways does Jazz music provides community-based educational opportunities?* To answer this question, I present the theme of how Black Anglophone history through the Jazz music scene and how it has transcended space. The experience of me walking through the streets of Little Burgundy how the murals of Oscar Peterson and Oliver Jones transformed buildings into lived educational experiences that are now historical landmarks of Black Anglophone community contributions to society during our contemporary age of modernization.

As I performed in *Café Got Soul* I clearly understood transcendence of space, because what was once an ordinary coffee shop any other day, today became an informal learning environment facilitated by Jazz. The conversation in the park, elaborates on how Jazz transcends musical limitations and becomes an educational opportunity. This is done because through o As Saraydarian (2021) explains, Jazz provides a perspective that changes space, working against the isolation of institutions. Jazz helped me move beyond an institutionalized understanding of knowledge because it enabled critical thought of my environment and how although environment changes whether it is through deindustrialization or modernization. Jazz holds a history that provides context of cultural exchange within our society. Thus, it provided me with an opportunity to receive and transfer knowledge.

I question whether the purpose of formal education has intentionally disrupted access to belonging for the Black Anglophone community by creating hierarchies in knowledge production and transmission. Examining the dichotomy between informal and formal settings of knowledge transmission reveals how education influences individuals' sense of belonging. Researchers, such as Mbembe (2015), have noted that whiteness in formal education often creates myths and fail to convey the whole truth, thereby maintaining power hierarchies. Education, in this context, creates barriers to access to knowledge and the truth about our histories.

Playing Jazz music was how I was able to belong in Montreal and provided a way for me to share my knowledge with others in informal conversations that were not limited by institutional barriers. Learning spaces, such as the park mentioned in Vignette 2, align with the ideas of Berman (2020), who suggests that informal learning spaces provide opportunities for

innovation that help bring out new ways of identifying with knowledge, moving beyond the replication of what is already considered known. By negotiating the meaning of Jazz in an informal, free, accessible setting such as a public park, I was able to share my own knowledge and learn from others about Jazz. This knowledge is shaped by personal histories, professional experiences as musicians, and academically oriented notions of music theory. A recurring theme is how Jazz music was able to change the atmosphere of a place and create a space for community education, even if only for a night. The photo in Figure 2 represents one of the many spaces that I was able to belong to because of Jazz. This photo was taken on an evening of improvisation with a twist, mixing instruments and DJ equipment.

Figure 2. Film photo of Café Got Soul in Little Burgundy, Montreal

Mullone, M. (2025). Improvisation *Jam*. [Film Photo].

Café Got Soul, as depicted in Figure 2, is located in the newly developed Little Burgundy and has allowed the continuation of Black Anglophone and Jazz culture to thrive within its doors. Due to the deindustrialization of this historically Black neighbourhood, spaces like Café Got Soul, only a few blocks away from the iconic Jazz nightclub Rockhead's Paradise, demolished in 1977 as part of the mass deindustrialization and gentrification of the neighbourhood, take on multiple roles as a music venue and community hub. The café stands as a modern reminder of the rich Jazz history of Little Burgundy. Like the spaces that exist to welcome musicians and community members alike, Jazz music rethinks itself in space and avoids being flattened out (Saraydarian, 2021). Due to the improvisational nature of Jazz, which "involve[s] the structuring of musical ideas in a temporal sequence" (Kenny, 1999, p. 58).

Black people have been misled by the contemporary understanding of our place in the world (Williams, 1999), and that connection lies in the fact that cultural history is tied to our storied landscape. Jazz in Montreal achieves this through movement and space improvisation, just like the music; the community is adaptable in its connection to the environment and has overcome the limitations of deindustrialization that have plagued the Black Anglophone community. The informal sites of Jazz and the conversations that arise from these spaces lay the foundation for dismantling the coercive nature of white supremacy through knowledge sharing, which allowed me to display my true self; therefore, I can reconnect with my identity in real time and find it easy to belong. The Montreal Jazz community has continued to forge connections among individuals that facilitate not only knowledge around the Black Anglophone community but also give others the chance to belong and showcase their identity.

