Perceptions of Religious Music in a Southern U.S. Public Middle School: A Case Study

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PERCEPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS MUSIC IN A SOUTHERN U.S. PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The College of Music and Dramatic Arts

by

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May 2018
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Ann Marie Stanley for guiding me through this rewarding process. Her expertise, calming presence, and “get it done” attitude kept me sane and on track to complete a successful dissertation. To the rest of my committee Dr. Daniel Isbell, Dr. Trey Davis, and Dr. Gundela Hachmann for encouraging me to consider multiple perspectives in my research. And to my parents and sister who always encouraged me to accomplish my goals and never stop learning.

To my husband Mike and our two sons Trent and Drew, I offer my most sincere gratitude. I thank my sons for the patience, love, and joy they exude. To my husband, I thank him for taking on the majority of the meals, cleaning, and kids, all while working a full-time job. But mostly, for his genuine and unwavering encouragement.
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ABSTRACT

Intercultural experiences can result in increased knowledge of and positive attitudes towards unfamiliar cultural groups (Neto, Pinto, & Mullet, 2016; Vuoskoski, Clarke, & DeNora, 2017). Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence process framework provides a method for exploring and categorizing elements of intercultural competence including attitudes, knowledge/skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes.

This narrative instrumental case study examined the perceptions of one middle school choir teacher, choir students, the student teacher, the parents, and the vice principal when implementing a researcher-designed unit titled: Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds. The choir teacher offered a unique perspective as an atheist amongst a large Christian majority. However, her training, solely in the Western classical tradition, informed her programming practices. She avoids programming religious music from a global perspective due to (a) concern over authenticity, (b) her need for choral success, and (c) a lack of resources. She also expressed fears about implied indoctrination, stereotyping, and generalizing, but demonstrated a receptive attitude towards the music unit. The students’ Muslim, Buddhist, Agnostic, and Christian perspectives provided examples of how students can contribute to meaningful discussions about religious music. They appreciated learning about diverse religious music and also expressed concerns over social justice issues related to religious minorities. The issue of the word god in patriotic music arose unexpectedly in data collection and students clearly positioned themselves as appreciative, indifferent, or opposed to the use of the word god in these songs.

When examining participants’ movement through Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence framework, the process was complex, amorphous, and continuous. The teacher,
students, and student teacher demonstrated respectful, open, and curious attitudes towards unfamiliar religious music and increased their knowledge of unfamiliar religions. However, students’ internal and external behaviors varied. Sometimes participants demonstrated an increase in intercultural competence, such as expressing empathy, while also showing indifference towards learning about other religions. Based on these findings, teachers might consider: (a) explicitly teaching multiple religious perspectives when programming, (b) working towards a complete, nuanced awareness of laws and policies regarding the use of religious music in schools, and (c) intentionally incorporating a global perspective within group singing.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Personal Vignette
Corvallis, OR 2007

I stare at the ringing phone. Ten minutes of my lunch break remain and I still have not eaten. Oh well, I’m sure it’s just the office asking a quick question.

“Hello, this is Emily.”

“Hello! Yes, this is Ellen, Josh’s mom.”

Shit. Why didn’t I let it go to voicemail? I muster up the sweetest voice possible,

“Oh yes! Ellen! How are you?”

“Well, actually, I’m, um, this is a little awkward, but I wanted to talk to you about the choir concert last week.”

I longingly spin my fork in my salad and wonder how loud my romaine would crunch over the phone,

“How can I help you?”

“Well, I know you have a lot of things to think about when you are programming your concert, but I just wanted to talk to you about the amount of Christmas music on your program.”

“I see.” I pause not knowing where to go next, I still don’t really understand her complaint, but I continue, “I really work to limit the amount of Christmas music in the program so as not to dominate the program with only one perspective.”

“Well that’s my complaint. This is America, and we celebrate Christmas. There should be Christmas music on a winter program.”

This time my pause is longer. This is only my second year teaching and I am always so nervous when I talk to parents. I decide to explain to Ellen why this is so hard for me,
“Ellen, I see where you are coming from, but I want to share with you something that happened last year around this time. I got a call from a parent complaining about the exact opposite. I had programmed a few Christmas songs on our winter concert she said that I should not have programmed any.”

Ellen gasps, “What?”

Luckily my door opens and several students enter for concert choir. Suddenly I hear Heart and Soul on the piano, a song that will usually drive any music teacher mad, but I find myself gesturing for them to play louder! She hears the commotion and I am able to gracefully postpone another difficult conversation until I can consult my administration. I hang up and sigh. I need to come up with a solution that is best for all of my students and community.

The above vignette, a personal experience from my second year of teaching, illustrates how religious music in the public school can result in conflicts. Based on these conflicts, I considered three rationales for examining the literature. First, Koperniak (2015) embodied a rationale in one succinct quote when he stated, “Any practice that results in lawsuits, policies, and the exclusion of students deserves scrutiny and reflection” (p. 221). Examining how religious music plays a part in developing an inclusive classroom climate will help educators to make informed choices and perhaps avoid unnecessary conflicts when programming music. The second rationale emerged from researchers who referenced confusion over written and implied school policies (Gianuzzi, 2014; Luke, 2004). Teachers work within a “censorship frame” with unwritten expectations and often feel obliged to include Christian music during certain holidays such as Christmas (Kallio, 2015, p. 197). The third rationale emerged from an examination of the laws surrounding religious music in the public schools, an examination of which can be overwhelming for many teachers.
School policies vary from state to state, district-to-district, and even from one administrator to another (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014; Hobbs, 2000; Jones 1997; Keating, 1990); however, laws are more concrete. In Chapter 2, I will discuss statute law, the First Amendment, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and Supreme Court cases that have addressed religion and public schools. However, in order to provide context, rationale, and a focus for my study, I will limit this introduction to federal case law related to music in the public schools, which resulted from federal court decisions (Fischer, Schimmel, & Stellman, 2003).

To locate the relevant cases, I consulted Cranmore and Fossey’s (2014) literature review of seven federal court cases that related specifically to the use of religious music in the public schools. While reading through court transcripts, individual narratives emerged from the text as I tried to understand the perspective of each side. Next, when summarizing the cases, I wanted to represent “multiple voices and signatures” and situate the plaintiffs’ experiences “within the larger social, cultural, and institutional narratives” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 205-207). Therefore, on a much smaller scale than Clandinin’s narrative inquiry approach, I used her method to add interest and perspective to my introduction, and to support my final rationale for this study. In the following section I grouped the seven federal court cases into three different categories and constructed three vignettes using details from the court transcripts.

**Florey v. Sioux Falls (1980)**
Sioux Falls, SD 1977

*The other parents look expectantly for their own children, and I know they feel the same pride and joy that I do. Here they come! One by one the kindergarten students file onto the stage. Parents are waving frantically and snapping pictures, awkwardly half standing and half sitting to get the best possible frame of their child. And there he is! My own little guy smiles bravely and pauses to look for me. Smack! The child behind collides and creates a domino effect of happy,*
nervous, and brave bouncing kindergarten students. The piano begins to play as the cute little unabashed nose pickers reach their spots on the risers and nervously keep their hands at their sides. The tune “O Come All Ye Faithful” seems familiar to many audience members. Initially I’m uncomfortable, but I sit tight while smiling at my little guy and wait for the next song. “Silent Night” soon follows. I read through my program and realize that the students, parents, and school community are only being offered one perspective this evening. Then, the following is recited:

The Beginners Christmas Quiz

Teacher: Of whom did heav'nly angels sing, and news about His birthday bring?  
Class: Jesus.
Teacher: Now, can you name the little town where they the Baby Jesus found?  
Class: Bethlehem.
Teacher: Where had they made a little bed for Christ, the blessed Saviour's head?  
Class: In a manger in a cattle stall.
Teacher: What is the day we celebrate as birthday of this One so great?  

I was stunned! My child’s First Amendment rights are being violated through the advancement of a specific religion in the public school! This country was founded on religious freedom! I have to act now!

In 1979 Roger R. Florey along with four other parents filed an action for declaratory and injunctive relief, indicating that the school board’s policy on religious music violated the Establishment Clause (Florey v. Sioux Falls, 1980). The Establishment Clause in the First Amendment indicates that citizens can worship freely and that the government will not impose a specific religion (Lewis, 2002). The above Christmas quiz spurred initial complaints regarding religious music in the Sioux Falls School District. In response to complaints, the school district adopted a new policy regarding religious content in the public schools which stated, “No religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees, and
none should be disparaged” (Homer, 1980, p. 1152). The policy also directed that holidays presented objectively were permissible, and that temporary religious symbols were appropriate. However, Florey and other parents believed the new policy still violated their student’s First Amendment rights. Although the court acknowledged that the Christmas quiz advanced religion, in light of the new district policy the court sided with the school district. They indicated that Christmas carols have “become integrated into our national culture and heritage. To allow students only to study and not to perform such works when they have developed an independent secular and artistic significance would give students a truncated view of our culture” (Florey v. Sioux Falls, 1980).

Almost fifteen years later, a parent filed a lawsuit against Duncanville Independent School District in Texas. In addition to concern over coach led prayers before and after basketball games, the parent indicted that the choirs theme song, The Lord Bless You and Keep You, which was sung at the end of choir class every Friday, on bus rides, and at the end of competitions, violated the First Amendment. The school district argued that not allowing their employees to participate in prayer would be a violation of their First Amendment rights. The court noted that when teachers lead or join in a prayer, “they cross the line between respect for religion and endorsement of religion.” However, the court did not consider singing The Lord Bless You and Keep You as a religious exercise or endorsement of religion, but as part of the music curriculum. The choir director David McCullar, testified that 60-75% of “serious choral music” is sacred, and that not allowing students to sing religious music would “require hostility” towards religion (Doe v. Duncanville Independent School District, 1995).

West High School Choir in Salt Lake City sang The Lord Bless You and Keep You at their graduation ceremony. Rachel Bauchman sued her music teacher and the school district for
violating the Establishment Clause. She also indicated that she was required to sing Christian music during choir rehearsals and concerts, and they were often invited to sing in religious settings. The court dismissed her claims indicating that the music chosen had a secular purpose, and the chosen venues were not used for a religious purpose (Bauchman v. West High School, 1997).

The above cases referenced instances when a school music program engaged in religious music, a lawsuit followed, and the court sided with the district—allowing religious music in the classroom due to the fact that it related to the curriculum and did not advance religion. The next vignette will highlight cases that resulted in different verdicts.

Jacksonville, FL

_I love picking up my children from school. Those few minutes from the carpool line to our driveway are a chance for me to hear all about their day without any distractions. Today my third grader jumped in the car and sang a song that was unfamiliar to me,

And when we pledge allegiance
There is no doubt where we stand
There's no separation
We are one nation under Him
In God we still trust

I calmly asked,

"Where did you learn that song?"

"We are singing it at the end of the year assembly." And she continued to sing,

Now there are those among us
Who want to push Him out
And erase His name from everything
This country's all about
From the schoolhouse to the courthouse
They're silencing His word
Now it's time for all believers
To make our voices heard
In God we still trust.

I am furious. The lyrics violate my child’s right to free exercise under the First Amendment. When I contact the school they indicate that my child is more than welcome to opt out, but that she will not be allowed to attend the entire assembly. How could I possibly tell my third grader that she has to miss out on her end of the year assembly? I have to act now!

In 2009 parents filed a motion for preliminary injunction against the St. Johns County School District in Jacksonville, FL. The song in question, In God We Still Trust by Diamond Rio, blatantly advanced one faith while attacking another and did not have a secular or curricular purpose. It was also noted that Joseph Joyner, the Superintendent, was a member of Marketplace Christian Professional Resources, whose purpose was to promote Christianity in the workplace and the public schools. The defendants requested this be stricken, but were denied (S.D. v. St. Johns Country School District, 2009).

A similar ruling occurred twenty-seven years prior in Houston, TX. In large print over the entrance to the Aldine Senior High School gym was a Christian prayer that was recited and sung at most sporting events, assemblies, graduation, and was often accompanied by the school band. Because the prayer took place on school property, during school sponsored events, and was often led by school officials, the court ruled that the singing of the “Aldine School Prayer” was a violation of the First Amendment (Doe v. Aldine Independent School District, 1982).

Stratechuk v. Board of Education, 2009
New Jersey, 2004

“I hate school; my teachers are so unfair!” (Pause for dramatic and well timed slam of the car door) My sophomore is completely distraught. Every adult (and life in general) are usually out to get her. I ask,
“What happened?” and brace for the usual whining about too much homework, being forced to learn, and the difficulty of living in a first world country with too many luxuries. She begins almost crying.

“We can’t sing any Christmas carols at the holiday concert, and they are not letting our Gospel choir sing at all on the student assembly!”

I was shocked. Fond memories of former Christmas concerts from my childhood flooded my thoughts. The December concert at my child’s high school allows me to share these experiences with my children and provides insight into an important part of United States history and culture. She continues to explain that another parent complained about the holiday concert violating the school district policy on religion in the public schools. I could not believe it! We live in a country where the majority celebrates Christmas! Allowing students to express their religious beliefs is their First Amendment right. Doesn’t the Establishment Clause indicate that the government must not advance OR prohibit religion? I felt that my child’s rights to freedom of expression and religion were being violated. I have to act now!

In December of 2004 Stratechuk filed a lawsuit against the school district claiming that the schools’ policy on religious music violated his child’s First Amendment rights under the Establishment Clause. He argued that the government was showing disfavor and hostility towards a particular religion and his children were being deprived of their right to learn about other religions. The court ruled in favor of the school district indicating that the policy did not violate the students’ First Amendment rights. Stratechuk appealed, but that was denied as well because, “Many decisions about how to best create an inclusive environment in public schools, such as those at issue here, are left to the sound discretion of the school authorities” (Stratechuk v. Board of Education, 2009).
A similar case occurred in 2009 in Washington State. Kathryn Nurre, a senior in the high school band, sued the superintendent because he would not allow the band to play an arrangement of *Ave Maria* at graduation. While sacred music was allowed at school concerts, the superintendent did not feel it was appropriate for graduation. The court sided with the school district, indicating that the school was not violating their First Amendment rights (*Nurre v. Whitehead*, 2009).

**Beyond Case Law**

The court cases referenced above provide a rationale for this study, highlight the controversial and diverse set of opinions related to this topic, and suggest that teachers should reference case law when programming religious music. In addition, the above cases, which span 30 years and multiple U.S. states, demonstrated that teachers cannot use one single case as a rationale for or against programming religious music. Context matters—the location, students, administration, community members, and previous conflicts should all be taken into account when teachers incorporate religious music.

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a rationale for simply avoiding conflict when programming religious music. Notably, the above court cases pertain to religious repertoire that reflects the Christian perspective. When teachers programmed an abundance of music from the Christian perspective, took a pedagogical approach that bordered on indoctrination, performed in church services, and performed religious music at major school events such as graduation, conflicts ensued. All of the federal court cases referenced above occurred when music teachers either privileged or restricted Christian music. Therefore, I examined the work of researchers who discussed religious music from a global perspective. For example, Johnson (2004) suggested that understanding the social, political, historical, and religious messages
present in all music is crucial to music literacy. Johnson’s approach to multicultural education is similar to Banks (2014), who discussed various dimensions of a multicultural classroom beginning with a content integration dimension, which would include simply programming diverse music. Empowering school culture was his final dimension, which outlined how students can reach an in-depth understanding that empowers students to seek social justice. Other experts have encouraged teachers to focus on developing a pedagogy and curriculum that focuses on the cultural make-up of their own classrooms (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1992). However, Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman (2004) critiqued the above approaches and cautioned against lumping groups together and creating stereotypes and generalizations that can marginalize students.

The above researchers did not focus specifically on religion as an aspect of a multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy. However, the controversial nature of religious music in the public schools combined with the possible benefits of a multicultural education provides a rationale to further examine the literature. Therefore, in Chapter 2 I will review history and policy related to religious topics in public schools. Then, I will address research related to students’, teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ perceptions of religion in the public schools. To conclude Chapter 2, I will discuss research that considers religious topics as possible components of multicultural, culturally relevant, and interculturally competent classrooms.
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following literature review is organized into five areas of study: (a) a historical perspective of religion in the public schools, which will provide background; (b) a policy perspective, which will reveal how school boards, organizations, and policy research inform present practices; (c) a “people” perspective, emerging from a line of research, will examine students’, teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ perceptions of religious topics in public schools; (d) a “looking ahead” perspective will discuss religious music as a component of a multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy; (e) an “intercultural” perspective will discuss participants’ shift in attitudes and knowledge when engaging in intercultural experiences.

History

The common school movement had yet to form in 1791 when the United States Congress guaranteed religious freedom through The Establishment Clause in the First Amendment which stated, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (U.S. Const. amend I). The clauses indicate that citizens can worship freely and that the government will not promote or restrict specific religions (Lewis, 2002). Thomas Jefferson was a strong supporter of the separation of church and state. He promoted public schools and believed they should serve a secular purpose (Mark & Gary, 2007). Early advocates of public school education such as Horace Mann and John Dewey supported the separation of church and state, although opinions varied. Some believed churches should not have administrative control over schools, while other more liberal views included making sure that teachers did not approach teaching about religion from the Christian perspective (Berry, 1961).
George Washington advocated for religious freedom and diversity, but from a Christian perspective. He advocated “to see Christians of different denominations dwell together in more charity, and conduct themselves in respect to each other with a more Christian-like spirit” (Smith, 2006, p. 48). One hundred and fifty years later, during Truman’s presidency, a landmark Supreme Court case declared that public schools could not use tax dollars to fund religious activities (*McCollum v. Board of Education*, 1948). Four years later, Truman signed a joint resolution with Congress, which set aside one day of prayer a year (Walker, 2008). Truman referenced the four gospels of the King James Bible in the following statement regarding the separation of church and state in a letter to his wife Bess: “They are the best yet. The trouble with the churches is that they don’t teach enough of those books…I don’t believe there’d ever have been any split if the teachers had stayed by the original four books” (Ferrell, 1998, p. 115).

John F. Kennedy took a more neutral stance than Truman and emphasized the separation between church and state after one of the most controversial cases regarding religion and the public schools. In 1962 as an outcome of *Engel v. Vitale*, school sponsored prayer became illegal, which was the first time the court had cited the Establishment Clause as a reason for not allowing religious activities at school-sponsored events (Gold, 2006). At a news conference following the decision Kennedy stated, “I think that it is important for us, if we are going to maintain our constitutional principle that we support the Supreme Court decision, even if we don’t agree with them” (Kennedy, 1962). During the news conference Kennedy also emphasized that people can choose to pray in their home, further emphasizing his support for the separation of church and state.

*McCollum v Board of Education* and *Engel v. Vitale* both referenced The Establishment Clause in their decisions. However, since the 1971 Supreme Court Case *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, a
set of guidelines known as the *Lemon Test* have been used to inform courts’ decisions. The Supreme Court devised this test to determine if a person’s First Amendment rights are violated under the Establishment Clause. The three-part test is as follows: (a) the statute must have a secular purpose, (b) its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion, and (c) it must not foster excessive government entanglement with religion (Alexander & Alexander, 2014, p. 193). In *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, Alton Lemon filed suit against David Kurtzman, the state superintendent of Pennsylvania schools, due to a 1968 statute that allowed public funds to pay for teachers’ salaries in private schools if they taught a secular subject. In response, President Nixon wanted to provide federal funds to parochial schools, which Republicans called, “parochaid,” but after the unanimous Supreme Court decision in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, Nixon had to work around this law, and he fought to provide tax breaks for families attending private schools (Mason, 2005, p. 152).

The first federal court case to address music in the public schools and apply the *Lemon* test was *Florey v. Sioux Falls* (1980), which was described in chapter one. Two published reviews of literature outlined court cases in regards to religious music in the classroom. Keating (1990) noted specifically how cases are assessed using the *Lemon Test* and the Establishment Clause. She suggested that teachers should consider the following: (a) understand your district’s policy, (b) keep the *Lemon Test* in mind when choosing literature, and (c) consider your axiological beliefs and how they might affect your programming choices. Keating encouraged teachers to intelligently explain the history and culture related to religious music. In a recent review of literature, Cranmore and Fossey (2014) compiled seven court cases from 1971-2009 that directly related to the performance of religious music in the public schools. They came to the following conclusions based on the courts’ rulings: (a) religious music may be used in the public
schools for secular purposes, (b) if the district policy is neutral, they may restrict religious music, (c) schools may perform religious music at sacred venues, and (d) parents cannot control the public school curriculum (p. 34). Cranmore and Fossey encouraged teachers to provide students with a culturally diverse curriculum, understand the laws, and refer to their district policy.

Policy

Aside from case law and statute law, teachers should consider their own school and district policies. While laws may appear to have greater weight, Duke and Cannady (1991) indicated that, “local school policies exert a much more immediate and consequential impact on students and teachers” (p. xi), and school boards, superintendents, and administrators typically develop school policy and tend to have a “direct effect on the lives of students, parents, and teachers” (p. 3).

In Chapter 1 I outlined certain federal court cases. In these cases, the judges took the schools’ policy on religious music into account when making a decision. However, not all schools have a policy on religious music. In a study regarding public schools and religion, Jones (1997) found that 68.4% of districts did not have a policy on religion, and the schools that did have a written policy mostly indicated, “religious topics should be dealt with in an objective and neutral manner” (p. iv). In Florey v. Sioux Falls (1980), the school developed a policy as a result of the case. In Stratechuk v. Board of Education (2009), which was also discussed in chapter one, the school district had a specific policy prior to the law suit, which the court supported. The policy stated:

Music, art, literature, dance, and drama along with religious customs and traditions, which have come to us from various elements of our national population, may be used to broaden our pupils’ awareness of the many elements that comprise our diverse American culture. (as cited in Perrine, 2016, p.4)
The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) developed the following position statement on religious music:

It is the position of the National Association for Music Education that the study and performance of religious music within an educational context is a vital and appropriate part of a comprehensive music education. The omission of sacred music from the school curriculum would result in an incomplete educational experience. (NAfME, “Sacred Music in Schools Position Statement,” n.d., para. 1)

NAfME’s position statement supports religious music in the public schools, but Koperniak (2015) suggested that NAfME amend their statement. Koperniak examined the development of Christmas music in the public schools and found that Christmas music emerged during the industrial revolution with a desire for “nostalgia” (p. 108). He discussed a current power/knowledge relationship that exists as teachers try to navigate the expectations of their communities, while making sure that every student feels comfortable and included. He proposed that “Christmas music become a post secular genre in America” and indicated that remaining “religiously neutral” is impossible given the history and cultural make-up of the United States public schools (p. 236).