This facilitation is not limited to people who identify as Black anglophones because Jazz has always been about breaking down racial barriers and bringing individuals together from multiple backgrounds. Griffin et. al (2023) says it best: "Jazz has always been protest music" (p. 410). The history of Jazz is about collective resistance to anti-Blackness and white-centric ways of doing and being (Griffin et. al, 2023). In sum, through this experience, I aim to highlight how Jazz music has bridged the gap, enabling Black Anglophones to feel connected to society while preserving their identity, as it has for me. Through these shared experiences, I have found the importance and need for continued shared spaces where individuals can build community and feel connected to their environments. Jazz music has always facilitated knowledge transfer between individuals, as it did for me in the park when we asked what Jazz is. When community and individuals feel that they can belong, it inevitably provides opportunity for education in culture, therefore laying the foundation to build an inclusive society. Jazz continues to maintain educational opportunities by changing space and facilitating conversation on the preservation of history and community.

Vignette 3: Note By Note, We Build

As the world was stuck in a state of confusion, and we were entering the tail end of the pandemic, I found myself still longing to be a part of community that I could not find in Vancouver and my mind I knew I had to leave to because I could no longer continuing hiding who I am and what I wanted to be. Somehow, I convinced my partner that we should drive across the country and move to Montreal. I had never been this far east in my life, nor did I know how to speak French at this point. I had always heard these stories about the diversity, Jazz music, and the vibrant culture. I had always wanted to learn French due to my ethnic background, being of Creole descent, and Jazz has always been a part of my life, being from the

South. Fast forward, I am now in a French school and have been in Montreal for a few months, and I was utterly astounded by the vibrancy, diversity, and community here. I began volunteering for the Black Community Resource Center (BCRC), which led me to conduct community-led research on the Black Anglophone community, ultimately resulting in my first publication. As I walk home one evening, I hear Jazzy, laid-back R&B/hip-hop music on the street. So, I follow my ears, and I end up in a punk bar that hosts weekly Hip-hop, R&B, and Jazz-based jams called *Mesh*. Whoa…. Mind blown. At that moment, I found what would become my community, and now I have been able to be part of something that has allowed me to grow and give back; this was what I was looking for: something meaningful. This Jam session I started attending wasn't just a space for me to play music, but for my exploration of myself. Although I had been around Jazz or musicians my whole life, this was different; this community came with responsibility. I had to learn how to become a better player, but more importantly, I had to learn my place within community. I thought this was such an amazing night I decided to go back but I quickly realized that this was not a space for me any other time than when the jam was happening. As I fumbled my way through my sense of belong to the Black Anglophone community just as I did when I learned Grant Green's solo in Idle moments, I learned to reconfigure my sense of my identity in relation to Montreal's Jazz cultures. As I explored the rich history of Black Anglophones with the BCRC, it opened a portal that invited me in like an adopted child. That allotted me space to pursue an authentic version of myself and belong to the community.

Vignette 3 outlines how I formed a connection through music. In this section, I aim to answer my second research question: *How can autoethnography and music be used to understand belonging, community/and identity formation in the context of Montreal Jazz cultures?* To answer this questions, I explore a recurring theme in my data of how self-

exploration through Jazz equipped me with a lens to understand how sharing notes not only build songs but community too.

My interest in Jazz music led me to move to Montreal, and being a Black Anglophone allowed me to volunteer with the BCRC. At this time, I began to develop an understanding of how similar my culture was to Montreal, given my Texas roots and Louisiana heritage, mainly due to the shared struggles common amongst Black communities in North America. According to Bayne (2019), "English-speaking Blacks that are struggling with the effects of marginalization, discrimination, exclusion and isolation from other English-speaking minority communities, and Quebec society," suggesting "Blacks are among the most disadvantaged among the minorities of the Province of Quebec." (p.36). Through my community involvement with BCRC I was able to work in tandem with community leaders who highlighted the significance of Jazz in the Black Anglophone community. Not only did I find that my involvement in Jazz allowed connections to the lived experiences of other Black Anglophones in Montreal, but it also provided an educational experience on how Jazz facilitated a sense of belonging historically and contemporarily.

Historically, Jazz provided a space for individuals to combat white supremacy peacefully and allowed them to share their history within their communities. The continuous theme that emerged from my involvement with the community is that many of the places hosting Jazz-influenced jams, workshops, and hangouts were white-owned spaces. As mentioned above, Jazz has had the power to transform and break down these racialized barriers; however, it is essential to examine what that transformation looks like. Although these places provide an environment for recurring events and gatherings that are more inclusive, there are natural limits due to the

lack of ownership of land, buildings, and venues. This autoethnographic experience helped me navigate the data, which led me to reflect on my lived experiences. These pivotal moments of my lived experience illustrate the difficulties of a marginalized individual within society. My lived experiences aim to help others understand the systems that maintain control over the narrative of how we perceive each other.

Jazz pedagogy is the foundation of these contemporary Jazz-influenced jam sessions in Montreal (Prouty, 2011). Griffin et al. (2023) view Jazz pedagogy as a collective of individuals, which is one way of countering resistance against anti-Blackness and white-centric ways of being and doing, thereby sharing and building community.

When I began attending workshops, jams, and gatherings, I was given opportunities to find my place and build and maintain reciprocal relationships. I have multiple roles within the Black community and Jazz community that can be utilized simultaneously or at different times: I am a musician, educator, learner, bystander, and community member. These roles are fluid and can evolve. Adam et al. (2015) explain that autoethnography emerged in response to concerns about colonialism, the need to recognize social difference, and identity politics. Through my lived experiences of the autoethnographic research, I underscore the connection to community and identity.

Institutions like white-owned spaces are limiting and can often halt the binding of the community for the Black Anglophone community because of the colonial nature of the environment. As seen in Vignette Three at the jam called *Mesh,* although a white owned bar, the jam night becomes an inclusive space where Black community comes together and practices their traditions. Lidskog (2016) argues "that a multicultural society can thrive only if its

members have access to their cultural heritage and that these strong collective identities do not necessarily lead to oppositional attitudes to others" (p. 1). Since I am of the Creole-Black American diaspora, I have been able to celebrate parts of my cultural identity through the sharing of music within space. Historically, white communities have tried to make people of colour subordinate and homogenize race (Griffin et al., 2023) as with Creole and Black people in New Orleans. In New Orleans, Black and Creole musicians formed sounds that would distinctly create a new understanding of Blackness, creating what we call Jazz today.

Jazz as a pedagogy has a profound influence on the community, serving as an analysis that liberates and brings forth a version of truth that aids in navigating the limits of ownership rooted in colonial oppression, thus giving individuals the tools to navigate structures of oppression, especially when centered on the Black experiences in educational systems, oppressing intellectual property that impacts the collective consciousness (Lozenski, 2016). Black communities often lend a hand to help individuals become part of something much more, as mine did for me when I first started working with the Black Community Resource Centre. The information I learned through the work with them is how I came to understand Jazz in a communal sense and what it has done for the Black anglophone community.

The culture of Jazz jam sessions has a long lineage in Montreal (High, 2017). In this informal structure, musicians can test their knowledge and skills on stage, while also building a community that is not limited to a specific space and transcends the building by being adaptable to various settings. Cameron (1954), the author of *Sociological Notes on the Jam Session*, knew long ago that Jazz music was more than just spontaneous music; it provided alternative instructions and inculcation that could manifest in expressions and norms, and offered education

for Black culture. Just as Jazz did in the days of the porters and for the CWC to bring the community together and provide historical timestamps, the offspring of Jazz was continuing within a new arrangement of notes of that we are calling Hip-Hop, Neo Soul, and R&B, which can be seen in the jams and workshops that I attended.