Additional research has been conducted examining policies, such as Robinson (2013), who developed Critical Religions Legal Theory. Her theoretical framework analyzed policies and court decisions regarding religion in the public schools. Robinson drew attention to problems schools encounter when navigating the laws regarding religion in the public schools, specifically when teaching about religion. Robinson examined Christian norms in public education, analyzed religion as an instrument of control and found, “how issues of dominance and power with regard to religion affect law and policy creation which then affects public schools in social and academic ways” (p. 25). Robinson proposed that a multicultural education should include an understanding of world religions.
Perceptions

The above research related to history, case law, statute law, and school policy regarding religion in public schools and music classrooms. Additionally, some research has been conducted regarding students’, parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of religion in the public school classroom (Aown, 2012; Berry, 2002; Helberg, 2007; Hubbard, 1999). Furthermore, researchers have sought out the experiences of religious minority students (Dupper, Forrest-Bank, & Lowry-Carusillo, 2015), how they coped with bullying that occurred due to their religion (Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2015), and possible inclusion strategies for teachers when working with these students (Burnard, 2008; Burnard, Dillon, Rusinek, & Sæther, 2008). In this next section, I will focus on literature related to the perceptions and experiences of students, parents, and administrators in public schools when approaching the subject of religion. In the final section, I explain three studies related to perceptions of religious music in the public schools.

Administrators

Administrators develop district policies and handle stakeholder concerns regarding religion in the classroom. Some researchers have examined religious topics in public schools such as policy, community complaints, and curriculum (Jones, 1997; Luke, 2004). Additional researchers offered insights into the perspectives of others, specifically administrators. For example, Helberg (2007) interviewed public school leaders and religious leaders to determine if there existed disagreements between educational philosophies regarding religion in the public schools. Helberg discovered superintendents with diverse communities reported more disagreements, and homogenous communities had fewer. Several religious leaders wanted input in the curriculum, but public school officials reported that they would not let this happen.
Helberg concluded that communication and an understanding of multiple religions are vital to solving conflicts. In a related case study, Berry (2002) chose four elementary schools, gathered data about the impact of Christmas on school activities, and examined steps the schools took to cope with religious topics. Emergent themes included mixed emotional responses, varied policies, and the precarious nature of religion in the public schools. Based on interviews, Berry noted that all of his participants valued a public school education and cared most for the well-being of their students, but indicated that some individuals seemed uncomfortable discussing the issue at length. He wondered if the inability to discuss the issue is prolonging the problem and stated, “This voluntary silencing of discussion may perpetuate the inability to recognize the nature of dilemma” (p. 152).

**Teachers**

In the above paragraphs I discussed administrators’ reluctance to teach about religion in the public school classroom, which researchers found can lead to misunderstandings and conflict. Teachers also find themselves in the middle of conflict when working with families and administrators, and Aown (2012) suggested that schools should stop avoiding religion as a difficult topic. In a single-subject two-year case study, Aown explored the experiences of a world religions teacher in one of Michigan’s public high schools. Aown sought to discover how and why the teacher decided to teach about Islam, including the curriculum design process. Through analyzing interviews, classroom observations, and artifacts, Aown depicted the teacher as a community humanitarian who formulated her practice through reading, discussion, and interaction with culture-bearers. Aown found the teacher’s curriculum design included comparisons with Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism: teaching unique qualities of each religion. However, Aown found it notable that the teacher’s pedagogy focused on respect,
and understanding of religions garnered through learning about their similarities. Aown’s implications for teacher educators included (a) encouraging independent learning in new teachers; (b) helping pre-service teachers design their own learning experiences; and (c) exposing pre-service educators to teaching about controversial topics.

Aown conducted her study in the northern United States, but Berry (2002) split his case studies between the north and south. When interviewing teachers Berry discovered that Christianity permeated the elementary classroom in the southern schools, which did not draw a clear line between issues relating to the separation of church and state. Luke (2004) revealed that some teachers do not fully understand the separation of church and state. Luke administered a test to 168 teachers in Southwest Florida related to the First Amendment and religion in the public schools. The average score was 63%, and a positive correlation existed between knowledge of the First Amendment and the programming of religious music—the more they understood the First Amendment, the more likely they were to believe that teaching about religion in the public schools was appropriate. While teachers’ perceptions and opinions regarding religion in the public schools are varied, the above researchers also indicated that a lack of understanding and an inability or unwillingness to engage in dialogue could be compounding the problem.

**Students**

Researchers suggested a willingness to understand and learn about others might avoid possible problems that can occur when religious topics enter the public school classroom (Aown, 2012; Berry, 2002). When teachers decide if and how to teach about religion, the effects on students are important to consider. Researchers have interviewed students and their families to determine how religion plays a role in their lives at school. For example, Hubbard (1999) found
that a student’s religious or spiritual identity plays a large role in a student’s sense of belonging. Hubbard used an oral history approach in a qualitative study of five Jewish adults regarding how they perceived Christianity in the school affected them as children. Hubbard also inquired about the perceived effects of Christianity on the five Jewish adult’s children, who were enrolled in a public school during the study. The adults did not have positive public school experiences in regards to religion, and believed their children were experiencing the same negative feelings. The parents’ negative experiences included feelings of anxiety and isolation from “being told that she was going to go to Hell because she did not believe in Christmas…when students referred to her as a ‘Christ killer,’ and…being told by a classroom teacher to sit on Santa’s lap” (p. 181). Hubbard suggested that teachers should: (a) understand the importance of student identity, (b) demonstrate sensitivity towards religious holidays, (c) educate students that religions other than their own are not bad, and (d) encourage parents to monitor school traditions. Finally, Hubbard indicated that university teacher education programs should prepare future teachers to promote and support religious diversity in public schools.

The inability or unwillingness to understand and accept students with different backgrounds and beliefs has led to bullying in schools. Forrest-Bank, Dupper, and Lowry-Carusillo (2015) suggested educating all students about the experiences of religious minorities, especially in schools where one religion is particularly dominant, may prevent bullying. They conducted semi-structured interviews to understand the lived experiences of 50 students from minority religions in a school with one dominant religion. Students reported verbal and physical assault, and indicated that certain teachers did not excuse religious holidays. The researchers identified non-physical bullying as “microagression.” Using grounded theory, they extracted patterns of microagression associated with religious bullying: (a) minority status, (b) precursors
to instances bullying, (c) teacher and adult roles, and (d) perception of peer intent. Teachers’ responses ranged from stopping instances, to non-interference, to perpetrator. One teacher said they do not reprimand students because they do not “deal with religion” (p. 42), although the researchers did find some teachers empowered the victims by reporting the incidents and punishing the aggressors.

In a similar study, Forrest-Bank and Dupper (2015) sought to discover how students cope with and counter this discrimination. After collecting data through semi-structured focus groups, they used a grounded theory methodology and identified themes including: (a) the importance of community affirmation, (b) parental influence, (c) friends inside and outside of their religious community, (d) how they respond to negative incidents, (e) perceptions of teachers, and (f) a desire to change the school culture. Many of the students reported that it is the responsibility of the administrators and teachers to provide an environment where all students feel safe. Several students suggested that schools should require world religion courses as a way to teach acceptance and inclusion of others.

**Perceptions in the Music Classroom**

Burnard, Dillon, Rusinek, and Sæther (2008) offered strategies towards inclusive pedagogies including collaboration among the students, the importance of learning about cultures represented in classrooms, respecting the music students enjoy, and allowing students to play/sing their preferred musical styles. The researchers conducted a multiple case study using a grounded theory approach and interviewed four music teachers from Spain, Australia, Sweden, and the UK regarding how they perceived the effectiveness of their efforts towards providing an inclusive classroom for a diverse student body representing many cultures, languages, races, and religions. In a similar study, Burnard (2008) highlighted the unique inclusion strategies of three
teachers. One teacher encouraged respect between all parties, another listened to the students’ individual needs, and another teacher focused on helping the students socialize, which the teacher identified as “musical socialization” (p. 68). This teacher did not allow discrimination in the classroom and made a concentrated effort to teach about race, gender, and religion. Burnard concluded with general similarities between the teachers, including that each teacher emphasized that all students were valued and recognized.

Norton (2008) focused on student spirituality in his one-year study examining how a first-grade music teacher and three first-grade students, who come from strong spiritual backgrounds in regards to music, navigate the public school music classroom. Through the lens of multicultural feminist critical narrative inquiry, Norton called for schools to be more equitable, and to understand the significance of music as a part of each student’s spirituality. The teacher collected artifacts and participated in journaling, and the children co-researched by interviewing a family member. Norton found that the teacher believed individuals can pull ideas from various religions, and each student’s spirituality affects their classroom life. For example, one student often got up and walked around during class because his church encouraged singing, dancing and walking around during services. The teacher allowed this, which Norton identified as culturally responsive teaching. Norton wrote, “Classrooms are spiritual places for children and teachers can affirm and/or marginalize the spiritualties of people within them” (p. 357). Norton used the term “invisible spiritualties” and indicated that avoiding a student’s spiritual side can marginalize them (p. 357).

A Multicultural and Culturally Competent Music Classroom

The studies outlined in the previous section related to perceptions of religion and religious music in the public school. In the final section of this literature review, I will discuss
studies related to multicultural music education and culturally response pedagogy in the music classroom, all of which also referenced religion. At the end of the section, I will explain how the research presented in this literature review led me to wonder how teachers, students, administrators, and parents, feel about religious music as a component of a multicultural and culturally responsive classroom. For the purpose of this study, I used Spitzburg and Changnon’s (2009) definition of culture: “evolving intergenerational attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns into which people are born but that is ‘structurally’ created and maintained by people’s ongoing actions” (p. 6-7). While they did not directly define structurally, Spitzburg and Changnon discussed how interactions shift based on context. Therefore, I interpreted the term as a combination of structure and situation.

**Programming Culturally Relevant Music**

Researchers have examined the effects of connecting music programming to the cultural make-up of a classroom. Boon (2014) studied an elementary string classroom of ten 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade African American students to determine the likelihood that the teacher could incorporate a culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), to discover the students’ musical preferences outside of the classroom, and to examine their view of the string program. Many students wanted to play familiar music on their violin such as rap, hip-hop, R&B, and gospel. Boon noted that students’ religious identities played a role in the development of their musical identities because of their familiarity and love of the music they experience in church. Shaw (2015) also discovered that student’s church music experiences affect how they view music in the classroom. One student experienced “cross-cultural communications” between gospel music and western choral music (p. 213). The teacher drew similarities to make connections to unfamiliar music, in this case, western classical music. Boon and Shaw considered their findings supported a CRP in the music
classroom, especially in the sense that teachers should connect with students using the musical experiences they bring with them.

**Incorporating Culturally Relevant Ensembles**

Abril’s (2009) study examined a teacher’s pedagogical response to the cultural makeup of her middle school band program. Nancy, the band teacher, began an afterschool Mariachi group of eight students (six Hispanic and two White, non-Hispanic). Her lessons consisted of listening to professional recordings, rehearsal, and discussion. Often the discussions surrounding the music led to difficult conversations and disagreements about the music, some of which the students felt conveyed negative stereotypes. Nancy felt uncomfortable and unprepared to manage these discussions initially, but shifted her perspective from teacher to learner based on Abril’s prompting that the discussions helped students to see different perspectives. Karlsen (2013) found similar tensions regarding how immigrant children in Norway responded to the incorporation of what the teacher assumed was the music from their homeland. Karlsen criticized a content integration approach of a multicultural education because stereotypes can emerge when teaching about certain cultures, ethnicities, or religions. In Karlsen’s study, students perceived the music as being important because of connections to culture, memories, and self-identity, but some students did not enjoy being generalized into one type of musical identity.

**Acknowledging Perceptions in Culturally Relevant Classrooms**

Shaw (2016) examined a music classroom where the teacher sought to look beyond stereotypes and generalizations. Shaw explored the students’ perspectives of CRP in a music classroom with a large majority of immigrant and migrant Hispanic students. James, the music teacher, excelled at making connections with students by learning about traditions within the Hispanic culture, and not lumping students into one uniform group. James brought in culture
bearers, arranged appropriate instrumental parts, and encouraged students to connect to their own culture. Common perceptions were that CRP motivated students, created a sense of pride, and helped express emotions. One student in particular considered her identity to be a mix of Irish, Persian, African American, and Filipino. She believed her culture and religion were intertwined, and discussed how she studied many cultures and religions while growing up in the Baha’i faith. Students enjoyed when James sought out diverse musical experiences that mirrored their backgrounds. However, students’ perceptions’ of barriers included the difficulty creating experiences that connected with each and every student, and the concern that only focusing on the cultural backgrounds of the classroom would limit the students’ learning about other cultures around the world. This discovery parallels with Rohan (2011), who found that students desire a culturally diverse experience in their music classroom. In Rohan’s study, the teachers believed they were providing a culturally diverse curriculum, but the students did not perceive the curriculum as such. Student, teacher, administrator, and parent perceptions can be vastly different. Acknowledging perceptions is crucial when deciding how to incorporate religious music into the classroom.

**Intercultural Competence Literature**

The researchers cited above discussed mostly positive outcomes for students when teachers programmed multicultural music, incorporated culturally relevant ensembles and pedagogies, and acknowledged students’ cultural identities. Additional researchers have examined the specifics of emotions in cross-cultural and intercultural musical experiences. To some extent, basic emotions in music can be communicated across cultures (Balkwell and Thompson, 1999; Fritz et al., 2009). These emotional perceptions appear to be a cross cultural experience. For example, Fritz et al. (2009) studied two groups who were both completely
unfamiliar with the others’ music: Western listeners and Mafa listeners. They found that both groups understood the emotions of happy, sad, and scared present in the other group’s music. In a similar study, Balkwell and Thompson (1999) found that listeners familiar with Western music understood the emotional intent of Indian Ragas, with which they were unfamiliar.

Additional researchers have sought to measure and assess cultural competence, cross-cultural competence, and intercultural competence. Researchers have used a variety of terms in this line of research and some have found there is “limited consensus about the definition of cross-cultural competence...significant challenges remain in defining and measuring cross-cultural competence and distinguishing its antecedents, core characteristics, and consequences” (p. Chiu et al., 2013, p. 844). Therefore, in this portion of the literature review, I will first discuss the outcomes of studies that assessed intercultural and cross-cultural competence using quantitative methods. Then, I will discuss researchers who used qualitative methods and employed frameworks as a mode of assessment. More specifically, I will explain the outcomes of research that used Deardorff’s (2006) framework for assessing intercultural competence, which is the framework I chose for the current study.

Measurements of Intercultural Competence

Individuals may be able to increase their ability to empathize with others by listening to music. For example, Vuoskoski, Clarke, and DeNora (2017) found that participants who reported high trait empathy would more closely affiliate with an ethnic group other than their own after simply listening to music from that ethnic group. First, participants rated their own empathy using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), and the researchers tested their attitudes towards either West African or Indian people using an Implicit Association Test (IAT). Then, participants listened to either West African or Indian music and took the test again. Participants’ attitudes
towards both groups improved and the participants who reported a high trait empathy were more likely to prefer the ethnic group associated with the music they listened to.

In a similar study, Neto, Pinto, and Mullet (2016) designed a multicultural music unit to determine whether students’ attitudes toward others can change. They tested 229 light-skinned sixth grade students in Portugal using an IAT to examine prejudice towards dark-skinned people. The students also completed an Explicit Anti-Dark Skin Attitude Test, where they reported on a 7-point likert scale from 0 (strongly prefer dark-skin) to 6 (strongly prefer light-skin). Then the students received five months of a researcher designed cross-cultural music unit featuring Portuguese and Cape Verdean songs. The control group received their typical music lessons. The cross-cultural unit included discussions regarding the singers’ backgrounds, the history, and the culture surrounding the songs. The music teachers were not made aware of the specifics of the study. The participants then completed the same measurements at the conclusion of the study, three months following, and sixty of the students completed the measurements two years after the study. In all cases the experimental group showed a decrease in prejudice, while the control group remained the same.

The researchers cited in this section seem to suggest that music listening and participation activities may reduce racial and ethnic bias. Some researchers credit musics’ unique combination of language, math, structure, and performance as possibly contributing to these results (Rabinowitch, Cross, & Burnard, 2012). In addition, both passive and active music activities can “positively influence people’s unconscious attitudes towards cultural others,” and those who exhibit high trait empathy are specifically susceptible to an increase in positive attitudes (Clarke, DeNora, & Vuoskoski, 2015, p. 77).
The above studies used IAT and self-report to examine bias. However, certain researchers have used frameworks to understand intercultural competence. For example, Spizberg and Changon (2009) described multiple researcher developed frameworks that assessed intercultural competence, mostly since the 1970’s, and recognized that there is not a “widely accepted model for training and assessment” of intercultural competence (p. 9). In an attempt to reach some sort of agreement, Deardorff (2006) utilized a 3-round Delphi method between 23 intercultural scholars who worked to clarify a definition for intercultural competence and agree on a way to assess intercultural competence. Deardorff developed two frameworks—a pyramid model and a process model. Both framework’s guide researchers in examining individual attitudes, knowledge and skills, desired internal outcomes such as empathy, and desired external outcomes such as appropriate behavior. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I will discuss the work of researchers who utilized Deardorff’s (2006) models to assess participant’s intercultural competence.

**Research with Deardorff’s (2006) Models**

Deardorff (2006) recognized that her model is based on a Western perspective of intercultural competence. For this reason, when conducting a phenomenological study of student’s intercultural competence on a Malaysian campus, Dalib, Harun, & Yusof (2016) bracketed out Deardorff’s model. The researchers wanted to describe “the essence of intercultural competence as it is lived by the students rather than using the model as a predetermined theoretical framework” (p. 6). When analyzing they attempted to first examine intercultural competence through the students’ experiences, and then they compared those experiences to Deardorff’s model. They found that participants experienced varying degrees of cultural understanding, and that language played an important role in these experiences.
The important role of language was also present in Krajewski’s (2011) study, which utilized Deardorff’s (2006) model to examine a diverse group of students at an Australian University. In this study, a culturally diverse group of postgraduate students in Australia worked in research teams. The student groups chose a topic that broadened their cultural perspective, and then individually reflected on the process. Krajewski studied the postgraduate students’ reflections and found evidence of “successful and less successful communication between students with different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds” (p. 143).

In a mixed methods study assessing intercultural competence, Prieto-Flores, Feu, and Casademont (2016) used Deardorff’s (2006) model to assess their qualitative data. They examined the intercultural competence of college students before and after The Nightingale Program, in which a college student is paired with an immigrant student in order for both parties to “develop flexible mindsets...to promote intercultural dialogues based on respecting and valuing diversity” (p. 441). Participants self-reported on a Likert scale to questions such as, “all groups should be given an equal chance” and “we would have fewer problems if we treated people equally” (p. 447). Interestingly, the control group perceived themselves to be more adaptive, flexible, and empathetic towards other cultural groups. However, the researchers conducted open ended interviews with 10 participants and found that students grew in their “openness, curiosity, knowledge, critical reflections, and intercultural sensitivity among mentors” (p. 450).

The researchers cited in this section suggested that intercultural competence is a continually developing process, but that participants could improve their attitudes towards others, their understanding of others, and also their internal behaviors such as empathy. For the current study, I utilized Deardorff’s (2006) process model, which I will outline in Chapter 3.
their definitions of intercultural competence, the above researchers referenced slight variations of cross-cultural and intercultural competence definitions. In attempt to align with Deardorff’s framework, I used Spizberg and Changon’s (2009) definition of intercultural competence, which identified intercultural competence as:

The appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different of divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world. These orientations will most commonly be reflected in such normative categories as nationality, race, ethnicity, tribe, religion, or region. (p. 7)

At the conclusion of Deardorff’s (2006) paper she provided an extensive list of future research questions mostly geared towards that paper’s audience—college professors and administrators. However, three questions in particular stood out: (a) How do college students perceive and define intercultural competence? (b) How do they perceive the development, value, and benefit of intercultural competence? (c) How does the developmental stage of an individual affect the assessment of that individual’s intercultural competence? (p. 260). These questions informed my purpose statement and research question, which I outline at the end of this chapter.

**Main Themes from the Literature**

**History**

The presence of religious topics and activities in the public schools has shifted over time. Between the terms of Presidents Washington to Kennedy, there appeared a slow movement to remove religious influences from schools and ensure the separation of church and state. However, inappropriate amalgamations of church and state are still present in public schools today. For example, the superintendent of John’s Country School District in Florida was a member of Marketplace Christian Professional Resources, which promotes Christianity in public schools (S.D. v. St. Johns Country School District, 2009).
Policy

While policies are not considered laws, their ability to immediately and directly influence their surrounding community can impact curriculum (Duke & Cannady, 1991), such as the programming and teaching about religious music. In addition, researchers have suggested that schools should have policies in place related to religious topics to avoid conflict (Jones, 1997). When conflicts do arise, courts tend to side with school districts that have a written policy in place (Stratechuk v. Board of Education, 2009). While polices can help guide teachers in a broad sense, individual perceptions are also important to consider within each context.