The Black community has used Jazz as a bridge, connecting their communities and forming a language that other communities have adopted (Mullone, 2023). By using my personal experiences, particularly through narrative and storytelling, I am able to give meaning to identities, relationships, and experiences, and to create relationships between past and present (Adams et al., 2015), allowing the audiences of this research to have an insider's insight into community formation. Thus, this offspring of Jazz music has become an identity marker and an informal constitution of agreements that enable individuals to practice inclusivity in various spaces. In other words, Jazz is freedom, Jazz is an innovative, inclusive, and humanizing musical rooted in the joy and pain of Black history (Griffin et. al, 2023). Lozenski (2016) articulates, "Jazz music, as with critical research, entails dissonance. This is the space where musicians and researchers learn about themselves" (p. 273). Jazz has been crucial in providing a space that allows me to form critical thought while building community, teaching me how to overcome and resist the static structures of institutions. Thus, it provides an antidote for oppression and offers opportunities for oppressed communities to rebuild outside the walls of institutions and through the limits of venue and building ownership. The Montreal Jazz community has laid its foundation and provided opportunities for Black Anglophones to preserve their history and pass it on to the next generation, allowing them to build upon it, providing a blueprint of traditions that form our identities.

In this autoethnography, I have used Jazz music as my base to belong to the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. By doing so, I have been able to highlight the different aspects of identity formation in the context of Montreal Jazz cultures. Autoethnography of the Montreal Jazz music scene has enabled me to illustrate how belonging to a community facilitates my identity within the Black Anglophone community. The Montreal Jazz scene is diverse and provides a space not only for me but for others to explore and express their individuality, fostering a sense of connection and belonging within the community.

Figure 3. First set of MAZA on rooftop

Note. From Mei-Ling, J. (2023). [Photo used with permission from photographer.]

In this section I incorporate the narratives from all three vignettes to answer the third research question: *How might autoethnography help explain the significance of Jazz music to identity formation, sense of belonging, and connection to the Black Anglophone community in*

Montreal? To answer this question, I explore a recurring theme of resilience through improvisation. The improvisational nature that comes from Jazz "frees Black people even if momentarily" Gilmore, 2021, p.120).

I have come to understand thought this autoethnographic experience that Jazz "is pathway to secure Black liberation through improvisation" (Gilmore, 2021, p. 119). Liberation that is born through knowledge of oneself, and Jazz has manifested this transfer of knowledge. As we immerse ourselves in this knowledge, we mold our identities. Music is an artistic form that provided an opportunity for me to make meaning of memories, giving me a personal identity.

For instance, I can still remember the days when my mother played her favorite songs, including those of artists such as *Maze*, *Earth, Wind & Fire,* and *Kool & the Gang,* just to name a few. In these moments, I did not realize that I would eventually come to understand that my mother was teaching me the culture, and I was beginning to adopt these musical customs, which would later become a part of my life. Throughout my experience living and attending formal educational institutions in Canada and the United States, I have often encountered separate histories that overlook the contributions of marginalized individuals to society. I learned how to belong, developed my cultural identity, and built community through music.

In this autoethnographic experience, I have consciously moved inward and outward to understand the community. Analyzing the culture surrounding Jazz music as an individual allowed me to explore myself and form a way forward for connecting with it in a larger context. Since Jazz music has historically been a form of music for the people, it possesses an extraordinary power to provide marginalized individuals with a unique form of communication

and knowledge sharing. As I was able to conduct research on Little Burgundy during my time with BCRC I was provided the opportunity to see how intrinsic Jazz was to the history of the community.