Perceptions

Students’ perceptions of religious music can offer valuable insights into the possible effects of programming and pedagogical approaches. Researchers have found that a worldview of religions can increase students’ respect and understanding towards unfamiliar religions (Aown, 2012). Music classrooms can provide a safe space and affirm students’ religious identities (Norton, 2008), which is important because religious minorities still experience instances of bullying in public schools (Forrest-Bank, Dupper, & Lowry-Carusillo, 2015; Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2015).

Multicultural and Culturally Relevant Classrooms

Students and have experienced positive outcomes such as respect towards themselves and others when their music teachers considered the cultural make-up of their classroom and community (Abril, 2009; Boon, 2014; Shaw, 2015). However, researchers have identified possible challenges to culturally responsive pedagogies such as negotiating students’ “multifaceted identities” (Shaw, 2016, p. 64), and negative experiences can occur when teachers stereotype or generalize unfamiliar cultures (Abril, 2009; Karlsen, 2013). In addition, Shaw
(2016) suggested that “an approach to teaching intended to foster recognition of diverse cultural groups may instead lead to marginalization if not practiced equitably” (p. 65). The above researchers identified meaningful experiences for students when teachers engaged in culturally responsive pedagogy, but context played a large role in determining what was best for students. For example, a culturally responsive pedagogy can limit a teacher’s ability to provide a global perspective (Rohan, 2011).

**Intercultural Competence**

Researchers have examined intercultural experiences and found that participants increased their knowledge of and positive attitudes towards unfamiliar cultural groups (Neto, Pinto, & Mullet, 2016; Vuoskoski, Clarke, & DeNora, 2017). In order to explore and categorize intercultural competence, researchers have utilized Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence process framework to explore elements of cultural competence including attitudes, knowledge/skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. Within this framework, researchers and participants can assess three of the four areas of intercultural competence: attitudes, knowledge, and internal behaviors such as empathy. However, only a person from the “other” cultural group with which an individual is interacting can truly assess appropriate external behaviors such as effective communication.

Researchers who have utilized Deardorff’s framework found that intercultural experiences resulted in shifts of perspective such as increased knowledge, understanding, and in some cases there existed a perceived increase in empathy (Dalib, Harun, & Yusof, 2016; Krajewski, 2011; Prieto-Flores, Feu, & Casademont, 2016). In these cases, researchers and participants did not quantify an increase in intercultural competence. In fact, within Krajewski’s (2011) study, students demonstrated “how the different background of the team members either
complimented the overall experience or led to misunderstandings and conflict” (p. 143). While researchers have suggested that teachers can provide experiences for students to improve their intercultural competence, “there is no one point at which an individual becomes completely interculturally competent” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 2). The process is complex, seemingly amorphous, and continuous.

**Research Questions and Purpose Statement**

After considering the court cases, laws, history, policy, and perceptions related to religious music in the public schools, I concluded there may exist positive outcomes for students when they perform diverse religious music. However, there is a dearth of research that specifically addresses perceptions of religious music as a component of a multicultural, culturally responsive and interculturally competent classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of a middle school choir teacher, the students, the student-teacher, the parents, and the vice principal, when implementing a researcher-designed unit titled: *Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds*. In this next section, I will state my research questions and explain how each one emerged based on the related literature.

The above literature suggested that teachers’ perceptions of religious music are diverse and there are multiple approaches when programming religious music. Variables such as school policy, opinions of the surrounding community, and the cultural make-up of the classroom all influence programming decisions. I wanted to know more about how the teacher navigates these variables in her choral classroom, which led me to my first research question:

1) How does a middle school choir teacher approach the programming and teaching of diverse religious music in the classroom?
While the teacher’s perspective is crucial to understanding this issue, the perspectives of the students, student teacher, parents, and administrator also play an important role when lesson planning, programming music, and developing curriculum. I wanted to know how they felt about choral repertoire that reflects a global view of religious music, which led me to my second research question:

2) What are the reactions of the teacher, students, student teacher, parents, and administrator when a researcher-designed unit titled Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds is implemented in a middle school choral curriculum?

The researchers cited in the above literature review suggested that in addition to considering the participants’ perceptions, examining data through a framework can offer additional insight into a phenomenon. For this case study, the phenomenon was the participants’ attitudes, knowledge, internal outcomes, and external outcomes as explained in Deardorff’s (2006) process model framework before and after they sang and learned about music that was unfamiliar and from different religious perspectives. Therefore, I arrived at my third research question:

3) Research Question Three: When implementing a researcher-designed unit titled Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds framed from an intercultural competence perspective (Deardorff, 2006), how do the teacher, students, student teacher, parents, and administrator, move through Deardorff’s intercultural competence process framework?

In this chapter I reviewed literature related to religious music in the public school in five categories: (a) a historical perspective, (b) a policy perspective, (b) students’, teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ perspectives, (d) religious music as a component of a multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy, and (e) research related to intercultural competence. In Chapter 3, I will explain my method. First, I will clarify the design, which is a narrative instrumental case study. Second, I will describe the research site and participants. Third, I will
explain the unit titled, *Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds*, and I will outline the music selected and lesson plans. Forth, I will detail my data collection, which will include interviews, observations, artifacts, and student reflections. And finally, I will describe my analysis of the data, which will include coding, further explanation of Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence framework, and trustworthiness.
CHAPTER 3. METHOD

Design

In the previous chapter I summarized literature related to history, laws, policy, and perceptions of religion in public schools. In addition, I reviewed research associated with multicultural, culturally responsive, and interculturally competent classrooms, which sometimes referenced religion as a component. However, there is little research related to perceptions of religious music in public schools. Therefore, my research questions focused on the perceptions of the teacher, students, student teacher, parents, and administrator when a unit involving religious world music was incorporated within the curriculum in one public middle school music program in the Southeastern United States.

In this chapter I will first summarize the school and participants. Next, I will explain my methodological design, which I arrived at after a careful examination of how case study and narrative inquiry can complement each other. In order to explain these two methods and their characteristics, I will first explain them separately, and then show how they can be brought together in a narrative instrumental case study and serve as an appropriate method to approach my research questions. Finally, I will discuss lesson plan construction, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Site

The middle school for this case, Cyprus Middle School (pseudonym), is an arts magnet school in the Southeastern United States. The school is located in an urban city with a population of about 200,000 people. Cyprus Middle School has around 800 students, with an ethnic distribution of about 55% African American, 40% White, and a small portion of Asian, Hispanic, and other—these distributions are similar to the demographics of the surrounding city. Less than one-fourth of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The choir program maintains a
busy and successful performance and festival schedule throughout the school year. For example, they have three major home concerts per year in addition to festivals and small performances, which take place in and around their community. I researched the advanced women’s choir and attended most class meetings for ten weeks.

**Participants**

The choir teacher, Melinda (pseudonym) has been teaching middle school choir for 12 years in the Southern United States and has been at Cypress Middle School for 10 years. Melinda indicated the socio economic and ethnic distribution of her choir mirrors that of the school. She estimated that about 90% of her students identify as Christian, but she does have a few students who identify as Jewish, Muslim, Unitarian, and Atheist. She identifies as atheist, but indicated that she grew up in the Christian tradition and enjoys the perspectives of many different denominations. Melinda is the reason I choose to work at Cyprus Middle School for this project. I interviewed her for a previous research project and discovered that we worked well together and developed a friendship. Melinda was crucial to this study and significantly more involved than any other participant. Building off of McCormick’s (1994) concept of “key informant” (p.160), I viewed Melinda as a key collaborator rather than an informant or participant. McCormick interviewed parents and teachers, but because the study depended on and revolved around a particular student, McCormick used the word “key informant” to describe the student. I used the term collaborator because key informant is not strong enough for the role Melinda played. In addition to interviews and observations, she helped shape this study in regards to the structure, pace, and flow of the project.

Additional participants included seven students who participated in individual interviews and/or focus groups (Aubrey, Emma, Amala, Ava, Natalie, Layla, and Camilla), the student
teacher (Sandra), the vice principal (Ms. Abbott), two choir parents (Liana and Sam), and the advanced women’s choir of 31 eighth grade girls. I used extreme sampling to select the students for the focus group (Patton, 2002). Because our focus group conversations centered on the students’ experiences with religious music in the public school curriculum, I consulted the advice of Melinda to put together an appropriate group. Melinda made a list of seven students with a mixture of attitudes and experiences who would contribute to a free and natural discussion. All seven students eagerly agreed to participate and promptly returned the IRB guardian consent forms.

The focus groups were ideal for this choral classroom because of the social aspects present in the ensemble (Eros, 2014). On a deeper level, focus groups can provide a place of comfort and mutual understanding for students, such as when Dupper, Forest-Bank, and Lowry-Carusillo (2015) used purposive sampling to create a diverse focus group for their study involving the experiences of religious minorities in public schools. They contacted “key informants” who knew the students and surrounding community (p. 39).

The parents were not as eager to participate as the students. I could not find a women’s choir parent from the non-dominant perspective who was willing to be interviewed. I sent letters home to specific parents of the focus group who might provide different perspectives. After multiple phone calls and emails from both myself and Melinda, we were able to secure two parents for interviews. Detailed explanations of the participants, interviews, and focus groups are provided in the section specific to data collection. The following are short descriptions of each participant.
Students

Amala is an 8th grade student in advanced women’s choir who enjoys listening to a wide variety of musical genres. She identifies as Palestinian-American and practices Islam.

Ava is an 8th grade student in advanced women’s choir who enjoys singing upbeat music. She categorizes her race as black, her ethnicity as American-Nigerian, and she practices Christianity.

Aubrey is an 8th grade student in advanced women’s choir who enjoys singing music that she can dance to and helps her express emotions. She categorizes her race as black and white and her ethnicity as American-Japanese. She practices Christianity with her mother and Buddhism with her father.

Camila is an 8th grade student in advanced women’s choir who loves sharing musical experiences with her family. She categorizes her race as white and practices Christianity.

Layla is an 8th grade student in advanced women’s choir who enjoys singing music from multiple cultural perspectives. She categorizes her race as black, most closely identifies with Christian holidays, but does not practice any particular religion.

Emma is an 8th grade student in advanced women’s choir who loves singing music in all languages. She categorizes her race as white, her ethnicity as Cajun, and identifies as agnostic.

Natalie is an 8th grade student in advanced women’s choir who enjoys incorporating movement and dance while singing. She identifies as Vietnamese-American and practices Buddhism.

Administration and Student Teacher

Ms. Abbott is the vice principal at Cypress Middle School. Before becoming an administrator, she was an eighth grade English teacher for 13 years. She is supportive of the
music program at her school and attends all concerts and programs. She categorizes her race as white and did not specify a religious affiliation.

**Sandra** successfully student taught full time at Cypress Middle School for the fall semester. She grew up in a Western choral tradition of large choirs and sang mostly classical music. She categorizes her race as white and identifies as Christian.

**Parents**

**Liana** works in social services for the state and grew up singing gospel music. She categorizes her race as black and identifies as Christian.

**Sam** grew up in a rural city in the Southern United States and attended private schools. He categorizes his race as white and identifies as Christian.

Each participant provided possible answers to my research questions and approached a difficult topic with multiple and diverse perspectives. As I worked through the participant contributions, I completed a diagram (Figure 3.1) to show how each of these participants were situated. This was demonstrated in Sofiy’s (2004) case study of one child’s experience with an inclusive classroom in an attempt to show their possible perspectives and relationships to the case (as cited in Stake, 2005, p. 445).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.1** Situation of participants
Case Study Rationale

Case study was an appropriate method for this topic because: (a) it focused on a complex issue, (b) there were social issues surrounding the case, (c) there were a multitude of activities that influenced the issue of religious music in the public schools, and (d) as a choral music educator myself I had experiential knowledge of the issue (Stake, 2005). In addition, my research questions required descriptive answers, such as what kind of religious music Melinda incorporates into her lessons, and explanatory answers, such as how she approaches teaching about the background of religious music (Yin, 2012). In this study, the case was the middle school music classroom. The teacher, students, student-teacher, parents, and administrator within that school community defined the “bounded system” of the specific classroom (Stake, 2005, p. 444).

More specifically this related to an instrumental case study, which Stake (2005) defined in two ways: (a) the case examined a particular issue, which in this study was the perceptions of religious music in Cypress Middle School’s choral classroom, and (b) because the bounded case “facilitates our understanding of something else” (p. 445). For example, in this study, one “something else” was understanding the decisions Melinda made when programming religious music.

An example of an instrumental case study occurred when McCormick (1998) examined how one nonreader became a reader. Her case study was bounded by the school and the circumstances she studied. McCormick collected data from a wide variety of sources such as observation, written documents, tests, and formal and open-ended interviews. The examination of one individual experience limited McCormick’s ability to generalize, however, case studies can allow readers to generalize the process rather than the people (Feagin et al., 1991).
The first research question focused on the process that Melinda, who is an atheist in a population with a large Christian majority, went through when she programmed religious choral music. The purpose of this case study was to convey Melinda’s perceptions, while at the same time developing my own perception of the case (Stake, 2005, p. 456). However, I kept Melinda and the other participants at the center of the case so that I remained “most authentic to the form in which people often experience their own lives” (Feagin et al., 1991, p. 21).

**Narrative Inquiry Rationale**

An instrumental case study method allowed me to bound the school as my system. However, I still wanted to highlight the unique stories and perspectives from within that system. For that reason, I was drawn to narrative inquiry. I wanted to make sure I understood the unique perspectives of the teacher, students, student teacher, parents, and administrator at the middle school. I connected a variety of data sources and developed “a holistic understanding of the experiences” from the perspectives of the participants (Olson, 2000a, p. 174). While my knowledge of the subject matter could limit my ability to see the participants’ perspectives, Stake (2005) saw experiential knowledge as beneficial to the process. However, Olson (2000b) saw this as a drawback and discussed how she carefully listened to the teachers’ stories from their perspectives, rather than her own. During the interviews I related to the emerging stories, but I continually situated myself to “hear their stories from their perspectives” (Olson, 2009b, p. 349).

Because a portion of my data consisted of observations in the field these stories were from my perspective. To ensure that I represented multiple perspectives, I used the following analytic lenses outlined by Chase (2005) to examine my data:

- “Narratives as discourse,” which allows the researcher to connect the unique stories they uncover to their own “emotions, thoughts, and interpretations.”
• “Narratives as verbal actions, which allows the researcher to communicate the reality through a credible and believable story.

• “Narratives as stories both enabled and constrained” by social circumstances, which included situating participants in their reality while also highlighting patterns that are similar and different.

• “Narratives as socially situated interactive performances,” which means that the narrative is a result of the story teller and story creator, including when and where the told story emerged.

• Researcher as narrator, which includes writing in the first person and the researcher developing “their own voice(s) as they construct others’ realities…and they write or perform their work for particular audiences” (p. 656-657).

When using these lenses, Chase cautioned that if the researcher becomes narrator, issues of authority emerge. To address this issue, Clandinin (2013) highlighted the importance of co-composing, which allowed “participants and researchers opportunities to further co-compose storied interpretations and to negotiate the multiplicity of possible meanings” (p. 47). However, the participants in this research project were a combination of co-composers, narrators, and researchers. For example, Melinda’s involvement was central to the study. I wanted to go further than simply capturing her perspective as accurately as possible. Her lived experiences along with the other participants were each unique. I wanted readers to see the story from the participants’ perspectives, not mine. In order to accomplish this Czarniawska (2014) considered her interviewees as the narrators. She interviewed using a focus group and from the first page of her study the participants are extensively quoted and the study read almost like a play as the participants engaged in discussion. In my analysis section, I will explain how I wrote poems as a means of “honoring the told story and preserving the value and dignity of the teller” (Kim, 2016, p. 111).
Lesson Plans

After several discussions with Melinda I realized that she does indeed program a wide variety of music throughout the school year (Mercado, 2017). We decided that in order to understand how the students, student-teacher, parents, and administrator perceived religious music in the classroom, we needed to program religious music for the months that I would be present in the classroom collecting data. Because my research questions related to religious music from multiple perspectives, we thought this would be achievable because we could program a variety of religious world music.

I was first drawn to the idea of constructing a unit to implement and study its effects from Menard (2015), who used “investigator-designed” lesson plans when conducting a study that introduced composition into the band classroom (p. 119). While our original intent was to co-construct the lesson plans and co-teach, Melinda did not feel comfortable leading the topic of world religions in the amount of depth necessary for this study. Before this project, Melinda’s strategy for teaching the background of a religious piece of music was to ignore the religious connotations—she discussed the piece in terms of emotions or in a broad historical or cultural context (Mercado, 2017). For this study, while the interview questions and focus group discussions honed in on how the participants experienced learning about religion as it related to the music, the lesson plans focused on the national standards for music education.

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) published updated standards in 2014, which are divided into five strands: (a) pre-k general music, (b) composition/theory, (c) music technology, (d) guitar/keyboard/harmonizing instruments, and (e) ensemble. Each strand has standards that are organized into the categories of creating, performing, or responding with various sub categories such as analyze, interpret, evaluate, and
present, which are further defined with an essential question to guide teachers. Students are evaluated under common anchors as novice, intermediate, proficient, accomplished, or advanced, and each level provides specific descriptions of what that looks like. For example, under the performing/present standard NAfME (2014) stated the following, “Musicians judge performance based on criteria that vary across time, place, and cultures. The context and how a work is presented influence the audience response” (p. 4). The students can then be evaluated under common anchor #6 and an advanced student would be able to, “Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of the technical demands and expressive qualities of the music through prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire representing diverse cultures, styles, genres, and historical periods in multiple types of ensembles (p. 4). The pieces I chose for this study, which I outline in a subsequent section, were chosen not only because they offer diverse religious perspectives, but also to serve the music curriculum and further students’ musical knowledge.

**Considering Culture and Religion in Repertoire and Lesson Planning**

In this next section, I will explain how I crafted lesson plans and choose repertoire while I focused on my research questions and adhered to the national music standards. As I examined possible pieces to include in the lesson plans, I saw religion and culture as a quilt and “metaphorically speaking, each narrative inquiry is a quilt made out of pieces of personal and social stories that may be collected from any walk of life...a reflection of a part of the world in which we live” (Kim, 2016, p. xv). Sometimes I could easily distinguish one color or pattern, but they also overlapped and become woven together. For example, Green (2017) discussed the differences between sacred and secular Jewish music. She defined sacred music as the biblical Hebrew language, and secular as other music spoken “throughout Israel and the Diaspora: Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Farsi, and English,” which are somewhat defined by geographic
location and “the three streams of Jewish music: Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi” (p. 1). So while *Hamisha Asar*, the Ladino piece I chose for this study, may not be considered a strict sacred piece in the Sephardic Jewish tradition, when we began to discuss the background of the piece religion became a part of the lesson. I considered these complexities as I planned the lessons. Melinda expressed concern that discussions regarding the background of the piece took away from learning the notes and rhythms. She wanted to ensure that there was enough time during class for her students to learn the music and be prepared for the performance. In the following section I explain our selected music. These selections allowed us to navigate the religious and cultural fabrics of each piece, but were also at an appropriate musical level that allowed students to engage in the music and feel confident to perform.

**Selected Music**

*Adinu* by Shireen Abu-Khader & Andre de Quadros, earthsongs.

The text of *Adinu*, by Abu Abdiiah Muhammad (1165-1240) is a traditional Sufi melody. Muhammad focused on understanding of all religions garnered through similarities, especially love. The second solo (*Subhanaka*) is an Islamic prayer for forgiveness. This piece is from a collection of choral works titled *Salamu Aleikum* (Peace Be Unto You) and focuses on cultural traditions in the Muslim world (Abu-Khader & de Quadros, 2011).

Selection Two: *Hamisha Asar* by Flory Jagoda, Arr. by Nick Page, Boosey & Hawkes

The text to *Hamisha Asar* is Ladino, which is spoken by Sephardic Jews, who were forced out of Spain in 1492. This song celebrates Tu Be’Shevat, which is a spring holiday that celebrates “when sap begins to flow from the trees” (Jagoda, 1993).

Selection Three: *Sing Alleluia, Allelu* by Mary Goetze, Boosey & Hawkes
 Sing Alleluia, Alleluia is a Christmas piece arranged by Mary Goetze and discusses the birth of the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. Melinda wanted to program an appropriate piece for her winter concert and therefore asked me to find a piece that they could learn using solfege and perform at the December concert. This song was an appropriate fit.

 Lesson Plan Construction

 For the purpose of this study I first constructed broad lessons for each of the above pieces and shared them with Melinda. Then I constructed weekly lesson plans to accommodate the musical needs of the students, the school, and Melinda and occasionally made day to day changes. For example, she decided to introduce Veteran’s Day music earlier than expected, so I decided to ask the students how they felt when the word “God” was used in a patriotic song. This event will be discussed in the findings. First, I have included a chart below to summarize the 10-week process. Then, I outlined the lesson plans day by day for the ten weeks.

 Week by Week Breakdown

 Week 1: 9/6
  • Observation
  • Finalize interview schedule

 Week 2: 9/12, 9/14
  • Unit lessons begin
  • First interview with Melinda

 Week 3: 9/21, 9/22
  • Continue lessons from week 2
  • Second interview with Melinda
  • First student focus group interview
  • Transcribe and code data from last week

 Week 4: 9/26, 9/28
  • Continue lessons from week 3
  • Interview with Sandra
  • Transcribe and code interview form last week

 Week 5: 10/2, 10/4
  • Continue lessons from week 4
• Interview with Amala
• Continue coding interview from last week

Week 6: 10/10, 10/12
• Continue lessons from week 5
• Interview with Camila
• Interview with Aubrey
• Transcribe and code interview from last week

Week 7: 10/16, 10/18
• Observation
• Transcribe and code interviews from last week

Week 8: 10/23, 10/24, 10/25, 10/26
• Observation/Concert Prep
• Attend concert: 10/24
• Interview Ms. Abbott
• Continue coding interview from last week

Week 9: 10/23, 10/24, 10/25
• Observation/Concert Prep
• Attend concert: 10/24
• Final focus group interview
• Continue coding interview from last week

Week 10: 10/30, 11/1
• Concluding lessons
• Final interview with Melinda
• Transcribe and code focus group from last week
• Parent interviews occurred on the following dates: Liana: 11/14, Sam: 11/30

Day by Day Lesson Plan Overview

9/12/17
Topic: Sacred and Secular Text
Objectives
• Students will be able to demonstrate correct solfege for measures 1-12 in Sing Alleluia.
• Students will be able to analyze the text for Sing Alleluia and Hamisha Asar and determine whether the pieces are sacred or secular.

Discussion questions
• What is the difference between sacred and secular?
• Look at the words we just sang. Talk to your neighbor about what you thought of when you first started singing the words.

9/14/17
Topic: Authentic Music
Objectives
• Students will be able to move their bodies to the various groupings in 7/8.
• Students will be able to describe the term “authentic” as it pertains to music.

Discussion questions
• Talk to your neighbor about what you think of when you hear the term “authentic.”
• What does it mean to sing a song “authentically?”

9/22/17
Topic: Music and Emotion
Objectives
• Students will be able to demonstrate a forward tone while singing Sing Alleluia
• Students will compare the phrasing between Sing Alleluia and Adinu

Discussion questions
• What comes to mind when you hear the word “Alleluia”?
• How do you feel when you listen to the melody of Adinu?

9/26/17
Topic: Similarities and Differences
Objectives
• Students will evaluate a performance of Adinu
• Students will compare elements of Sufism with Christianity
• Students will explain the difference between inter-religious and intra-religious

Discussion questions
• What similarities and differences can you draw between Sufism and Christianity?
• Can you explain what the composers mean when they say, “inter-religious harmony”?

9/28/17
Topic: Similarities and Differences
Objective
• Students will compare elements of Islam and Christianity with Judaism.

Discussion questions
• What similarities and differences can you draw between the three religions we have discussed so far?
• How do you feel about learning about other religions and cultures?

10/2/17
Topic: Stereotypes and Generalizations
Objectives
• Students will sing through Sing Alleluia.
• Students will sing through the Hamisha Asar chorus without music.
• Students will compare events associated with the Alhambra Decree with other events throughout history.
• Students will discuss the effects of stereotypes and generalizations.
Discussion Questions
- Do you think it’s important to learn about other religions being persecuted?
- Although the Alhambra Decree was in 1492, can you think of other past or current events that can compare?

10/4/17
Topic: Conflict
Objectives
- Students will sing measures 4-9 of Adinu with a forward tone.
- Students will describe some of the history associated with the conflicts between Israel and Palestine.
Discussion Questions
- What refugee crises are going on today?
- How do you handle disagreement with friends?

10/10/17
Topic: Review
Objectives
- Students will compare regions of the world with religious beliefs.
Discussion Questions
- What have you enjoyed and/or not enjoyed learning so far?
- After learning about the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic religions, did you find that you had stereotyped or generalized groups of people based on their beliefs? How do you feel about that?

10/12/17-10/26/17
- The students are working towards a concert so I observed for 2 weeks.

10/30/17
Topic: Patriotic Music and Religion
Objective
- Students will sight-read new Veteran’s Day music and Winter concert music
Discussion Questions
- How do you feel about the word “God” in a piece of patriotic music?

11/1/17
Topic: Final lesson
Objectives
- Students will sing the melody of Adinu in unison
- Students will the alto and second soprano line on solfege
- Students will perform all three parts of Adinu
Data Collection

In this next section, I will discuss my methods and rationales for data collection including interviews, observations, and artifacts. With Melinda I had unstructured, informal, and in-depth interviews. With the students, I interviewed seven students in two separate focus groups. Based off of the data from the first focus group, I selected three students who I had additional questions for and would also represent extreme sampling: Camilla, Aubrey, and Amala. With the choir parents, principal, and student teacher I conducted semi-structured interviews. My plans for each of these interviews, including additional data collection, are outlined in the next section. The interviews were broken down by minutes as follows:

- Melinda 1: 17:39
- Melinda 2: 38:30
- Melinda 3: 1:25:28
- Focus Group 1: 37:29
- Focus Group 2: 39:23
- Camilla: 23:24
- Aubrey: 18:47
- Amala: 24:52
- Sandra: 21:51
- Ms. Abbott: 19:49
- Liana: 31:50
- Sam: 24:09

Melinda

The idea of teaching alongside a master teacher made me excited and anxious. While I documented my experiences and interactions, I worked to broaden my understanding of a complex issue. My role as the lead-researcher, but “second in command” when teaching had its benefits and drawbacks, which Hāwera and Taylor (2017) described in their collaborative study that guided Māori children in New Zealand in mathematic lessons. They discussed how the teacher and researchers’ views differed, but their main focus was student learning. At the beginning of the study the teacher led the lessons. However, as the project continued and the
researchers observed and became more knowledgeable with their environment, they could contribute to student learning. The “researchers needed to care about the teacher and her goals and vice versa” (p. 157). Melinda and I both acknowledged the “shifts in power between participants” to achieve our individual and shared goals (p. 156-157).

I conducted three unstructured interviews with Melinda. The first two interviews were to gather information about her programming and how she felt about religious music in the public schools. The first interview occurred during the first week and last for 17 minutes, and the second interview occurred during the second week and lasted 38 minutes. I transcribed and coded the interviews using In Vivo and values coding methods (Saldaña, 2016), which then informed my third interview questions. The third and final interview with Melinda occurred during week 10 and focused on how she felt about the unit and religious music in the public school. That interview lasted 85 minutes. I used the following questions to guide the unstructured interviews with Melinda:

**First Interview Questions**

1. How do you feel about religious music in the classroom?
2. When you think of the term, “religious music” what denomination do you consider?
3. Are you comfortable programming music from the non-dominant perspective?
4. Can you talk about your experiences with religious music as a student?
5. Can you talk about your experience with explaining the background of a piece when there are religious elements?
6. When you are getting ready to program music for the year, what do you think about?

**Second Interview Questions**

1. Have you ever had any complaints because of religious music?
2. If you were to sing a song from a non-dominant religious perspective, and then teach about that religion to give some context to the song, do you think you would get any backlash?

3. How would you say that your opinions towards programming religious music are similar or different to the majority of people in your community?

4. Do you have a specific music curriculum provided by your school or district?

5. If yes, does the curriculum dictate any repertoire selections?

6. Are there any expectations from your administration and/or parents when it comes to what kind of music you program?

7. Do you have to choose specific music for festivals?

8. Are there any “unwritten rules” about choosing music?

9. Is there anyone else in your school or district who gives input on your music programming?

10. How do you feel about teaching the background of a religious piece?

11. When your students sing something do they come to believe it or do they play that part?

**Third Interview Questions**

1. You said, “Even if you don’t believe what the song is saying, just attach your own feelings to it.” Do you do that when you sing a religious piece of music?

2. You said that you usually do Christian music in languages besides English. Why is that?

3. You used the term “ultra-religious” quite a few times during the last interview. Can you explain what this term means to you?

4. You said, “Maybe they could learn something, I wish that I could do that.” What would help you “do that?”

5. You said, “Like if I’m hearing about beliefs that other people have that I think are detrimental to people and society.” Can you give specifics?

6. You mentioned that you feel like you see things “more clear(ly)” than religious people. But, I heard some of the students say they feel bad for people who are not religious because they will not be happy and have not “found Christ” how do you feel about that?

7. You mentioned that you don’t care what people worship as long as they don’t hurt other people. Where is that line? What constitutes “hurting” someone?
8. You mentioned that you do not want to discuss the “negative stuff” about religion. What if it’s to expel a stereotype or generalization?

9. You said, “Music class is more personal” than other classes. Can you explain why or how?

10. Is there an age you consider it appropriate to discuss religion in the public school?

11. Should music always be sung with emotion and expression? What is more important...singing the correct notes, rhythms, and articulations in tune, or singing with emotion and expression?

12. Talk me through your thought process when you are planning out what you are going to say before you discuss the background of a piece...do you plan it out?

13. Your students seem to love the Winter concert the most. But, when I asked three of them if it was moved to January and the Christmas theme removed they seemed sad, but said they would understand. What do you think would be the reaction from the students, parents, community, etc. if you did that?

14. What would make teaching about a piece easier for you? External resources?

15. Should we care about what others believe?

16. How did you feel about this whole process?

17. Is there anything you want to do differently after experiencing this unit?

18. Is there anything you want to do, but won’t because of external factors?

19. What resources would help you?

**Student Focus Groups**

I interviewed seven students in focus groups. The first focus group took place during week 3 and lasted 37 minutes. The second focus group with the same seven students took place during week 9 and lasted 39 minutes. I was interested to see how the second focus group differed from the first. In the first focus group I benefited from an “outsider” perspective (Merriam, 2009). Conducing the second focus group later in the study provided additional perspectives, as I developed a rapport with the students, which proved beneficial with the final focus group (Conway, 2002 & 2003).
The focus groups were beneficial on the surface level because: (a) I could extract a large and diverse set of perspectives in a short amount of time, (b) because of the potential for energetic conversations the data was powerful and insightful, and (c) the students were able to look beyond their own recollections and “mine the historically sediment collective memories and desires” (Kamerelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 903). As I thought about interviewing students I recalled my time as a teacher. Students I had in choir for seven years would often struggle to communicate with me when we spoke one on one. However, if I engaged multiple students in conversation the interactions were usually less awkward and resulted in a variety of and verisimilitude of information. While facilitating the focus group I was reminded of the “parent turned taxi driver” phenomenon. Suddenly when friends are in the car, children forget that their parents are hanging on every word and cataloging topics for further analysis and discussion. Melinda was not present during these sessions, so as to give the students a sense that they were not being graded on what they said.

I had seven students in the focus groups to allow for meaningful discussion and construction of events and ideas (Kozel, 1985, p. 108). As the moderator (a) I made sure the group stayed focused on the topic, (b) I ensured that everyone was able to participate, (c) I kept track of non-verbal communication such as nods of approval or disapproval, and verbally confirmed these interactions, and (d) I listened for overlap during conversations and verbally confirmed anything that might have been difficult to transcribe so that the participants’ words were not misunderstood (Eros, 2014, p. 279-280). I served as an active observer in these groups and spoke only to ask brief questions and facilitate further discussion. After the first focus group, I transcribed and coded the data using In Vivo and values coding (Saldaña, 2016), to inform my second set of questions. The following set of questions were used to guide each focus group:
First Focus Group Questions

1. Name one of your favorite pieces that you have sung in choir at this school.

2. What about that piece made it your favorite?

3. How do you feel about singing music that you are unfamiliar with?

4. How do you feel about singing music from another culture?

5. Do you like to hear about the meaning of a piece?

6. Do you want to learn about the meaning before you begin rehearsal, during the learning process, or right before the performance?

7. How do you feel about singing music that has religious origins?

8. How do you feel when you sing a piece that has an unfamiliar religious origin?

9. When someone tells you they believe something very different from what you believe, how do you feel?

Second Focus Group Questions

1. How do you feel when someone says, “Even if you don’t believe what the song is saying, just attach your own feelings to it.”

2. In our last conversations some of you assumed that I identify as Christian. I never told you how I identify. What made you think that?

3. Have you ever been discriminated against because of your religion?

4. Has this unit got you thinking about how you might have inadvertently stereotyped or generalized religious groups?

5. When you sing a piece of music for an audience do you think more about conveying the meaning, or about singing the correct notes, rhythms, and articulations?

6. Do you think that singing religious music can change a person’s beliefs?

7. What is it about singing religious music that is different from learning about a religion in another class?

8. In the last group their seemed to be a “hierarchy of religions.” There are a variety of religious beliefs in this group. Is one more “right” than another?

9. Emma: You said that you don’t like focusing on the words in religious music because you feel like the religion is “being pushed on you.” Is it the type of music you sing when you feel
that way, or is it how the music is presented? You said that you don’t feel that way with your choir teacher...what about after I worked with the group?

10. Amala, Emma, and Layla: You all used the phrase “I don’t care” when it came to learning about other religions, but you also emphasized that you want to respect others’ beliefs. Can you expand on this?

11. Aubrey: During our interview you told me a few stories about when you approached other people and had honest conversations about their culture, religion, etc. You seem very comfortable and curious about people who might be different than you are. Do you know why that might be?

12. Natalie, Ava, and Camilla: You said you like singing music of a different culture because, “It’s interesting to see all the different perspectives and backgrounds and how it came together.” Can you think of a time when it was either really interesting, or really NOT interesting, and explain why?

**Individual Student Interviews**

When planning this study, I had not intended to interview individual students. However, after I transcribed and coded the first focus group I still had specific questions for individual students. Therefore, I decided to interview three individual students with different backgrounds and perspectives: Amala, Aubrey, and Camilla. I asked them the following questions:

**Questions for Amala**

1. When you learn music from other religions that you are unfamiliar with, you mentioned that you would not want to do it wrong. Can you elaborate on that?

2. What music are you most familiar with?

3. Why do you not speak Arabic at home? How do your parents feel about you not speaking Arabic at home?

4. You mentioned you identify as Palestinian and Arab. Can you elaborate?

5. You mentioned conflicting ideas about music at home, school, and the mosque. How do you navigate these environments?

6. Are your parents supportive of your experience in choir? How do they feel about the songs we are singing?

7. Have you ever been discriminated against because of your religion?
8. Has this unit got you thinking about how you might have inadvertently stereotyped or generalized religious groups?

**Questions for Aubrey**

1. Last time you said, “I like different, unfamiliar music like the one that we were just singing, Bonse Aba.” Can you elaborate on why?

2. How do you feel about the songs we are singing?

3. How do you feel when someone says, “Even if you don’t believe what the song is saying, just attach your own feelings to it?”

4. What is your favorite concert? Why?

5. How do you feel about singing Christian songs in school?

6. How would you feel if the winter concert was moved to January?

7. Have you ever been discriminated against because of your religion?

8. Has this unit got you thinking about how you might have inadvertently stereotyped or generalized religious groups?

**Questions for Camilla**

1. Last time you said, “I think that if we sang songs we are familiar with it would take away from that accomplishment of being in choir and that learning process that makes us want to try harder...there’s just something different...it makes your brain really think in a good way.” Can you elaborate on that?

2. What is your favorite concert? Why?

3. How do you feel about singing Christian songs in school?

4. How would you feel if the winter concert was moved to January?

5. How do you feel about the songs we are singing?

6. Have you ever been discriminated against because of your religion?

7. Has this unit got you thinking about how you might have inadvertently stereotyped or generalized religious groups?
Parents, Administration, and Student Teacher

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the student teacher, two choir parents, and the vice-principal. The semi-structured interviews centered on listening and an emphasis on reconstruction of concrete details (Seidman, 2013). The interviews involved broad questions to understand the background of the participants’ perspectives. The open-ended questions utilized the “grand tour” technique outlined by Spradley (2016, p. 87), which asked participants to reconstruct important experiences. Additional interview questions were more specific to the music curriculum, and involved the programming of religious music and the discussion of any conflicts that arose due to this programming. These conflicts were important to examine while in the field in order to ask important follow-up questions. Yin (2012) indicated that analysis should occur while in the field so that any conflicts that arise during initial interviews can be resolved in subsequent interviews. I asked the following questions:

Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about students singing religious music in the public school?
2. When you hear the term, “religious music,” what genres of music come to mind?
3. How do you feel about students singing religious music from non-dominant perspectives?
4. If students are singing a piece of religious music, do you feel it’s appropriate for the music teacher to teach the facts about that religion? For example, general beliefs, practices, traditions, and holidays?
5. Is there an age you consider it appropriate to discuss religion in the public school?
6. Can you describe any experiences you had with religious music or simply religious topics in your K-12 experience?
7. What are your personal views about religion and public schools? What is appropriate?
8. What is an appropriate amount of Christmas music at a December concert?
9. Have you experienced any conflicts because of religious topics and/or religious music?
10. One student told me they did a unit on world religions in the 6th grades. How did you feel about this unit? Do you see learning about religions and singing about religions differently?

11. Should music always be sung with emotion and expression? What is more important: a) singing the correct notes, rhythms, and articulations in tune, or b) singing with emotion and expression?

**Artifacts**

I included artifacts as part of my data collection such as concert programs, school textbooks, and observation notes (Tobias, 2014). I used “supplementary data sources not to verify whether the stories told in conversation were true but rather to add depth and breadth to these stories (Olson, 2000a). I discussed previous concert programs with Melinda so that I could understand why, from her perspective, she programs the way she does. The programs also helped the participants recall specific moments when they interacted with the music and helped them convey emotions and details.

While the artifacts were not central to my data collection, I considered how “documents and artifacts overlap as categories of data sources…such as textbooks…photos, and displays” (Sandelowski, 2002, p.112). For example, I considered the music we used as an artifact. Melinda, the students, and I examined how the composers set the lyrics to each piece to engage the listener, highlight significant sections, and suggest emotions.

**Notecards**

During my first few lessons I worked to engage the students in discussions regarding the music. Towards the beginning of the lessons I discussed broad topics such as culture, race, ethnicity, and authentic music. I drew on the students’ experiences and incorporated quick think-pair-share questions. After the lessons I would write observation notes consisting of mostly what the students had shared and my thoughts about the lesson. However, as the lessons progressed problems arose. I wanted to teach them about the religions that pertained to the music—
While many of the students were able to share their experiences with Christianity, most of the students knew little about Judaism and Islam. I found myself lecturing about the religions and I noticed the students were less engaged. About two weeks in I sat down to reflect on the lesson for that day and had little to write. I basically wrote down that I lectured, we sang, and the students seemed bored. I recalled that Menard (2015) would provide prompts to students after composition exercises—asking how they felt about the lessons (p. 121). Therefore, I decided to pass out notecards during certain lessons and I asked the students to write down their thoughts about what we were learning. This also made me change my discussion questions to be more meaningful and engaging. The students were not required to participate with the notecards, and providing their names was optional. I transcribed and coded the notecards with the rest of my data.

**Analysis of Data**

In the previous section I explained my data collection methods. In the final section of this chapter I will discuss how I analyzed the data. First, I will explain how I coded the interviews, observations, notecards, and artifacts. Next, I will describe how I situated the participants within Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence framework. Then, I will explain how I crafted poetry using transcripts from one unique day of data collection. Finally, I will end with a discussion of my approach regarding trustworthiness.

**Coding the Interviews**

To confirm that I adhered to the participants’ values and represented their voices I began with *In Vivo* coding, which used the participant’s words verbatim to code the interviews (Saldaña, 2016, p. 105). I chose *In Vivo* coding because of the controversial and sometimes sensitive nature of my topic. I wanted to ensure that my analysis represented the values and
voices of the participants. During my second cycle, I used a values coding method, which applied codes “that reflect a participant’s values, attitude, and beliefs, representing his or her perspective or worldview” (p. 131). I also used values coding to examine and analyze my observation notes, artifacts, and notecards. After extracting and combining themes, I completed a third cycle of coding that focused on broad ideas and addressed my research questions as “meta categories” (p. 279).

**Intercultural Competence Framework**

While reading and coding, I kept noticing how participants interacted with Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence framework—in, out, forward, and back. During my second cycle coding I noted when their attitudes, knowledge/skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes would shift. Deardorff explained that people do not move logically through the framework and “it is important to pay as much attention to the development process – of how one acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 2). Therefore, in order to answer my final research question, I situated the participants within her framework (Figure 3.2). First Melinda, then the students, and finally the student teacher, administrator, and parents. In the results chapter I will explain the framework in greater in detail.

**Transcripts as Poetry**

During the final week of data collection, Melinda had a last minute request to perform at a Veteran’s Day event and she had to pass out new music. At first I was a little disappointed because my time working on the religious music unit was limited to ten minutes that day. However, as I observed her working on the music and listened to the songs, I realized there was a religious element woven throughout the Veteran’s Day program as well. Instead of working on our religious music for 10 minutes, I simply passed out notecards and said, “How do you feel
about the word *god* in religious music?” Almost all of the students were eager to engage with this question. After I transcribed and coded their answers, three distinct viewpoints emerged. However, their answers were so passionate that I could not summarize them in my own words. Therefore, I crafted three poems using extracted and rearranged sentences and words, which captured the perspective of each participant (Poindexter, 2002).

![Process model of intercultural competence](image)

**Figure 3.2** Process model of intercultural competence. Reprinted by permission (Deardorff, 2006).
Conveying participants meaning through researcher-crafted poems can be a poignant and concise way to represent their voices. For example, Poindexter (2002) used only the participants’ words to represent their experiences and described this as a personal process that needs to be unique to each project. I sought a transcript analysis that would help me mine the language of the participants and represent their voices in a more artistic medium. For example, Richardson (1994) explained, “Like the lived experiences they represent, poems are emotionally and morally charged. Lyric poems concretize emotions, feelings, and moods—the most private kind of feelings—so as to recreate experience itself to another person” (p. 9). The three poems allow the reader to see the variety of student perspectives in a clear, concise, and artistic medium. Richardson further described that participants do not share their experiences in chronological order, and all events are not “stuffed into the same narrative” (p. 9). The poetry in the current study presents readers with the complexity of lived experiences.