Williams (1989) speaks on how in the 1940's that "Jazz was king" (p.34) and the uniqueness of the Jazz jams took on a life of its own and for this newly developing Black identity in Montreal, for which Jazz had become a binding thread. Jazz jams are symbolic, essential, and one of the many ways we can build our identity in a new space while still sharing our past identities, which helps provide new avenues for relationship-building and cultural expression. Just as Lindskog (2016) understands music as a community builder for marginalized individuals, it also highlights a unified social expression that has become an identity marker and an extension of oneself from past lives.

To maintain diversity in society, one must understand how different community groups/organizations come together under a common expression. Throughout the autoethnographic experience, I have related to Ellis and Bochner (2000) on how epiphanies are created, and how those impressions stay with us. These recollections, memories, images, and feelings that persisted throughout my life provide crucial fuel for analysis to understand my sense of belonging to the Black anglophone community. I connected with myself, and music is a fundamental aspect of a culture and how individuals form a community. My experiences underscore the significance of individual experiences in bridging the gap from self-understanding to collective understanding, thereby illuminating the experiences of society.

Figure 4. Setting the mood

Mullone, M. (2025). *Setting the Mood* [Cell Photo].

The social expression of music that I learned from the jams taught me the traditions of the community through allowing me to interact with musicians, organizers, and attendees over time. The sharing of our own version of Black culture helped me showcase my identity, creating social bonds among the members (Lidskog, 2016). Creating and maintaining a tradition decentralizes the hegemony of colonial culture by creating an inclusive environment. Jazz music in Montreal has become an integral part of the city's social fabric (Williams, 1989), and it is essential to understand how education can help preserve the culture of the jam session.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the white dominant hegemonic powers controlling media and historical narratives can sway our self-perception. Educational institutions often shape and guide our directions and connections to the educational system. Educational systems have systematically enforced assimilation, compelling individuals to relinquish their

cultural identities to survive (Tarrant et al., 2002). The impetus for the current research was to understand the effects of how institutions have changed the perception of Jazz.

Blais-Tremblay (2018) also mentions that Jazz is often associated with vice and the underbelly of society by the cultural elites, portraying a picture of sin. For example, the colour red was a consistent recurrence that formed a variety of shows I played and watched. Red is the colour that is often associated with sin, brothels, and nightlife, as seen in Figure 4. (Blais-Tremblay, 2018). During the golden era of Jazz in Montreal's Red-Light District, it was riddled with Jazz musicians and their music. Historically, Ghonasgi (2024) states that the Black community in society was typically associated with crime and drugs. However, what is notably absent from the literature is an alternative perspective that highlights any positive aspects of Jazz as a form of education in the informal sector (Goldman, 2010). Jazz only came to be seen as valuable through the extension of capitalism and was therefore used for white people for profit.

Holley (2013) states that Jazz became colonized, and how we treated its figures within Jazz became warped. According to Holley (2013) "Jazz did not come into existence because Black people were simply Black. Its creation resulted from history, geography, social conditions, and, most importantly, the will to create something of artistic human value" (p. 3). Therefore, there is still much that is overlooked in the assumptions about what Jazz can offer to anyone who is not fixated on maintaining the positive aspects of the movement, such as its cultural teachings and historical relevance to the Black Anglophone community.

Blais-Tremblay (2018) states that "vice and Jazz are intricately woven together at the point of emergence as well as at the point of dissolution of Montreal's Jazz scene" (p. 74). Considering this quote in relation to my lived experiences shared through my vignettes, this

could not be further from the truth. Improvisation from Jazz taught me how to navigate structures of systematic oppression in the same ways that it taught me to move to "our beat and purposely being off beat to white supremacy" (Gilmore, 2021, p. 120). Jazz as education has done precisely what Lozenski (2016) says: "education involves learning something that disrupts our commonsense view of the world" (p. 274). Jazz music has provided me with an alternative form of perception that has inevitably built and structured my identity. Since Jazz is inherently Black-centric and anti-racist, it possesses a pedagogical power that encompasses ideals of collectivity, engaging the community to teach love, care, and a focus on justice and equality within the Black Anglophone community (Griffin et al., 2023).