**Trustworthiness**

The use of triangulation—integrating “information from diverse sources” allowed me to interpret the phenomenon from various perspectives within my bounded case (Willig, 2013, p. 300). While the study of one school limited my ability to generalize findings to other situations, Firestone (1993) discussed how findings can still be beneficial through case-to-case transfers. For example, in Chapter 1 I explained controversies that emerged because of religious topics in the public schools. In Chapter 5 I will discuss how these controversies exist in varying degrees in the current study and across related research. Even when formal generalizations are not made, readers with experiential knowledge form their own generalizations (Stake, 2005). When case studies “come close to lived situations” they can immediately relate to and impact the reader (Barrett, 2014).
Another important aspect of this project, allowing teachers to make their own transfers and applications, is supported by Simon’s (2009) definition of the aim of case study research: “to generate an in-depth understanding of a specific topic….and to inform professional practice” (Simon, 2009, p. 21). In addition, I considered Melinda an expert in the field because of her knowledge of choral music and choral pedagogy. Especially during the third interview, she was able to challenge and evaluate my interpretation of the data, which Willig (2013) explained as “respondent validation” (p. 325). Willig cautioned researchers not to misinterpret validation as acquiescence. Melinda is a highly educated and experienced choir teacher. She willingly and without reservation responded to and challenged my interpretations of the data.

In this chapter I explained the design of the current study—a narrative instrumental case study. Then, I outlined the details of my bounded case—a Southern U. S. public middle school choral program. Next, I introduced my participants within that system—the choir teacher, students, student teacher, parents, and vice principle. Then, I explained the unit on religious world music and outlined the lesson plans. Finally, I described my analysis—the data I collected, how I coded the data, additional data interpretation through poetry, Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence framework, and trustworthiness. In Chapter 4, I will further clarify my analysis while I highlight the findings in detail.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

The following chapter is divided into four sections. (a) Research question one—how the teacher Melinda approaches repertoire and pedagogy related to diverse religious musics. (b) Research question two—the teacher’s, students’, student teacher’s, parents’, and vice principal’s perspectives of the researcher-designed unit titled *Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds*. (c) Research question three—how the participants moved through Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence process framework from my perspective. (d) An unexpected day of data collection—how the students felt about the word god in patriotic music.

Research Question One

*How does a middle school choir teacher approach the programming and teaching of diverse religious music in the classroom?*

When examining the data related this research question, I discovered that Melinda avoids programming religious music from all perspectives. However, because of her extensive background in Western choral music education, she most frequently programs Christian music. She openly discussed why she avoids programming music from the non-Christian perspective. Her reasons for this avoidance can be separated into three main themes: (a) authenticity, (b) perceived success, and (c) lack of resources.

“Making a blanket statement:” Authenticity

Melinda worries about performing all music authentically. She recognizes that her students enjoy learning music from other religions and cultures. However, she expressed a fear that she might “disrespect” others, especially when performing unfamiliar religious music. In addition, she is concerned she might misspeak and talk about “the negative stuff.” She stated, “Religions sometimes don't accept each other, or don't accept certain people...if I talked about that, maybe that would be sort of like me persecuting that religion.” When I asked her to identify
some of those stereotypes and “the negative stuff” that would come up she could not think of any examples. I could not tell if she honestly could not think of any, or if she was so afraid of even verbalizing her negative thoughts. She seemed to equate negativity with what she called “ultra-religious music,” which she described as music that makes a judgement statement about others’ beliefs. She commented that ultra-religious music and ultra-religious people try to improve the lives of people who are not religious.

In an effort to circumvent discussions of religion as they pertain to the music, Melinda shared that she avoids “making a blanket statement” when talking about religion with her students. Rather than comment on a specific religion, she provides a neutral emotion, with which she believes all of her students can relate. For example, when I observed her while working on Keep Your Lamps she said, “This song is a spiritual and based in Christianity...but I like to have my own interpretation of this song.” A few weeks earlier when rehearsing Bonse Aba she said, “If you are not Christian, think about what the music, the rhythm, and pitches say to you, not necessarily what it really means...so do you think this should be an exciting song?” The students nodded and she said, “Ok, then let’s be excited, measure 54.”

“I want my classes to sound the best they can:” Programming for Success

The following intrinsic and extrinsic motivators influenced Melinda’s programming: (a) personal feelings of success, (b) student success, (c) scores at festivals and contests, (d) community and parent perceptions, and (e) administrative approval. While she is open to programming various genres, she is drawn to music that she can teach and the students can understand. She stated, “I'll do any type of music. It's just me knowing how to make it sound good...if it's not going to be great the kids are not going to like it, they're not going to feel successful.” There exists a perceived balance between programming for student’s musical
growth, exposure to diverse music, and providing songs “they can relate to.” She juggles all of these needs while finding music that is the appropriate difficulty level, range, and voicing. However, success is a top priority for her. For example, two weeks before a concert I noticed her demeanor began to change. She seemed nervous about me teaching new repertoire that would not be performed on the concert. When I asked her if she wanted the religious music unit placed on hold for a week she was relieved. I kept coming to classes to act as an observer and helped with sectionals as needed. During this time the rehearsals became more rigorous. Melinda went into a “performance mode” where almost all of class time focused on the three songs for that concert. When we spoke about this she said, “I'm very performance based, and I want my classes to sound the best they can.” When I asked her if she would consider programming religious music from non-dominant perspectives, such as Adinu or Hamisha Asar she said, “It would have to be performed at something.” Everything Melinda programs is tied to performances and ultimately success, and she is uncomfortable teaching religious music with which she cannot relate.

“I just need time:” Lack of Resources

Melinda grew up going to a Methodist church every Sunday, and while she knew by the time she was in middle school that she identified as atheist, she still loved singing in the church choir. This passion for choral music continued in high school, undergraduate, and graduate school, where the repertoire and pedagogy was almost always from the Western Choral tradition. During this time, she was mostly exposed to Christian music. She indicated that she does not know enough about other genres and stated, “Because I just need time. And that's the thing there's never any of as teacher, ever.” When I observed Melinda teach I never saw her sit back and relax. She teaches from 7:05-12:00 every day without a break, escorts her class to lunch,
attends a lunch meeting with her cohort, supervises recess, and then has her “planning period,” which from what I observed was mostly meetings with students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Melinda wants to learn about unfamiliar music, she just also needs to eat, sleep, and go to the bathroom. Beyond finding music, learning about the background, and translating the piece, Melinda expressed that she does not have the pedagogical content knowledge to teach music from other religions and cultures.

When we had our final interview she had just finished programming for the Christmas concert. We talked about how the majority of the music is Christmas. I asked her, “What about students who don’t celebrate Christmas or who celebrate other holidays? What is our responsibility to those students?” At first she quickly responded, “I would love if we could have representations of everybody’s religion.” Then she paused and said,

But actually that’s not true...In my perfect world I would have representations of no one’s religion... I could probably do a better job of searching for new and different things...like if I wanted to evenly represent every single person's different view or religion. I don't know that I would be able to that. And I think in a perfect world...where I would have a lot of time to research more...it probably could be done, and that would be awesome, and I would love to do that.

I asked her what would help her program religious music from the non-dominant perspective, and she indicated that she wants more arrangements that are appropriate for the middle school voice. She also would also like recorded examples of the text when it is in an unfamiliar language. She appreciates when publishers include detailed information in the music and offer pronunciation and performance guides. Still, when she considered how these resources would help her she was resistant to change and stated, “And so, getting myself to reflect and change, even a little bit takes a lot, not just about this, but about anything in teaching.”
Research Question Two

Research Question Two: What are the reactions of the teacher, students, student-teacher, parents, and administrator when a researcher-designed unit titled *Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds* is implemented in a middle school choral curriculum?

Melinda

“I felt myself getting in a panic:” Initial fears. Melinda was nervous about this unit. When teaching, she glazes over the topic of religion as it pertains to the music, so to have an entire unit on religious music made her nervous. In my original method I had planned for Melinda and I to team teach. I was going to design the lesson plans and then have Melinda choose what she wanted to present. She asked if I would do the first few lessons so that she could watch me. After the first lesson Melinda was pleased to see that the students did not “freak out,” and she thought she might be able to talk about the religion as it pertained to the music. After the first lesson she stated,

I felt myself getting...in a panic at first because that's how I normally get whenever we have even a smidgen of those kind of conversations. Because I just don't want to say the wrong thing, or say something offensive...so it was cool because I sort of got to like watch it happen, and like it was fine.

I asked her to talk more about why she gets in a panic and she went back to her concern over authenticity. She mentioned how religion is tied to culture, and that many of her students “would define their culture by their race.” She sees race, culture, and religion as being woven together. While she identifies as atheist, she knows that religion played a part in her cultural identity. Her religious identity places her in the non-dominant perspective, so she does not feel that she can talk about religion. However, she recognized that her race places her in the dominant perspective and she stated,

Especially because I'm white...people have a lot of preconceived notions about me just based on how I look...I'm a white girl with brown hair, you know? And my beliefs and
things are very different than most people around here who look like me...I've just come to realize that a lot of people aren't going to understand and maybe they will, but I just, I don't know...I know a lot of kids...learn stuff from their parents and what their parents say...it's almost like that's religion, you know? And if I try to say anything different...I don't know, the thing is maybe they could learn something...I wish that I could do that.

“I'm a curious and interested person:” A middle ground. Eventually Melinda started to feel like she could talk about the background of the music. For about one minute during the fourth week she went over the translation to *Bonse Aba*, but it was minimal. She did not ask the students for their input and they quickly got to the music. She only focused on the positive aspects of the piece. When I asked why she did not go in-depth she said, “I'm a curious and interested person...it's not like I mind learning about other religions, I just don't seek it out...unless it's going to show something better to me than what I already perceive it to be.” We had to find a middle ground with this unit. We never got to team teach like I had hoped. She just was not comfortable working on *Adinu* or *Hamisha Asar*.

“A private thing:” Perceptions of discussion. Melinda is concerned about generalizing her students. She sees religion as way to sort people into stereotypical groups and stated, “We’re all different.” She does not like how she is stereotyped as an atheist, and it is important to her that people respect the religious identities of others as “a private thing for them and their family.” When she did talk about the background of a religious piece of music she quickly took the meaning of the piece to focus on history and culture. And this was a stretch for her. When I asked her how she felt about the unit overall she said,

I feel like it is awesome. It makes me like think about a million things, and it makes me nervous...and it definitely makes me want to do things a little differently...getting myself to really change, especially just because I've been doing this for a long time, I'm very stuck...and so...it definitely just gives me a different perspective, and so I think that's awesome...it's also shown me that like by you doing it...showing me that I can talk about in depth things with them, and they will be receptive and not freak out...I would like to do that more. I just need to make myself prepare to do it the right way...because a lot of what I do right now is just very like, I've done the same way, so it's awesome, yeah.
Students

“It’s like an adventure:” Receptive attitudes. From the beginning the students were receptive to learning about the religious background of the various pieces. In the focus groups, the students talked about why they enjoyed singing diverse music and learning about the background of the piece. They mentioned feeling like they had accomplished something new when they learned unfamiliar music. Natalie said, “I think it’s like an adventure and a journey to learn new things.” However, they prefer to learn the information in small chunks. They told me when I talked for too long about a piece they started to get bored.

During class reflections, the majority of the students said they enjoyed learning about other religions and cultures. However, one student in particular said, “I didn’t feel it was relevant to know this stuff.” A few students were neutral and made comments like, “I thought that it was interesting. I didn’t like it, but I also didn’t dislike it.” However, the majority of students shared Camilla’s sentiments:

I have enjoyed learning about how different and alike religion across the world is...it made me realize other people think different things too. You know, there's going to be different points of view, different religions are going to think different things about other religions...we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us and cause big problems...it's a different take. It's a chance for me to see...what other people are going to say...other people are going to tell you that they believe in this, and I'm just going to have to accept it, and not think negative things about them because they believe in something different.

“More British:” Clashing cultures. In the focus group the students brought up the word “proper” when discussing language and culture and described the majority of students at Cypress Middle School as proper. Layla defined proper as avoiding slang words and using “complete sentences.” Aubrey mentioned that using big words makes you proper. Emma described proper as being polite, avoiding the word “y’all,” and “being more British.” They seemed to equate Western classical music as proper, and certain dialects within the Southern United States with
improper. Camilla expressed how the religious songs she sings in school are more proper than the songs she sings in church and stated, “We sing worship songs at church...in choir...the songs are more proper...we focus on pronunciation and our posture...it is different, and I like that.”

“It’s something that I could relate to”: School music vs. church music. Emma is completely comfortable singing religious music in school. However, she wants to focus on the musical elements. When the background of a song is presented she only wants the facts. Emma currently identifies as agnostic, but she used to attend church and said,

The music I sang in church...made me uncomfortable because it felt like a religion was being pushed on me. And I'm agnostic. And the choir music, it's just kind of welcoming...it shows you the religion...this is what this religion is about...I feel very comfortable with this choir's music.

Aubrey talked about how she is comfortable singing religious music in all settings. She likes to sing “music from different cultures” because she moves between the Christian and Buddhist perspective based on whether she is with her mom or her dad and she said,

When I see music from different cultures I’m like, well I get this because I've sung music from both perspectives of a religion...I want to learn about all of them. I love how people worship their own different gods, and it’s really cool to me how they do different rituals.

Amala loves singing in choir and explained how her religious life sometimes clashes with her love of music because according to her religious practices, “it’s not really good to like listen to a lot of music.” Choir is a place where she experiences music, and she is excited to sing Adinu because her home music, church music, and school music do not mix and she said,

Like when I go to the mosque we don't sing music at all...unless it's like, for God or like for the prophets, then those songs are ok...but when I get handed music at school, like here, and it's from different religions, like when I got that music...Music of the Muslim world...I got excited because I knew it was going to be in Arabic...it's something that I could relate to.
Ava also enjoys singing music from her own religion and said, “I like when I get Christian music, because I’m a Christian, but I also like getting other religious types of music because I feel like it’s cool to see what other people believe.”

“Religion is fun”: Active learning. During the final focus group, the students shared why they liked singing and learning about religious music from various perspectives in choir. They compared leaning about religion in choir to learning about religion in their social studies class. They felt that music added a layer of interest because of the expression required to sing. They thought of learning about religion in desks as boring. The conversation went as follows:

Emma: You put all of your emotions into songs, but not really into class work. It’s better in choir.

Camilla: Same, and we didn't really learn about religion in choir like until you came, we didn't...

Aubrey: We didn’t know

Camilla: Nobody really talked about religion and its application to music

Emma: Yeah, or like its history.

Camilla: Yeah.

Aubrey: So thank you...

Emma: It’s definitely not the religion that’s boring, it’s the classes that are boring.

All: (Laughing)

Aubrey: Religion is fun

Emma: Yeah

Natalie: Always fun.

“Maybe one-day people will learn from their mistakes:” Levels of understanding.

While teaching Hamisha Asar I decided to begin with an explanation of the Alhambra Decree
(also known as the Edict of Expulsion) of 1492, in which Jews in Spain were persecuted for their religious beliefs and forced to convert to Catholicism, flee, or die. *Hamisha Asar* is in Ladino, which is a Romance language from the Sephardic Jewish tradition. The composer, Flory Jagoda, grew up in Bosnia because her ancestors had fled Spain in 1492. During the discussion the students were visibly upset and immediately connected my explanation of the Alhambra Decree to the Holocaust, which I then explained was why Flory Jagoda ended up in the United States (Davcheva & Fay, 2016).

After our discussion I asked the students how they felt about the lesson that day. I also asked if they thought it was important to learn about these historical events that related to the music we were singing and if so, to elaborate on why. Almost all of the student felt it was important to learn about these events, and their “why” fit into the following three categories: (a) Important for musical understanding. For example, one student wrote, “I feel the background affects the mood of the song, so that's easier to sing.” (b) Important for cultural understanding. For example, a student expressed, “It is important to learn about religions or cultures...because they have impact on our religions and cultures today. It is interesting to make connections from across the world with modern-day beliefs.” (c) Important for social understanding. For example, there were ten students who had societal concerns and wrote that they did not want “history to repeat itself.” They explained that people need to learn about these events because “there is a lot of hate going on right now due to religion, and we don't want a few people’s prejudice to repeat history with a different religious group.”

**Administration, Parents, and Student Teacher**

“I don’t want my kids to be ignorant”: Different perspectives. Vice Principle Abbott, Parent Liana, Parent Sam, and Student Teacher Sandra discussed how they felt the unit was a
great idea. Parent Liana views religion from a Christian perspective. She sees religion as a solution to “the way the world is...the violence...now that it’s honing in on schools.” She sees religion as a way to help “misguided people” and stated, “Muslim, Jewish, all of it, it should be an open forum...whatever you practice it should be allowed...I feel like it would better the school.” Parent Liana recognized the fact that she had a Christian perspective and stated, “We need all godly aspects, to help shape students, guide them, protect them.” She felt that when religion was “taken it out of schools, that’s when it all went down.” She wants religion to be a large focus and stated, “So bring that back. Have them sing it, you know, in choir, for special performances, I’m all for it.”

Parent Sam sees religious music as a way for students to “see and hear and feel different perspectives.” He described his family as a “Christian household, but he wants his children to have a global perspective of religions and stated,

I don’t know if you can cement what you believe in if you don’t know what else is around...your viewpoint is so skewed...you end up being ignorant and I don’t want my kids to be ignorant. I don’t want them to grow up necessarily like I did...I want my kids to end up being better because of my failure...I look back...we can do this better, we can do this different...that’s the goal anyway...and this starts with...school. It just does.

Similar to Liana, Ms. Abbott thinks “they need to be aware that there are different religions out there.” However, she sees a lack of religion as a problem and stated,

Especially if they leave here and they go home and they don’t go to church...they don’t have that that strong...household. I think letting them be aware of it and getting that here, I think that’s what they need to be good productive citizens.

“How does it relate to our song?”: Music first. Student Teacher Sandra saw going into depth as a problem and felt that the teachers should only discuss religion “as much as it would relate to the piece...get like the basics of it and why are we singing this, how does it relate to our song, and relate it back to the music.” Sandra was more worried about the pedagogy of teaching
the content. She worries about balancing singing with talking and said, “How would you do this without talking at them? That’s hard.”

**Research Question Three**

**When implementing a researcher-designed unit titled *Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds* framed from an intercultural competence perspective (Deardorff, 2006), how do the teacher and students move through Deardorff’s ICC framework?**

**Situating the Participants within the Intercultural Competence Framework**

Deardorff (2006) outlined an intercultural competence framework, resulting in the following elements: attitudes, knowledge/skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. The participants all displayed varying degrees of cultural competence amongst each other and themselves. Deardorff explained moving through the framework as “a lifelong process—there is no one point at which an individual becomes completely interculturally competent. Thus, it is important to pay as much attention to the development process – of how one acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 2). She emphasized reflection as “critical” during this process.

In order to answer my final research question, I situated the participants within this framework. First Melinda, then the students, and finally the administrator, parents, and student teacher. Each section is organized using Deardorff’s elements and shows how through language and communication the participants moved around the framework—displaying varying degrees of intercultural competence, which continually shifted. Rather than a prescribed and orderly progression, I saw the participants weaving in, out, forward, back, and around Deardorff’s framework.

When reading each framework begin on the left side with attitudes. Read the columns from top to bottom before moving to the next column. Note how participants give conflicting
statements. These contradictions occur between participants, and they even contradict themselves. Deardorff explained that one unit is not enough to develop intercultural competence and that “intercultural scholars in particular seemed to feel strongly that one component alone is not enough to ensure competence” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 248). Participants also jump across the framework—moving from intercultural competent attitudes, to displaying desired external outcomes, and then back to attitudes, continually shifting throughout the model. Deardorff noted that “the degree of appropriateness and effectiveness would be more limited than if the internal outcome had also been achieved (p. 257). Therefore, the purpose of this framework is to show how the participants move through an “ongoing process of intercultural competence...it is a continual process of improvement, and as such, one may never achieve ultimate intercultural competence” (p. 257).

**Melinda’s Framework.** Melinda values other cultures and enjoys learning about others, especially her students. However, she separates religion from culture—seeing culture as positive and religion as negative. This framework (Figure 4.1) shows how Melinda struggled with the concept of religion as interfering with students’ individual identities. She sees religion as a dangerous way of generalizing a group of people into negative stereotypes. Rather than dispel these stereotypes with the students, she just ignores the topic all together. However, she sees the value in offering students a global perspective of religious music, and can see herself incorporating more diverse religious music and discussing the background of those pieces with her students.

**The Student’s Framework.** Most of the students expressed a desire to learn about other people, especially when learning about religion and experiencing unfamiliar religious music. They were open and curious, but also revealed that they did not always care about understanding
other religions. This framework shows how the students displayed varying stages of knowledge and skills, and wanted to learn about religions that were unfamiliar (Figure 4.2). While the students try to avoid stereotyping, they are still grappling with what it even means to stereotype a person or group of people. They want to understand and respect each other. I was consistently struck by their openness and honesty towards each other, and their willingness to forgive each other’s assumptions and move forward.

The Vice Principal, Student Teacher, and Parent Framework. I spent ten weeks interacting with and observing Melinda and her students. Therefore, my interpretation of the intercultural competence of Vice Principals Abbott, Student Teacher Sandra, Parent Liana, and Parent Sam, which is based off our approximately 30-minute interviews, is shallow compared to the students and Melinda. I did not work closely enough with them to discover their internal or external desired outcomes. However, they indicated desired internal and external outcomes they would like to see their students and teachers display. Therefore, I have included those quotes in that section of the framework (Figure 4.3). They all had a positive attitude towards religious music with which they were unfamiliar. In addition, they verbalized that they believe it is important for students to learn about people who are different from them. However, Vice Principal Abbott and Student Teacher Sandra showed a concern over engaging in controversial topics such as religion on a deep level with students and seemed to understand the line between preaching and teaching more than the parents did.
If they feel sorry for me. Bless their hearts. But really it doesn’t bother me at all. I don’t care what other people believe.

I’ve just come to realize that a lot of people aren’t gonna understand. People who are religious feel like they have the clarity or the upper, something... I just feel like they’re silly.

If they feel sorry for me. Bless their hearts. But really it doesn’t bother me at all. Not everybody can think beyond themselves.

My job is to teach them stuff they don’t already know. We should know the most we can about the general culture and/or religion of where our students come from.

I think they are kind of dumb sometimes and I know that’s like a horrible thing to say.

I’ve just never wanted to like put myself out there.

I hope that I know how to do more things...as authentically as possible.

I don’t want to get into any of the like negative stuff.

I don’t get those like religious like things...this sounds like a thing that religions say and it’s just pretty typical.

I just wish that I knew how to do more things...as authentically as possible.

I would just want to like give it time or give it voice...I just wish there was no religion so that everyone could get along.

Figure 4.1 Melinda’s framework
Most white Americans are usually Christian. I want people to open up to Christianity and be saved. I feel like people look like the religion that they follow, like I look Muslim. It also reminded me about what's happening in the world today where the country Israel is split now because of the war between Palestine and Israel.

It doesn't really like relate to me, so I don't really care. I was a little bored learning about the religions. I understand that they are important to history, but I was bored. We all need to know the differences and similarities in culture and religion.

Huh, maybe they aren't all terrorists. We don't even know there was other religions but Christianity. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity.

Most white Americans are usually Christian. I actually really enjoyed learning about where the music came from...I've always liked learning about cultures. I want people to open up to Christianity and be saved.

I feel like people look like the religion that they follow, like I look Muslim. It also reminded me about what's happening in the world today where the country Israel is split now because of the war between Palestine and Israel. We all need to know the differences and similarities in culture and religion.

The only religion that I really like know, know stuff about is Christianity. I have intentionally stereotyped people before I knew. I've been stereotyped, I think we all have personally, I don't like it.

I was a little bored learning about the religions. I understand that they are important to history, but I was bored. We all need to know the differences and similarities in culture and religion. It doesn't really like relate to me, so I don't really care. I feel like people look like the religion that they follow, like I look Muslim.

I originally thought that all Jews believed the same things. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity.

If they're speakin' about God, I'm gonna automatically connect it to Christianity. I thought that was just Muslims in general. I haven't stereotyped anyone.

You know believing in Christianity doesn't make you a better person than a Muslim... or a Buddhist... it depends on the person. You don't have to talk about other people's religion like it's bad. It's just what they believe.

If they're speakin' about God, I'm gonna automatically connect it to Christianity. I thought that was just Muslims in general. I haven't stereotyped anyone.

Other people think different things too...there's going to be different points of view... different religions... we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us, and cause big problems. Other people think different things too...there's going to be different points of view... different religions... we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us, and cause big problems.

We all need to know the differences and similarities in culture and religion. It's always important to learn how everyone is different so we don't offend anyone. There is a lot of hate going on right now due to religion.

I typically kind of generalize some people to be Christian. I honestly don't care because I didn't feel it was relevant to know this stuff.

Other people think different things too...there's going to be different points of view... different religions... we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us, and cause big problems. I honestly don't care because I didn't feel it was relevant to know this stuff.

You don't have to talk about other people's religion like it's bad. It's just what they believe. I haven't stereotyped anyone.

You didn't hear nothin' about any other religion except Christianity, so socially, they would promote what they think is the best. You know believing in Christianity doesn't make you a better person than a Muslim... or a Buddhist... it depends on the person.

People tend to put what they believe most on top. Other people think different things too...there's going to be different points of view... different religions... we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us, and cause big problems. It could be important to some people but not really me... that'll probably be located somewhere else.

You didn't hear nothin' about any other religion except Christianity, so socially, they would promote what they think is the best. You know believing in Christianity doesn't make you a better person than a Muslim... or a Buddhist... it depends on the person, I really think we all have personally, I don't like it. I haven't stereotyped anyone.

You don't have to talk about other people's religion like it's bad. It's just what they believe. I haven't stereotyped anyone.

I thought that was just Muslims in general. I haven't stereotyped anyone.

Other people think different things too...there's going to be different points of view... different religions... we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us, and cause big problems.

Huh, maybe they aren't all terrorists. We don't even know there was other religions but Christianity. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity.

Other people think different things too...there's going to be different points of view... different religions... we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us, and cause big problems. It could be important to some people but not really me... that'll probably be located somewhere else.

I honestly don't care because I didn't feel it was relevant to know this stuff. I thought that was just Muslims in general. I haven't stereotyped anyone.

You know believing in Christianity doesn't make you a better person than a Muslim... or a Buddhist... it depends on the person. You don't have to talk about other people's religion like it's bad. It's just what they believe.

I originally thought that all Jews believed the same things. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity.

It's always important to learn how everyone is different so we don't offend anyone. There is a lot of hate going on right now due to religion.

Other people think different things too...there's going to be different points of view... different religions... we have to grow to accept these things, and not let them get to us, and cause big problems.

I really enjoy learning about where the music came from...I've always liked learning about cultures. I actually really enjoyed learning about where the music came from...I've always liked learning about cultures.

I typically kind of generalize some people to be Christian. I honestly don't care because I didn't feel it was relevant to know this stuff.

I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity.

I was a little bored learning about the religions. I understand that they are important to history, but I was bored. We all need to know the differences and similarities in culture and religion.

Huh, maybe they aren't all terrorists. We don't even know there was other religions but Christianity. I didn't even know there was other religions but Christianity.

I was a little bored learning about the religions. I understand that they are important to history, but I was bored. We all need to know the differences and similarities in culture and religion. It's always important to learn how everyone is different so we don't offend anyone.
Requisite Attitudes
Respect, Openness, Curiosity, Discovery

Knowledge and Skills
Cultural Awareness, Observe, Evaluate

Internal Outcome
Adaptability, Empathy, Flexibility

External Outcome
Effective and Appropriate Behavior

It should be an open forum...an open discussion...just to get different views out.

I just don't think I know too much about it.

I haven’t had a lot of experience singing Non-Western music, even in like college, most of our stuff was like Latin.

We need to be better versed and educated on different cultures, different religions.

I wouldn’t see it as being me offending any one because it’s stated in the Bible.

Anything to do that like edifices or like verbally proclaims...who Jesus is...we are 100% for it.

I don’t want my kids to be ignorant.

How am I going to teach these kids something that I don’t even know?

I just don’t think I know too much about it.

I want my kids to see and hear and feel different perspectives from other families, other religions...other beliefs.

That's what I'm most proud of here...the diversity...the willingness to be more accepting of others and people that are different.

You shouldn’t want to make one religion, place it above, one more than the other.

I would hope that we would want to expose our students to lots of things.

I wouldn’t want my child to be denied her freedom in celebrating her religion because someone who doesn’t believe is speaking loudly.

Do your very best, and expose them to anything and everything.

I'm probably going to go more towards what I’m familiar with.

I'm probably going to go more towards what I’m familiar with.

Explain differences so they can have a clear understanding between the two...broaden their horizons.

Where the scales actually turn...it's when we said, 'We just don't need to have prayer in school, we don't need to have the Bible school anymore.' It either rubs people the wrong way, or it hurts their feelings.

I'm so glad that the songs we sing around the holidays are based on...God like coming down to this rat hole of a planet and rescuing some people

It goes back to that exposure which I think is key.

The world is made up of different types of people.

People seem to be more comfortable singing...Christianity based music.

It goes back to knowing your students, knowing your parents...good communication.

I guess that I don’t know much about the religion [Judaism]

We need to know again that that this is a huge world.

I haven’t had a lot of experience singing Non-Western music, even in like college, most of our stuff was like Latin.

They need to know again that that this is a huge world.

I just don’t want to go too far in depth.

I don’t think it’s fair to stereotype, make assumptions.

It goes back to knowing your students, knowing your parents...good communication.

I don’t want to go too far in depth.

It's important for students to get other perspectives and try to see things from other people's points of view, to keep their minds open.

The world is made up of different types of people.

I just don’t want to go too far in depth.

I don’t think it’s fair to stereotype, make assumptions.

I just don’t want to go too far in depth.

I just don’t want to go too far in depth.

It should be an open forum...an open discussion...just to get different views out.

I just don’t want to go too far in depth.

I just don’t want to go too far in depth.

I don’t think it’s fair to stereotype, make assumptions.

Figure 4.3 Vice principal, student teacher, and parent framework
God and Politics: An Unexpected Day

On my second to last day at Cypress Middle, Melinda had to change up her lesson plan at the last minute. The women’s choir was asked to sing at a Veteran’s Day event, and so Melinda needed to teach two new songs quickly. She let me know that I would have the last 10 minutes of class that day. They worked on arrangements of *American the Beautiful* and *Song Sung Hero*. The word allegiance came up and she asked the students what that meant. No one raised their hand. She explained that “allegiance is a thing” and went on to talk about how the text discussed allegiance as being loyal or faithful to our country. Her conversation with the students encouraged me to use my 10 minutes at the end of class to ask the students a question related to their Veteran’s Day music. I recalled Deardorff’s explanation that “deep cultural knowledge entails a more holistic, contextual understanding of a culture, including the historical, political, and social contexts (Deardorff, 2011, p. 68). I handed out notecards to everyone and said, “Please write about how you feel about the word ‘God’ in a piece of patriotic music.” Their responses were extremely diverse and passionate. As I coded the data I found that the class divided into almost equal thirds—taking three distinct positions on the topic. Their ardent voices jumped out at me as I coded the data. I found that I was unable summarize their feelings in my own words and maintain their fervor. Therefore, I crafted the three following poems using extracted and rearranged sentences and words, which captured the three main perspectives of the class (Poindexter, 2002). This technique is also known as “found” poetry. The words are the students’ sentiments from that day, and I did not add any text of my own.

I Feel Blessed

Religion is the founding of our great country,
what our country stands for.
Religion shapes our belief and mindset.
I know God is here and a feeling of comfort,
I think that he's watching over everyone.

I feel blessed that my God is mentioned,
it is an honor to sing about my Savior and our country.
The Lord really is the savior and the glory should go to him.
So with God represented songs,
it shows that we are with him.

Respect the fact that religion is a part of life,
maybe not yours,
but in a lot.
Stop being defensive about the littlest things,
people should get over themselves.

**I Pay No Mind To It**

I don't feel anything honestly.
I respect all religions and don't mind,
as long as it isn't offensive.
Although many people who serve our country,
don't believe in God.

These patriotic songs were made long ago.
I don't mind the phrase being brought up in songs,
it's still going to be used no matter if we like it or not.
Lots of songs have God or religion that I don't believe in,
I like the rhythm and melody.

It really doesn't have an effect on me.
People use the word God to stress unity, strength, and protection.
I know it wasn't meant to offend others,
I pay no mind to it.
I just keep going on about my life.

**It's Not Very Diverse**

Christianity is taking over,
restricting things for those who aren't Christian.
America is a huge mix of religion.
Some don't believe in God,
especially in America.

Why are we doing a song about God?
I feel a little weird singing it,
the songs might exclude people.
There are a variety of religions in America,  
I wish the songs expressed that.

It doesn't really make sense,  
the impression Christianity and America are one in the same.  
It's not very diverse.  
We didn't get here because of God,  
we got to do this amazing free country on our own.

**Conclusion of Findings**

In this chapter I first explained how a middle school choir teacher programs religious music. Melinda offered a unique perspective as an atheist teacher amongst a large Christian majority. However, her training, which was solely in the Western classical tradition, informed her programming practices and placed her in a majority perspective amongst United States choir teachers.

Next, I discussed how the teacher, students, student teacher, vice principal, and parents perceived the religious music unit, which offered insight into how music teachers can consider a global view when programming and teaching about religious music. The students’ unique perspectives as Muslim, Buddhist, Agnostic, and Christian, provided one example of how students can contribute to meaningful discussions about religious music. In addition, they appreciated learning about diverse religious musics.

In the third section, I interpreted how the participants moved in, around, and out of Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence process framework. Melinda, the students, and student teacher Sandra were respectful, open, and curious about unfamiliar religious music and increased their knowledge of unfamiliar religions. However, students’ internal and external behaviors varied. Sometimes participants demonstrated an increase in intercultural competence, such as expressing empathy, while also showing indifference towards learning about other
religions. The parents and administration appreciated that the unit provided diverse musical experiences for their students.

In the final section of this chapter I explained findings that emerged from an unexpected day of data collection. I asked the students how they felt about the word god in patriotic music. Three themes emerged from their responses: (a) an appreciation for the use of the word god in patriotic music, (b) indifference towards the use of the word god in patriotic music, and (c) opposition to the word god in patriotic music. Because this day was unexpected, I will not include it as part of my discussion in Chapter 5, but rather in Chapter 6, I will introduce new literature and theory related to patriotic music in schools to provide one example of how religious themes can emerge throughout the school year and affect music students and teachers.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the findings from my first three research questions related to literature and theory from three perspectives: (a) programming, (b) case law, and (c) intercultural competence. Then, I will provide implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Research Problem

Some music teachers are conflicted about programming religious music in the public schools (Gianuzzi, 2014; Luke, 2004). Researchers suggested that perceptions of religious music are diverse and variables such as school policy, opinions of the surrounding community, and especially the cultural make-up of the classroom can influence programming decisions (Boon, 2014; Rohan, 2011; Shaw, 2015; Shaw, 2016). While examining the research, I noticed a “controversial line” that teachers did not want to cross when discussing religious music with their students, but Bradley (2012) suggested that “educators who present sanitized contexts for the music they teach or who avoid contexts altogether contribute to the ongoing devaluation of the arts in education” (p. 194).

Purpose Statement

I wanted to know more about how teachers navigate these variables in their music classroom, and perceptions of diverse religious music in the public schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of a middle school choir teacher, the students, the student teacher, the vice principal, and the parents, when implementing a researcher-designed unit titled: Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds.

Method

My methodological design was a narrative instrumental case study. The instrumental case study design allowed me to bound the school as my system (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2012). In order to hear the participants “stories from their perspectives,” I incorporated narrative inquiry into my methodology (Olson, 2009b, 349). After designing the lesson, I collected data through
interviews, focus groups, observations, artifacts, and written student reflections. I then transcribed and coded the data in three cycles.

Summary of Major Findings

Research Question One

For my first research question, I asked how the teacher Melinda approaches the programming and teaching of diverse religious musics. I found that Melinda mostly programs religious music from the Christian perspective, but usually programs Christian music in a language besides English so that she does not have to discuss the meaning. In addition, she avoids programming religious music from non-Christian perspectives because she worries that she will not be able to perform the music authentically. Melinda feels she can have more success with western music, as she lacks the knowledge and resources to feel comfortable teaching diverse religious musics.

Research Question Two

For my second research question, I wanted to know what the teacher, students, student teacher, parents, and vice principal thought about a researcher-designed unit titled Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds that examined the similarities and differences of various religious perspectives. I found that most participants enjoyed learning about other religions. The students, student teacher, and parents were receptive from the beginning and appreciated the unit. At first, Melinda was nervous about the controversial topic of religion, but as the unit progressed she noticed that her students and school community appreciated learning about other religions.
Research Question Three

For my third research question I asked how the participants moved through Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural competence process framework. The participants all displayed varying degrees of intercultural competence amongst each other and themselves. Rather than a prescribed and orderly progression, the participants weaved in, out, forward, back, and around Deardorff’s framework and displayed a variety of attitudes, knowledge/skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes.

Limited Limitations: Unlimited Perspectives

In this paper I discussed “subjective phenomena,” and my interpretation from a “person’s perspective, which is what meaning is all about” (Morse, 2018, p. 805). The findings are my experiences of the events, and this discussion is my interpretation of how they relate to the literature, theory and practice. Like intercultural competence, “experience cannot be quantified, counted, or turned into a thing. Experience is an ongoing process” (Denzin, 2018, p. 849). In Chapter 3, I discussed aspects of generalization and the outward boundaries of the study’s applicability. However, Denzin might argue that this “practice cannot be generalized into other practices” and this study is “significant because it is an instance of a cultural practice that happened in a particular time and place...every instance is unique and has its own logic” (p. 849). In contrast, previous research, as outline in Chapter 2, signified that the phenomenon of controversy surrounding religious music in the public schools is not an isolated event. Therefore, Willig (2013) might acknowledge that this instrumental case study presented a specific outlook on an existing phenomenon (p. 305). In response, I relied on triangulation to represent diverse perspectives, although my epistemological stance and personal biases limited my perspectives.
For this study, my biases and previous experiences influenced how I interpreted the phenomenon. I was a public school choir teacher for nine years, five of which involved teaching middle school choir. For example, I empathized with Melinda when she discussed how hard it is to find quality music for middle school students. In addition, my current belief that public schools honor the separation of church and state conflicted with my previous experiences. For example, when the parents in the current study indicated that they wanted religion “back in the schools” I cringed at the dangerous doors that might open. In contrast, my experiences growing up in the Catholic Church made me sympathetic to those who wanted to express their religious beliefs. As I observed, taught, transcribed, coded, and analyzed others’ experiences I had to be “willing to take risks, to move back and forth between the personal and political, the biographical and the historical” (Denzin, 2018, p. 851).

The interviews and observations were not a description of the experience, but a unique construct of the experience (Willig, 2013, p. 281). Each day was a “concrete, contextualized, and lived” event (Fiske, 1992, p. 155). In Chapter 3, I discussed how readers could create their own generalizations when reading case studies. Considering this, when I found myself generalizing the current case to my previous experiences I reflected on those experiences and worked to set them aside so that I could focus on the current case, “what it is, what it does...understanding the case itself” (Stake, 1995, p. 8). Also in Chapter 3, I discussed my evidence: method, data, and analysis. In an effort to “chart a path of resistance,” Denzin (2018) discussed “the politics of ethics” (p. 839-840) to create a “safe place for writers” (p. 851). In short, Denzin states, “We have an ample supply of methodological rules and interpretive guidelines...open to change and to differing interpretation...our science is open-ended, unruly, and disruptive...inquiry is always political and moral....objectivity and evidence are political and ethical terms” (p. 851).
Organize of Discussion Section

In the above paragraphs I summarized the research problem, my purpose statement, my methodological design, and my research questions. In this next section I will discuss my findings as they relate to recent literature, theory, and practice—going beyond what the results mean. To do this, Jackson and Mazzei (2018) suggested using concepts “to show how they work, what they do, what they allow, and what they unsettle” (p. 733). Jackson and Mazzei discussed the importance of looking “beyond the expected” when finding meaning. They used the terms “deconstruction” and “unsettling” to look at the data and find what is unique in an effort to “keep things moving” and “enable transformation.” They focused on how to work with the data and examine the data through different theories. While readers may see my data as fitting into other theories, I found that intercultural competence as a theoretical framework helped me answer my research questions. I used Jackson’s and Mazzei’s suggestion to explain the meaning of my findings and asked myself these three questions: (a) How do the findings work within and against related research? (b) What do the results “do” and “allow” in terms of intercultural competence theory? (c) How do the findings “unsettle” the “pedagogical order” and inform present practice? After covering related research, theory, and implications for practice, I end this chapter with suggestions for future research.

Considering Perspectives of Programming Through Related Research

In this section I will explain how the current study related to research on programming of religious music. First, I will discuss the process of selecting religious music. Then, I will discuss the perceptions of teaching about religion as it relates to the music. Finally, I cover research that relates to the perspectives of programming through the students, student teacher, administration, and parents.
**Selecting the Music**

Melinda intentionally programs religious music in languages other than English to avoid discussing the background. I found that Melinda was constantly concerned about what a discussion regarding religion might lead to in her classroom. In a study of five Finnish music teachers, Kallio (2015) found that teachers were “wary of including religious repertoire” (p. 202). Melinda likes to teach her students “new things, and new languages, and new styles of music,” but she is most comfortable teaching music from the Western classical tradition because her background and education are from the Western classical tradition, so she knows “how to make it sound good.” Her pedagogy often informs her programming.

Few researchers have surveyed the programming practices of music teachers. Forbes (2001) surveyed 104 high school choral directors from Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia regarding their repertoire selection practices and found that the most important factor when selecting music was whether or not the director found it pleasing, and rated last was whether or not they thought their students would enjoy the music. Similarly, Melinda tries to program a variety of music and said, “That’s what I’m going to teach them, and whether they like it or not it doesn’t matter...it’s the experience of knowing about it, of doing it.”

When programming music, Melinda is more concerned with technique than aesthetics. This contradicted Reames (2001), who examined how 210 Virginia high school choir directors selected repertoire for their beginning high school choirs. Eighty-nine percent of teachers thought that the technical and aesthetic value of music were equally important. Melinda’s choirs sing impeccably in tune, they are musically advanced, and they are performance driven. Melinda avoids taking risks when programming music and only selects music that she knows the students can perform well. To her, imprecise singing, “would be failure.” This pressure to perform with
technical perfection may stem from Melinda’s personal expectations and not the students, administration, and parents who believe that technical and aesthetics are equally important. Her concern for perfection seems to spill over into her concern for saying the right thing. She never wants to offend and she worries about “the negative stuff” and stereotypes that sometimes surface when discussing religion.

In addition to “the negative stuff,” Melinda tries to “keep the peace” by avoiding religious music that is “ultra-religious,” and in English. In a philosophical examination of _Bauchman v. West High School_, Perrine (2017) described what Melinda called “ultra-religious music” as devotional music. In the court case, two pieces were programmed for graduation: _The Lord Bless and Keep You_ by John Rutter and _Friends_ by Michael W. Smith, which the choir student, Rachel Bauchman, felt were inappropriate for graduation given their religious texts. Perrine considered the Rutter as more appropriate because it is a staple choral piece often performed at choral concerts and used to promote musicianship, while the Smith is often performed in contemporary worship services and taught to promote religion. Melinda is an atheist, and does not place one religion above another. If fact, she places her “non-religion” above religion. She is afraid to tell her students that she is atheist and allows them to think she is Christian and stated, “No one knows, they think I’m a little Southern Christian girl.” Her experiences growing up as an atheist in a Christian community and in a Western choral tradition have shaped how she programs religious music, and how she discusses the background of a piece. Ultimately, she tries to secularize the music, removing religion from the discussion. Melinda argued that she can teach musical expression without going into the meaning of a piece. But the students, parents, and administration felt that understanding the meaning was key to being musically expressive.
Teaching About the Music

Music teachers cannot draw clear lines that cover all controversial concerns that might arise when teaching about religion as it relates to the music. Therefore, Perrine (2017) argued that teachers should write their program notes before even teaching the music. They could consider the translations, and discuss the music’s significance to the curriculum and that specific concert. However, Melinda does not do translations or program notes in an effort to avoid controversy.