In summarizing my response to the third research question and feeling most accountable to the Black Anglophone community, I underscore what Jazz music has done and continues to do for myself and for Montreal, more broadly. Jazz continues to transcend environment and space, allowing individuals to build community. Although there is a limitation on ownership of venues due to many reasons of socioeconomic oppression and racial oppression, Jazz still finds a way to belong. Jazz serves as a pedagogy, presenting history through informal settings that create opportunities for Black Anglophones to exchange knowledge, ultimately due to the transcendence of Jazz through space and its educational aspects.

I have been able to maintain my identity and promote it positively, encouraging others to do the same, thereby creating a symbiosis between community, belonging, and identity within the contemporary Black Anglophone community in Montreal. Autoethnography in my research has helped me explain the significance of Jazz music to identity formation. Expanding the idea of Kenny (1999) improvisation is a way of "making of something out of nothing" (p. 58). This was

because, throughout my experience as a Jazz musician, I was able to see how individuals who occupy the lowest socio-economic status (Bayne, 2019) improvise their way through society and learn to connect with others in a similar situation from the Black diaspora. Further, the sense of belonging came from understanding the deeply rooted connection of myself in the Black Anglophone community in Montreal.

Concluding Thoughts

I have utilized my autoethnographic experiences to interpret the significance of Jazz music and the Black Anglophone community within Montreal's broader society. The data collected from my performances, workshops, jam sessions, and community-led projects provided me with insights, which are reflected in my findings. Autoethnography as a method provided me with insight to navigate the data, enabling me to understand and explore how the Black Anglophone community belongs, forms community, and maintains identity within the Montreal Jazz scene. Through this autoethnographic research project, I have come to understand how Jazz music has laid the foundation for the Black community to maintain resilience that allows individuals to belong to the greater society of Montreal. Further, from a historical cultural standpoint, the research highlights the continued contributions that continue to break down racial barriers that typically separate. From a political perspective, this chapter pushes for the acknowledgement of how politics has played a continuous role in the systematic oppression that plays out in universities.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion

This autoethnographic study has aimed to highlight my personal experience and use narratives to understand how community, identity, and belonging are understood within the

broader society of the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. These autoethnographic study used field notes, and photography which was cross analyzed to write the vignettes, explaining the significance of Jazz music to identity formation, sense of belonging, and community building of the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. My findings underscore three main themes. First, Jazz music provides community-based educational opportunities through the transcendence of space. Next, I demonstrate how autoethnography is employed to illustrate that self-exploration through Jazz connects autoethnography and Montreal Jazz cultures, facilitating an understanding of belonging, community, and identity formation. Lastly, a critical point highlighted through the dialogue and findings above is the improvisational resilience of the Black Anglophone community in maintaining its community, fostering a sense of identity, and belonging within society. Furthermore, my self-exploration through autoethnography provided insight into the significance of Jazz in my own identity formation, which resulted in a deeper understanding of my sense of belonging to the Black Anglophone community in Montreal. This highlights how the Montreal Jazz music scene emerged from hardships and perseverance, maintaining a positive impact on the transfer of communal knowledge and creating a space that broke racial barriers.

I specifically chose to write from an autoethnographic perspective, which "displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Humphreys, 2005, p. 841). I believe that my narrative and my experiences can provided a contemporary understanding of the complex and multiple ways that Jazz produces a transfer of knowledge. The reflexive thematic process (Braun & Clarke, 2019) compelled me to reconcile my position and engage in self-reflection. I encountered many challenges, including having to think differently about my identity in ways that I have not had to grapple with before. However, the critical thinking that has emerged from this research has illuminated the reciprocal relationships I must continue to

foster to maintain a healthy relationship with the community, which allows me to belong within society.