Researchers have discussed a reluctance from teachers to engage in controversial topics with their students (Abril, 2009; Bradley, 2012; Kallio, 2015). Uncomfortable conversations can occur and sometimes lead to students expressing negative stereotypes (Abril, 2009). However, when teachers can begin “to recognize their importance and value in deepening students’ understanding” (p. 85), perhaps they can offer students a new perspective and expel harmful stereotypes and generalizations. During the current study, Melinda just barely put her toe in the water when it came to having conversations with the students about the meaning behind the religious music. After observing me teach the students about the religions as they pertained to the music, she saw that the students, parents, and administration “did not freak out.” She also noted that the students were approaching a more world view of religions.

While concern over controversy might prevent some teachers from teaching about world religions, Norton (2008) argued that ignoring spiritual identities can marginalize students. However, Melinda does not see religion and spirituality as part of her students’ identities and stated, “I don’t really necessarily need to know about their religion, I just need to know about them as their own person.” Melinda’s fear of controversy has caused her to remove religion from her students’ identities. In a sense, she not only secularizes the religious music she programs, but
also the religious identities of her choir students. Kallio (2015) also found this fear of controversy in the teachers she interviewed and stated,

> With school and church separate in policy, questions may be raised regarding the potential for religious repertoire to ever be inclusive and democratic in a school context. This is particularly relevant as an ‘easy’ answer to the increasing diversity of school populations appears to be the increasing exclusion of religious repertoire altogether. (p. 202)

In addition to separating religion from identity, Melinda separates religion from culture—while simultaneously embracing a culturally relevant pedagogy. Spitzburg and Changnon’s (2009) definition of culture as “values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns” (p. 6-7) allows individuals to identify their own spirituality, morals, ethics, and perhaps that includes religion. Therefore, Melinda’s comment about how she just needs “to know about them as their own person,” and not their religion, fits within her identity of a teacher who practices a respectful culturally relevant pedagogy. However, simply the fact that she programs religious music mostly from the Christian perspective could be perceived as suppressing other religions. For example, Amala was excited to sing *Adinu* because it was something she could “relate to.” She is in the eighth grade and this was the first time her religion had been musically represented in a classroom, and she specifically noted the positive aspects of the song. She considered that when people sing a piece like *Adinu* they might reconsider Muslims and say, “Maybe they aren’t all terrorists.”

Melinda’s avoidance of religious discussions as they relate to the music could be viewed as a missed opportunity for increased global awareness as “more complex form of cross-cultural understanding may take root when music classroom conversations dare to include these crucial contexts (Bradley, 2012, p. 193). However, if Melinda continues to program music from mostly
the Christian perspective, then I would argue that classroom discussions regarding religion as it relates to the music would be inappropriate and one-sided.

**Considering Multiple Perspectives when Programming**

**Students.** The students in the focus group spoke openly about their own religions, they enjoyed learning about other religions, and they wanted to sing diverse religious music. However, the students did not express a desire for school to be a spiritual place, or to be representative of their places of worship. If fact, Aubrey mentioned that she appreciates keeping her school life and church life separate because she takes on different identities in each setting. In contrast, Norton (2008) found that some students prefer to blend their spiritual and religious identities with their musical identities, especially those who grew up with music in their place of worship. In the current study, students were most interested in the history, culture, and facts, surrounding religious music. In addition, they were open to discussing controversial topics and differences of opinion related to religious music. Researchers have suggested that students enjoy learning about other religions (Aown, 2012; Berry, 2002). However, if the dominant perspective pervades the curriculum, students outside of that perspective can feel marginalized (Hubbard, 1999), and even experience bullying (Dupper, Forrest-Bank, & Lowry-Carusillo, 2015; Forrest-Bank, & Dupper, 2015). Melinda’s concern over how to engage students in appropriate discussion regarding religion is warranted. She has to walk a careful line. She needs to provide a safe, supportive, and inclusive classroom for all students, while also acknowledging multiple perspectives and engaging students in critical thinking.

**Student Teacher.** The student teacher, Sandra, is also hesitant to program and teach diverse religious music, especially if she is unfamiliar with the language or genre. Western classical music has almost always been her focus—in secondary school, her undergraduate music
classes, and her music education program. In an examination of multicultural awareness in preservice teachers, Cherng and Davis (2017) indicated that White preservice teachers often “lack the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work effectively with increasingly diverse P-12 populations” (p. 13). Similarly, Sandra revealed to me that she noticed the classroom dynamics shifted when we began to discuss the background of the pieces and that the students started “to lose energy,” and she asked me, “How would you do this without talking at them?” I had also felt that drop in energy and I appreciated her honesty. In response, I worked to incorporate shorter discussions that centered on students’ experiences which were woven throughout the rehearsal in small episodes, and kept the flow, pacing, and energy at a comfortable level. However, my previous experiences as a middle school choir teacher made this adjustment relativity easy. As a student teacher, one of Sandra’s main concerns is keeping the students engaged. She has discovered that she can “manage” her classroom best through constant activity while incorporating non-verbal teaching strategies. While this is an effective strategy, there are times music teachers need to communicate important information. I found talking with the students about the religions rather than at the students allowed for a deeper level of classroom engagement.

**Administrator.** Administrators can assist new music teachers with content and pedagogy. In the current study, the vice principal recognized her role in helping teachers determine what is appropriate when teaching about religion in the public schools, and when it comes to the laws and policies, many teachers are misinformed (Luke, 2004). Vice principal Abbott stated, “As a school leader your expectations always need to be very clear and have a faculty that knows that they can come to you if they have any concerns.” While understanding the laws and policies are the responsibility of all teachers and administrators, when new teachers
enter a community with which they are unfamiliar, the administrators can play a crucial role in assisting teachers. However, administrators who have no musical content knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge related to the music classroom could hinder the teacher’s development. Unless they have a music education degree and experience in the music classroom, I would be wary of asking for too much advice beyond assistance with understanding the needs of the community, or on the other end, one that is overly concerned with community traditions that might only acknowledge the dominant perspective.

**Parents.** In the current study, parents of students from non-dominant perspectives would not volunteer to be interviewed. I approached them through phone, email, letters home, and even Melinda tried to reach out, but I could not acquire an interview. Therefore, I should note that this is a partial parent perspective. While the parents from the non-dominant perspective did not provide a reason for declining an interview, their hesitance could be a reflection of their students’ experiences in school and within the community. For example, when I asked Amala and Natalie if they had spoken to their parents they told me that their parents do not speak English very well and would prefer not to be interviewed. When I offered to find an interpreter or have their daughters join the interview to assist, they still were not interested. Emma’s dad was initially interested, but then backed out. However, their parents still appeared to value and support the choral program. I met Amala’s dad one day after school while he was helping with the choir fundraiser. And Emma’s dad is a music teacher in the district. Perhaps the strong statements from those supporting religious music in the public schools deters the minority voices from speaking out.

Little research has been conducted regarding parents’ perceptions of religious music in the public school. Hubbard (1999) found that Jewish parents believed their students had negative
experiences in regards to religion in the public schools, specifically the pervasive nature of
Christianity that permeated the school. In the current study, I only found Christian parents who
were willing to be interviewed, and both Liana and Sam encouraged religious music from all
perspectives in the music classroom. However, Kallio (2015) found the complete opposite. One
teacher in Kallio’s study stated that parents “don’t want to have anything to do with religion in
the classroom” (p. 202). In addition, Cranmore and Fossy (2014) indicated that while parents
cannot control the programming, teachers should still be sensitive “to the various religious
beliefs represented by the students and parents” (p. 35).

**Considering Perspectives Through Case Law**

In the previous section I covered research related to the participants’ perceptions of
programming and discussion of religious music. In this next section, I will still consider the
participants’ perceptions, but through the lens of case law.

**Teacher Perspective**

When facilitating lessons and discussions on religion as it relates to the music, teachers
should consider the difference between student free speech and teacher free speech in the
classroom. Melinda recognized that her role as the teacher puts her in a position of power, and
therefore a more precarious position when teaching about religion. Teachers should be aware of
their power and authority. They cannot place value or judgment on students’ identities because
“a critical event affecting religion/school relationships may consist of an incident that changes
the basis for determining who will hold the authority” (Thomas, 2006, p. 22). Melinda worries
that her discussion of religion will place her views regarding religion as the authority.

Federal courts have ruled that if the district policy is neutral, a school district can restrict
the programming of religious music (Cranmore & Fossy, 2014). Melinda’s school does not have
a policy on religious music, and so she relies on her previous experiences as a student and teacher to inform her choices. For example, she indicated that they perform their winter concert in a local church because of the seating capacity and acoustics. She has never experienced complaints. The vice principal supports her decision to perform in the church and stated, “I love that she takes them to the church for the winter concert...the atmosphere...it’s out of the school in the church setting...it’s beautiful.” The concern over performing in houses of worship was present in in Bauchman v. West High School, in which Perrine (2017) argued if Bauchman “had been obligated to do so as part of the choral curriculum it is difficult to see how the courts might have justified this requirement” (p. 203). Teachers need to be exceedingly careful with religious venues so as not to place “substantial pressure on students of minority faiths” (p. 204). When considering sacred performance venues, Melinda seems most concerned with the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion. To adhere to this, she avoids discussing religion and does not provide program notes. However, simply performing in a house of worship could be perceived as an endorsement. Perrine discussed The Coercion Test from Lee v. Weisman (1992), which he felt clarified the Establishment clause in the sense that schools “cannot place students in the dilemma of having to choose between participating in a religious exercise or protesting against it” (p. 204). Perrine noted a line between performing religious music as a musical exercise, and performing it as a religious exercise. While Perrine might suggest that Melinda adopt more detailed programs notes to include an educational rationale, he would likely conclude her programming and venue choices are not violating student rights.
Students’ Perspectives

In contrast to Melinda, the students concerned themselves most with the Free Exercise Clause in the First Amendment: *or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*. They seemed to have a clear understanding in regards to what teachers can say—teach don’t preach. However, in regards to what students can say, *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* (1969) is a useful case to reference. In this case, students at a public high school in Des Moines, Iowa wore black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam war. The school district wrote an anti-armband policy, which the students did not follow. The students were then suspended, filed suit, and the case eventually made its way to the U. S. Supreme Court. The Court sided with the students, citing that the armbands did not invade the rights of others or disrupt class. They emphasized two points in regards to student’s free speech. First, the Supreme Court explained, “in class or out of class” students cannot engage in speech and expression that “disrupts classwork or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others” (section II, 513). Second, the Court stated that in order to limit speech, a school “must be able to show that its action was caused by something more than a mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness” (Section II, 509). In addition, the Court stated that controversial discussions in schools are important because,

> Our Constitution says we must take this risk, and our history says that it is this sort of hazardous freedom—this kind of openness—that is the basis of our national strength and of the independence and vigor of Americans who grow up and live in this relatively permissive, often disputatious, society. (Section II, 508-509)

**Student Teacher Perspective**

Sandra does not feel prepared to teach religious music outside of the Christian perspective. When considering teaching the unit in the current study she hesitated and said, “There’s a lot of background I don’t know...I don’t want to tell them anything wrong...it just
makes me feel a little bit cautious.” Some researchers who studied the perceptions of religious music in the public schools suggested that university teacher preparation programs should better prepare future teachers to appropriately engage students in controversial discussions such as religion (Aown, 2012; Hubbard, 1999). Sandra’s cautious nature is understandable considering the controversial court decisions and the fact that “as like a new teacher...I have nothing to like base anything off of.”

**Administrative Perspective**

According to researchers, U. S. school districts widely vary in their expectations or polices regarding religious music (Gianuzzi, 2014), and religious topics (Berry, 2002, Jones, 1997) in the public schools. In *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (1988), the U. S. Supreme Court stated, “Educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the style and content of student speech in school-sponsored expressive activities so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns” (p. 484).

According to the current study, related research, and case law, administrators play a key role when it comes to determining polices on religious music in the public schools. Additionally, when school districts have a policy in place that does not violate students’ rights, the courts tend to side with the school districts when conflicts do arise (Cranmore & Fossy, 2014).

In the current study, Vice Principal Abbott seemed most concerned with “knowing your students, knowing your parents...good communication, having that relationship.” Being a teacher and administrator in the district for over 15 years, she had a strong sense of the community values. In *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, the court commented on the importance of understanding community values as a “weighty and delicate” task as “it demands particularized
and supremely subjective choices among diverse curricula, moral values, and political stances to teach or inculcate in students, and among various methodologies for doing so” (p. 484).

**Parent Perspective**

Both Liana and Sam saw religious music as a way to change “the way the world has turned today.” Perhaps Liana’s and Sam’s encouragement of religious music stemmed from their belief that religion is currently too far removed from the classroom. For example, Sam said, “When we said oh we just don’t need to have prayer in the school, we don’t need to have the bible in school anymore...if the church would have done things better...it [religion] would have been a lot more attractive.” While Sam did not directly reference the case, he was commenting on *Engle v. Vitale* (1962) which made sponsored prayer in the public schools illegal. When discussing the bible, he was referencing *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948), which stated that schools could not use tax dollars to fund religious activities. In the current study, which is 55 years after *Engle v. Vitale* and 69 years after *McCollum v. Board of Education*, Liana believes that when the courts began to draw more definitive lines between the separation of church and state, “that’s when it all went down.”

In the above sections, I first discussed relevant research and the results of the current study related to programming perspectives of religious music in the public schools. Then, I highlighted specific court cases that complimented and contrasted the findings in the current study. In this next section, I will discuss intercultural competence literature related to religious music in the public schools.

**Considering Perspectives Through Intercultural Competence Theory**

In the current study, I found that programming and teaching students about diverse religious music increased the student’s knowledge of others. For example, the students
demonstrated an increase in knowledge of other religious perspectives, which Deardorff (2006) explained as developing cultural awareness. In the following section, I discuss how the perspectives of the participants in the current study related to Deardoff’s intercultural competence theory and other intercultural competence research. First, I consider choir’s origin from a global perspective. Then, I discuss research related to the participants’ shifting intercultural competence. Next, I demonstrate how the context of the study affected how I interpreted intercultural competence. Finally, I explain intercultural competence as a continuum when reflecting on the results from the current study and related research.

**Global Perspectives of Choir**

In *Bauchman v. West High School* (1997) the court stated that religious music was permissible because “a significant percentage of serious choral music is based on religious themes or text” (p. 554). From a Christian perspective this quote is true. However, I considered this quote from a diverse religious perspective. For example, what percentage of “serious choral music” is from the Jewish perspective? I then asked myself, where did “serious choral music” begin? And, what is our responsibility to that tradition? In an effort to examine this tradition from a global perspective, I extracted the following definitions of choir in *The Cambridge Companion to Choral Music*:

- **Choir**—“the place in the church where the service is sung and by extension to those who sing it” (Hiller, p. 61).

- **Chorus**—“a group of dancers and singers” (Hiller, 2012, p. 61).

- In Latin American, choir “was established by Spanish immigration, through the Catholic Church...choral music developed in the cathedrals, missions, brotherhoods, and religious societies (Guinand, 2012, p. 130).

- In China, Japan, and Korea, “the art of modern choral singing—is inseparable from the history of Christian missions in the East” (Ling-Tam & Cho, 2012, p. 150).
The above researchers situated the origin of choir in the Christian church. However, in chapter eleven, de Quadros explained that in South and Southeast Asia, “group singing traditions were rich and varied well before the onset of Western contact” (de Quadros, 2012, p. 159). When considering the above research, I drew a dividing line between group singing and choir. The concept of choir, not group singing, is a Western tradition from the Christian church. Some might argue that choir teachers program religious music from the Christian perspective in order to have a well-rounded curriculum and solid choral foundations. However, while choirs’ roots are Christian, currently, “all over the world, choirs abound and repertoire has become global...the genre that started in European communal and religious life has spread throughout the world” (de Quadros, p. 1). While Melinda programs significantly more secular music than sacred music, when she closely examined her programming practices regarding religious music, she found that Christian music dominated her sacred programming. Schools are becoming more diverse every year, and an interculturally competent music classroom that programs a wide variety of sacred music from multiple religious perspectives will allow students to develop a more global view of religious music. This will pay dividends in the form of respectful, curious, culturally aware, and empathetic students and communities.

**Participants’ Perspectives of Intercultural Competence**

**Shifting intercultural competence.** Researchers have found that teachers can model and encourage a commitment to learning about other religions in order to dispel misconceptions and promote understanding (Aown, 2012; Berry, 2002). In the current study, the students consistently presented positive attitudes towards multiple religious perspectives. In addition, they expressed social justice concerns when learning about religious persecution and indicated that they need to understand these events, “so that history will not repeat itself.” Individuals’ attitudes may
become more open as they “experience multiple musical cultures through significant performance experiences (Bradley, 2009, p. 58). However, a few students did not express learning about other religions as important because they “didn’t feel it was relevant to know this stuff.” However, Parent Sam valued the unit and expressed that “I don’t want my children to be ignorant.” Teachers should consider varied perspectives because while the majority of intercultural competence can “manifest within the context of intercultural interactions,” in some cases, intercultural competence can reside “with the person” (Chiu et al., 2013, p. 844).

**Context influences competence.** In the current study, intercultural competence manifested through interactions with music, people, and information. While the individual interviews allowed the participants to discuss how intercultural competence existed within themselves, previous experiences may have shaped their responses. Had the interviews taken place on a different day or with a different researcher or “perceiver” as Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) explained, then the assessment of competence would have varied and “thus no particular skill or ability is likely to ever be universally ‘competent’”(p. 6). In addition, the students negotiated their individual cultural identities, especially in the focus group, which shaped the discussion and cultivated “mutuality and cooperation in intercultural relationships” (Kim, 2009, p. 54).

During the focus groups, and sometimes even class discussions, I found that the students were able to work through understandings together, which Dalib, Harun, and Yusof (2016) also found. They critiqued Deardorff’s (2006) model—approaching intercultural competence as an “individual concept,” and discussed that “competency requires a mutual process between communicating partners to co-create intercultural competence” (p. 16). However, while Deardorff’s framework offered a researcher-led assessment of individual competence, she
recognized the importance of others when determining competence, specifically when determining individuals’ external outcomes. For example, in the current study, and especially during the focus groups, the students guided “each other in the learning process” (Krajewski, 2011, p. 150). When the focus group discussed Christmas celebrations Aubrey indicated to Amala that she did not know her “celebratory Christmas terms.” I found myself feeling nervous about this exchange—Aubrey was displaying a lack of knowledge I assumed to be basic. An explanation that Muslims do not celebrate Christmas was offered, Aubrey smiled and nodded, and the conversation moved on. I appeared to be the only one who had been uncomfortable. Researchers have found that these exchanges are important as they “may allow the development of different forms of communication and new ways of relating to others” (Krajewski, 2011, p. 150).

**Intercultural competence as a continuum.** While the students were comfortable asking questions and exchanging information, Melinda was uncomfortable with these exchanges. For an explanation of Melinda’s fear of controversy, refer back to the discussion at the beginning of this chapter. Ultimately she indicated a willingness to consider other religious perspectives, but only when presented in a positive light. Melinda existed in different stages of intercultural competence—only as she expressed her own religious and cultural identity did she appear willing to navigate intercultural situations in regards to religious music.

Similar to Krajewski (2011), I found the participants moved organically through the continuum. In addition, the exchanges between participants appeared to encourage an “increased intercultural sensitivity toward a greater ethnorelativist worldview” (Prieto-Flores, Feu, & Casademont, 2016, p. 450). Melinda and the students were already open and willing to learn. Most of the students, especially those in the focus group, appeared to accept their spiritual and
cultural identities. Perhaps they demonstrated an increase in intercultural competence through the lens of Deardorff’s (2006) framework, because they were “prepared to make it work” (Volet & Ang, 1998, p. 20).

**Unsettling and Informing Present Practice**

In the previous sections, I reviewed research that related to my findings on programming religious music. I discussed the laws and policies that can guide music teachers when programming religious music such as the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment and *The Lemon Test* (Lewis, 2002). However, past court cases show that context matters and that teachers need to consider the cultural make-up of their classroom and community when programming music, which can result in positive outcomes (Abril, 2009; Shaw, 2015). However, additional researchers indicated that only focusing on the cultural backgrounds of the particular students in one classroom inhibits learning about cultures from around the world (Rohan, 2011; Shaw, 2016).

Therefore, I then discussed intercultural competence research related to my findings through Deardorff’s (2006) framework. In this next section, I offer practical implications to inform and unsettle present practice. First, I will discuss how this study might help teachers critically examine their programming practices. Second, I offer examples for teacher education program to better prepare future music teachers to program religious music from a global perspective. Third, I suggest how schools and administrators can provide meaningful professional development to support teachers’ endeavors to increase their pedagogical content knowledge needed to program music from a global perspective. Fourth, I critique NAfME’s current position statement on sacred music in schools, and I offer rationales for an amended statement. Finally, I consider how choral music educators can move forward—ensuring that
choir is a place where students can develop their attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal and external behaviors and approach a more global view of religious music.