The main contribution of this study is recognizing how community is built and maintained and how understanding community helps foster belonging for individuals while adhering to their identities. What I could do differently moving forward is to incorporate others' narratives in conjunction with mine. Furthermore, this autoethnographic research has provided insight into how Jazz music provides community-based educational opportunities. Autoethnography provided a vessel to transfer knowledge through my lived experiences and connections to Jazz and the Black Anglophone community here in Montreal. In my case, researcher positionality was crucial because it alters the power dynamic of traditional ethnographic methods, which can create power imbalances between participants and researchers. In this case, autoethnography treats research as a political, socially just, and socially conscious act (Ellis et al., 2011), lending the research a personal dimension by showcasing my perspective on belonging, identity, and community formation, and attempting to reposition power in the voice of the marginalized.

Limitations

While this research is about me, it is also about social and educational justice for the Black Anglophone community. Maynard and Simpson (2022) highlight the importance of reclaiming identity in settler colonial states such as Canada, piecing back community with our experiences. I have had to reflect on past experiences and come to terms with them. I say this because I had to be real with my lived experiences as a Creole-Black man from the United States. Therefore, my lived experiences are rooted in combatting systemic oppression, which

pervades the research. I have also, for ethical reasons and time considerations, had to leave out information and other stories that could lead to the identification of community members. Further, I do not have any formal Jazz training or have attended school for any other music-related education. I come from a nuanced background that is purely rooted in my informal learning. Moving forward, I plan to address my musical education more formally, which will enable me to create a more holistic approach to understanding the connections between formal and informal Jazz education. I also focus on the Black experience, which in no way is meant to denounce the lived experiences of others within the realm of Jazz, nor is my experience as a Black anglophone meant to generalize the experiences and realities of others in my shared community.

Further Research and Closing

The knowledge of Jazz culture combines what can be found in schools and most of what is found in places that host jam sessions, serving as the binding point to give individuals a sense of cultural formation for many who come from different backgrounds, while maintaining the essence of the culture that has come before. This is important for understanding history in Montreal, because as time progresses, it proves that social formation is not static but does not come from nowhere. Montreal's history of segregation and racism continues to this day (Mullone, 2023). Since Jazz music historically has been a form of music for the people, it has an extraordinary power to give marginalized individuals a unique form of communication and knowledge sharing. The Jazz diaspora is symbolic, essential, and one of the many ways we can build our identity in a new space while still sharing our past identities to help provide new avenues of relationship-building and cultural expression. The research aims to utilize the results of my findings and contribute to the ongoing discussion on applying an anticolonial framework

to knowledge transformation, to grasp the diverse lived experiences of Montreal, along with other places.

I recommend that the reader of this research understand Jazz expansively beyond the music and how it creates spaces that combat colonial understandings of knowledge. This is a stepping stone to the continuous work that is needed to maintain the balance in historical knowledge of the communities and how systemic oppression affects the Black Anglophone community. Therefore, aiding in the context of understanding Jazz as a pedagogy. Griffin et al. (2023) explain what Jazz as a pedagogy does for a community: "Jazz, at its inception, was an innovative, inclusive, and humanizing musical rooted in the joy and pain of Black history in response to white exclusion" (p. 410). This autoethnography encourages others to research and highlight who is recognized for contemporary contributions in education within the community, creating spaces for participatory cultural practices that enable belonging and recognize the value of everyone's identity. This research takes direct action to decolonize our current educational structures and combat the tactics of assimilation of marginalized cultures into mainstream society. This research aims to add to the existing literature of Jazz as a public pedagogy and community-based education.

Like Jazz, this research encourages individuals to bring forth knowledge as if it were a collection of notes in a jam. Each note represents a time and place that can be shared, forming the sentences that explain who we are to each other. As those sentences develop into our shared songs, just as we do with community, we can leave a historical timestamp for others to take part in and belong to. Here, I have shared my notes with you, hoping you will find a sense of belonging within our community.

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