**Programming and Pedagogy at the Secondary Level**

Melinda cares most for her students and is doing what she can to help them grow as musicians. She takes great care choosing music, but often encounters barriers such as a lack of knowledge, resources, and time when working to program diverse repertoire. During the ten weeks I observed Melinda she rarely got a drink, went to bathroom, or even sat down. She hardly had enough time to keep up with all of her classes, meetings, emails, and paperwork—researching and preparing her next program often took a back seat. Her tendency to program familiar music is not a sign of apathy, but a lack of time and resources. She loves to spend time learning about new music and pedagogies, but her school district and community have a multitude of expectations. And many of those expectations are coming from the dominant perspective in the community who enjoy hearing the students sing music from the Christian perspective. When the majority voices praise teachers for their efforts, the minority voices may feel that they are too small to be heard. As a result, students are missing out on valuable opportunities to developing their intercultural competence. In this section, I first suggest that in order for choir teachers to assist their students in developing their intercultural competence, teachers should look beyond the context of their community and offer a global perspective of religious music. Then, I encourage choir teachers to interrogate festival expectations and requirements that may restrict diverse programming and pedagogy. Finally, I provide recommendations to publishers to support teachers with appropriate resources to accompany repertoire.
Beyond community context. In Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, I outlined court cases that demonstrated teachers need to be aware of the context in which they teach. In Chapter 2, I explained that throughout history, U.S. public schools have slowly transitioned to reflect a position of religious neutrality. Although, the Southern U.S. appears to be less neutral than the Northern U.S. (Berry, 2002). Currently, public schools may be experiencing a perceived shift in the opposite direction. For example, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has made comments that may be interpreted as threatening the separation of church and state. She stated the need to focus on “greater Kingdom gain in the long run by changing the way we approach… the system of education in the country” (Stanton, 2017). Comments like these appear one-sided and do not approach religious topics from a world view. While I have argued that teachers need to be aware of their community profile, here, I suggest that if music teachers chose to program religious music, they should incorporate diverse literature and pedagogical approaches associated with global religious perspectives regardless of their community context.

Teachers in homogenous communities may not experience as many complaints and disagreements associated with religious topics as diverse communities (Helberg, 2007). However, teachers should consider that minority students in homogenous communities may be afraid to speak out if their teacher programs an abundance of music from the dominant perspective. In the current study, religious minorities were not always comfortable sharing their religious identities and requesting diverse music. For example, Melinda perceives that her community views atheist as a bad word and therefore does not share her atheist identity with her school community.

For the sake of argument, consider a public school where 100% of the students practice Christianity. In this case, I argue that if teachers are going to program religious music, they have
a responsibility to offer their students a worldview of religious music. Students may find work outside of their homogenous community, and teachers need to help students develop their intercultural competence so they can successfully live and work in a global society. For example, in the current study one student stated, “I didn’t know there was any other religion besides Christianity.” This severe lack of intercultural competence cannot continue. Music teachers can program and discuss religious music from multiple perspectives to at the very least increase student’s knowledge and comprehension of world religions. In the current study, the parents valued a world perspective of religious music because they did not want their “kids to be ignorant.” However, while school districts should take parent and community agreements and disagreements into consideration, parents cannot enforce a specific curriculum. I suggest a multicultural and culturally responsive approach in music classrooms, in combination with a worldview of religious music in order to develop students’ intercultural competence.

Disrupting performance and festival expectations. In the current study, I asked Melinda what would help her program music from diverse religious perspectives. She indicated that she is “equally worried about being successful in the performance and them [her students] learning musical and technical things.” While she would enjoy having in depth conversations with her students about the background of the music, she is highly concerned with how her students sound—festival ratings, concerts, and audience perception inform her programming and pedagogy.

If teachers want to develop a choral and/or vocal music program that focuses on intercultural competence and work to develop a global perspective of religious music, I think they should avoid contests and festivals with restrictive rubrics, ratings, and repertoire requirements. Music festivals should be a place for students to share all aspects of the music they
have learned—the historical, cultural, and political influences surrounding the music. Imagine a festival where students first spoke about the music in-depth and discussed the music’s relevance to society. Instead of judges sitting in the back and critiquing only musical aspects of the performance, they could come to stage after the performance and engage the audience in discussion—encouraging topics geared towards inclusion and social justice.

The pressure to perform difficult literature with the intent to impress the audience is taking up rehearsal time that should be spent on students understanding the implications of the music they are singing. Narrow repertoire expectations, both written and unwritten, at festivals restrict teacher’s ability to program diverse musics. The expectation from administrators, parents, and students to return from festivals with trophies and superior ratings is creating a performance culture, not an education culture. Meaningful performances have the ability to inspire change. Students should concern themselves with the emotional effect on the audience rather than the critical ear of a judge. Teachers should concern themselves with developing interculturally competent musicians rather than programming exceedingly difficult music intended to impress judges and requires out-of-school marathon rehearsals and weekend retreats spent on technical precision.

Festivals, competitions, and narrow performance expectations are creating a climate that forces teachers into a programming box. Diverse programming and pedagogical practices require time in rehearsal to have in-depth conversations about the historical, political, and cultural impacts of music. When required repertoire lists contain a large majority of Western classical sacred music, they send a message to teachers and students about whose music is of the most value. State music organizations should closely examine the religious music on their repertoire lists and ensure they offer a global perspective of religious music. While choir’s origins are
rooted in the Christian church, our students are not and there exists enough published choir music available to program from a global perspective.

**Recommendations for music publishers.** Melinda also revealed that she is more inclined to program unfamiliar music when publishers provide background information, pronunciation guides, and recordings. I suggest that all music publishers have a responsibility to provide resources that assist teachers in developing their pedagogical content knowledge of world musics. For example, publishers should provide detailed program notes including the historical, contextual, and political environment surrounding compositions. Furthermore, publishers could provide a resource packet when teachers order 20 or more copies of a composition. The packet could be available electronically and contain (a) translations and pronunciation guides, (b) a recording of a native speaker reciting the text, (c) contextual considerations including history, culture, and politics, (d) composer and lyricist biographies, (e) performance practice suggestions, and (f) suggestions for authentic pedagogical approaches and performances. In order for teachers to program a global perspective of religious music and work to develop interculturally competence music students, they need time, resources, and support to learn the music and pedagogy associated with multiple genres. Choral music publishers such as earthsongs publishing have resources available and are making diverse music more accessible. However, preservice music teachers are still being taught exclusively in Western classical pedagogy. Therefore, in the next section I will provide implications for teacher preparation programs.

**Teacher Preparation Programs**

As music educators, we have a responsibility to ensure that our curriculum serves all students. Historically, choral music education programs in the U.S. have overlooked sacred
genres outside of the Christian tradition. Melinda values the bachelor’s and master’s degrees she earned, which helped her to become a successful choir teacher. However, she expressed that she mostly learned repertoire and pedagogical approaches associated with Western classical music. In addition, she mostly sang religious music from the Christian perspective. As a middle school choir teacher, when she does program world music she is uncomfortable teaching unfamiliar languages and worries that her pedagogical approaches are inauthentic.

Therefore, in the following section I offer suggestions to music teacher preparation programs to assist preservice teachers in developing their intercultural competence. First, I suggest that colleges and schools of music interrogate strict and narrow course requirements that tend to a Western classical approach. Then, I explain how music teacher education programs can provide intercultural experiences for preservice teachers outside of their higher education communities. Finally, I encourage colleges and universities to collaborate across disciplines to develop student’s intercultural competence.

Coursework requirements. Teacher preparation programs, colleges of liberal arts, and schools of music should offer courses and ensembles that present a global view of music. A prescribed curriculum that focuses solely on a Western perspective of music is not serving the needs of music education students who are soon to enter schools with diverse student bodies. Teacher preparation programs can update their curriculum and methods courses to address literature and pedagogy surrounding world musics. I argue that music courses have a responsibility to present a global perspective of music. Students can learn repertoire and pedagogy from ensembles, music history, theory, and group or individual applied lessons. Professors can attend to performance practices from across the globe.
I would also argue that music education students be granted more autonomy and flexibility in their coursework selections. When colleges and universities require music students to take four semesters of theory, especially when the theoretical approach reflects Western traditions, I argue that they are attenuating preservice teachers’ ability to effectively teach in the public school music classroom. For example, music education students should consider the grade and subjects they plan to teach after graduating. If they feel a course on ethnomusicology would better serve their professional endeavors and help them be successful in a secondary choral classroom, then they should be able to substitute that class in lieu of, say, a semester of atonal techniques.

Music teacher education programs should also consider ensemble requirements. While traditional ensembles such as large concert choirs provide valuable experiences for music education students, students should diversify their ensemble experience and perform in groups that approach repertoire and pedagogy from multiple perspectives. For example, if students are required to participate in seven semesters of traditional large ensembles, they often do not have enough credits left in their schedule to have other group musical experiences such as world music drumming, chamber, and popular a cappella ensembles. Music education professors can help guide preservice teachers through their ensemble choices so that they are prepared to offer a variety of ensembles to their future music students. With more diverse course requirements, preservice teachers can have the opportunity to improve their intercultural competence, and ultimately the competence of their future students as well.

**Service learning and study abroad programs.** Universities have developed specific programs to improve students’ intercultural competence (Prieto-Flores, Feu, & Casademont, 2016). Deans and directors can place a high priority on funding intercultural interactions both at-
home and abroad. However, these programs should accompany coursework and on-campus intercultural experiences because the process is “not a direct result of solely one experience” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 259). Continuous involvement in diverse practicum and service learning projects in addition to a study abroad program can provide preservice music educators with valuable insights and prepare them to teach effectively in public schools.

**Collaborative university environments.** In addition to flexible course requirements and service learning projects, music teacher education programs can collaborate department wide efforts to address student’s intercultural competence. For example, applied professors can help students choose literature from perspectives with which they are unfamiliar. Ensemble directors can program religious choral music from perspectives outside the Christian tradition and model appropriate pedagogical approaches. When applied professors and directors are unfamiliar with certain approaches they should seek out culture bearers in their community and involve students in the learning process—modeling that learning new content and pedagogy is valuable. In methods courses, music teacher educators can model appropriate discussions of religious world music, and then allow students to practice and lead these conversations in safe environments.

For example, a worthwhile assignment would direct students to create a vocal music program that focuses on a global perspective and aims at developing K-12 student’s intercultural competence. The goal of the assignment should be to create curriculums and vocal music groups that are completely unique and honor diverse musical perspectives. Preservice teachers should be encouraged set aside their previous experiences and imagine a classroom with students from around the globe who offer unique and diverse musical identities. As they consider multiple genres, ensembles, and pedagogical approaches, preservice music teachers should reflect on the global perspectives they are offering their future school communities.
Professional Development

Teachers should consider expanding their knowledge of repertoire and pedagogy related to diverse religious music. In addition, teachers may find that cultivating their own professional and cultural dispositions will allow them to develop a more ethnorelative view of choral music. For example, teachers should engage in professional development that helps them examine stereotypes, generalizations, and tokenism that can occur when programming diverse music. Developing a music curriculum that incorporates a global view of religious music with respect and authenticity takes time and consideration. Meaningful professional development activities and resources can help music teachers develop these skills and dispositions. Professional development should be tailored to music teachers, provide collaboration between beginning and advanced teachers, allow time for reflection, and connect teachers to the resources they need (Stanley, Snell, & Edgar, 2014). Teachers may feel more comfortable programming and teaching about diverse religious music if school districts allowed teachers time during the school day to collaborate with other teachers and share their experiences with diverse music. In addition, with inclusion and diversity being an important topic right now there are a host of music conferences offering valuable resources on this topic, which if allotted the time and money teachers would be able to attend.

Cultivating a worldview. In the current study, the teacher, students, student teacher, parents, and vice principal wanted to sing, hear, and experience diverse religious music. However, teachers are nervous about programming religious music due to possible religious controversies that might emerge (Gianuzzi, 2014; Luke, 2004). Communities have diverse needs and teachers should consider these needs while programming and teaching religious music from a global perspective. School districts should provide meaningful and context specific
professional development so that teachers can acquire the pedagogical content knowledge necessary to teach religious music from unfamiliar perspectives. For example, administrators can help music teachers contact culture-bearers in the community and provide time during school day for teachers and community culture-bearers to meet. This cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach because every community is different. In this next section, I will provide a sample professional development activity that examines case law through an intercultural competent lens.

**Sample professional development activity.** One possible activity could include an examination of two federal court cases, *Bauchman v. West High School* (1997) and *Nurre v. Whitehead* (2009). These cases make for an interesting argument due to similarities—such as the conflict over sacred music at graduation ceremonies, but also for their differences—such as date, location, and genre (choral verses instrumental). In *Nurre*, a senior in the high school band sued the superintendent for not allowing an arrangement of *Ave Maria* at graduation. The court sided with the school district, indicating that the school was not violating students’ First Amendment rights. In *Bauchman*, the court ruled that the two songs in question, *The Lord Bless and Keep You* by John Rutter and *Friends* by Michael W. Smith, were appropriate for the choir to sing at graduation (refer to Chapter 1 of this document for more details). These two cases can help teachers understand the importance of context and composer intent when choosing religious music (refer to page 92 of this document and Perrine (2017) for discussions on selecting religious music).

In a professional development activity, a facilitator who understands case law and school policy could summarize *Bauchman* to demonstrate how conflicts can arise when music teachers involve students in worship services and program devotional music such as *Friends* by Michael
W. Smith. However, they could discuss the musical and intercultural benefits of programming *The Lord Bless and Keep You* by John Rutter, which “has formed an important part of both Jewish and Christian worship practices throughout the centuries” (Olsen, 2012, p. 7). When referencing Nurre, facilitators could encourage teachers to consider the song *Ave Maria* from various perspectives. For example, one group of teachers could argue that *Ave Maria* is a piece intended for worship, and another group of teachers could argue that *Ave Maria* is a standard instrumental and choral composition.

Facilitators should encourage music teachers to acknowledge both sides of every argument. In addition, facilitators can encourage teachers to position themselves within the cases and consider how they might have worked with the communities to resolve conflicts. For example, Mr. Torgerson, Bauchman’s choir teacher, should have researched and explained the background of the Rutter as the text has Christian and Jewish roots. In addition to the musical benefits of the Rutter, this provides space to discuss the history and culture surrounding Jewish and Christian music with students. In contrast to the Rutter, the musical implications of the Smith are not justifiable, especially considering the context of the performance. Professional development facilitators should also point out where court documents contain evidence of inequitable practices—such as the choir’s participation in worship services, and blatant disregard towards students’ feelings—such as emailing parents and blaming Bauchman for the cancellation of the spring choir tour. Together, these two court cases could help music teachers understand multiple perspectives of religious music in public schools.

**NAfME’s Position Statement on Sacred Music in the Schools**

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) recently published two position statements—Inclusivity and Diversity in Music Education, and Equity and Access in Music
Education. Both position statements reflect culturally responsive language such as (a) encouraging students to create, perform, and respond to all musics, (b) supporting pedagogy that affirms students’ identities, and (c) equal access to music education for all students (NAfME, “Equity and Access in Music Education Position Statement,” n.d., & NAfME, “Inclusivity and Diversity in Music Education Position Statement,” n.d.). In this next section, I will argue that NAfME’s rationale supporting their position statement on sacred music in the schools does not reflect the organizations’ current goals towards inclusion and diversity. The current statement reads,

It is the position of the National Association for Music Education that the study and performance of religious music within an educational context is a vital and appropriate part of a comprehensive music education. The omission of sacred music from the school curriculum would result in an incomplete educational experience. (NAfME, “Sacred Music in Schools Position Statement,” n.d., para. 1)

NAfME’s rationale, which follows the above statement, does not encourage teachers to program a global perspective of religious music, but rather appears to serve as justification for programming Christian music. In this next section, I will critically examine NAfME’s sacred music position statement. First, I compliment the first rationale titled, “The First Amendment...,” which positions religious music within the content of case law and explains the relevance of The Establishment Clause and The Lemon Test to music teachers. Then, I criticize NAfME’s paragraph titled “Legal History” as being antiquated and one-sided. Finally, I disagree with a quote by Ambraham Schwadron from 1970, which NAfME includes as an argument for teaching about religious music. Following my critique, I provide suggestions for NAfME to amend the sacred music position statement.

**The First Amendment and The Lemon Test.** The first section of NAfME’s sacred music position statement titled, “The First Amendment...” clearly explains the First Amendment
and its application to religious music in public schools. In addition, NAfME provides a list of questions based off of The Lemon Test to assist teachers in making programming and curricular decisions regarding purpose, primary effect, and excessive entanglement (for explanations of The First Amendment and The Lemon Test refer to Chapter 2 of this document). This portion of NAfME’s statement is helpful and relevant to music teachers. For example, NAfME discourages music teachers from financially entangling their music programs with religious organizations.

**Legal history.** The next section of NAfME’s position statement titled, “Legal History,” outlines four court cases as rationales for sacred music in the public school: (a) Florey v. Sioux Falls School District (1980), (b) Bauchman v. West High School (1997), (c) Brandon v. the Board of Education of the Guilderland Central School District (1980), and (d) Widmar v. Vincent (1981). Citing Brandon and Widmar, NAfME explains that the cases involved free speech. While they affected free speech, the cases were more directly associated with facility use, and these cases ultimately influenced the Equal Access Act (EAA) of 1984 (Alexander & Alexander, 2011; Russo, 2008). While these cases are important for teachers to understand in relation to religious topics in public schools, there are other more applicable cases NAfME could cite to address free speech (for examples and a discussion on student and teacher free speech refer to pages 98-100 of this document). In addition, Brandon and Widmar do not directly address religious music.

NAfME could have referenced one of the “seven federal court cases that had a direct ruling on the performance of sacred music in school” (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014, p. 32). However, NAfME only uses two of these cases as a rationale: Florey v. Sioux Falls School District (1980) and Bauchman v. West High School (1997). NAfME’s discussion of these cases is dated and one-sided. For example, NAfME states,

Ms. Bauchman claimed that the songs were sung prayers and therefore constituted a violation of the establishment clause. Rejecting this argument, the court said that music
has a purpose in education beyond the mere words or notes in conveying a mood, teaching cultures and history, and broadening understanding of arts and that the selection of the music had a primarily secular purpose of teaching music appreciation. (NAfME, “Sacred Music in Schools Position Statement,” n.d., para. 3)

While these facts are true, I disagree with NAfME’s decision to highlight this case as a rationale for programming religious music. For example, in Bauchman, the choir teacher invited the choir to sing on monthly church services and blamed Bauchman for the cancellation of the spring choir tour in an email to parents. While this case does provide precedence that supports the legality of religious music in schools, NAfME should have noted the ethical implications of the teachers’ actions. One ruling from a federal court case that took place over 20 years ago should not validate the use of Christian music in public schools. Future music teachers are not going to be teaching in Utah in 1997.

In the same paragraph, NAfME uses Florey v. Sioux Falls (1980) to validate the use of religious music and states,

The plaintiff, an avowed atheist, touched off a statewide furor in 1978 when he complained about the use of the hymn “Silent Night” in the school’s Christmas program. He contended that the use of the song violated the doctrine of separation of church and state. (NAfME, “Sacred Music in Schools Position Statement,” n.d., para. 3)

NAfME’s strong language such as “avowed atheist” and “statewide furor” are inappropriate and unnecessary and appears to negate the plaintiff’s religious identity. In addition, NAfME completely failed to mention the use of The Christmas Quiz in Florey, which the court indicated was inappropriate (refer to Chapter 1 to read The Christmas Quiz).

Schwadron’s quote. At the conclusion, NAfME presents an additional antiquated rationale. NAfME quoted Abraham Schwadron’s 1970 article from the Journal of Research in Music Education, which read,

If it is possible to study Communism without indoctrination or to examine the ills of contemporary society without promoting the seeds of revolution, then it must also be
possible to study sacred music (with performance-related activities) without parochialistic attitudes and sectarian points of view. (NAfME, “Sacred Music in Schools Position Statement,” para. 5)

In a critique of this rationale, Koperniak (2015) asked, “Is this the best defense of sacred music in the public schools?...the communist example is outdated and inappropriate” (p. 57). Furthermore, Koperniak problematized Schwadon’s quote indicating that NAfME’s statement, which equates studying Communism to studying music, trivializes the music education profession as, “the performance of sacred music—any music—requires different, active participation than the studying of concepts and facts about Communism” (p. 57). In addition to dated and somewhat irrelevant cases, this final statement from almost 50 years ago renders NAfME’s position statement on sacred music in the public schools as extraneous and in need of extensive revisions.

**Suggestions to Amend NAfME’s Position Statement on Sacred Music in the Schools**

In the previous section I first mentioned that NAfME provides clear and helpful explanations of The First Amendment and *The Lemon Test* for public school music teachers. Then, I criticized how NAfME presents the legal history of religious music in public schools. Finally, I disagreed with NAfME’s use of Schwadron’s quote, which equates the study of music to the study of Communism. In this next section, I offer a 3-part framework for NAfME to revise their position statement for sacred music in schools. First, I suggest that NAfME consider philosophical, historical, and empirical research in their purpose statement. Second, I suggest NAfME present a thorough discussion of case law related to religious music in the public schools that addresses multiple perspectives. Third, I suggest that NAfME adopt a worldview of religious music.
Philosophical, historical, and empirical research. I suggest that NAfME review philosophical, empirical, and historical, research related to religious music in the public schools. For example, Chapters 1, 2, and 5 of this document consider history, policy, and perceptions of religious music in public education. Some conclusions relevant to NAfME’s position statement include:

- While schools are sites for religious neutrality, inappropriate amalgamations of church and state are still present in public schools (S.D. v. St. Johns Country School District, 2009; Stanton, 2017).
- Having a policy in place related to religious topics may avoid conflict (Jones, 1997).
- A worldview of religions can increase students’ respect and understanding towards unfamiliar religions (Aown, 2012).
- Music classrooms can provide a safe space and affirm students’ religious identities (Norton, 2008).
- Intercultural experiences have resulted in shifts of perspective such as increased knowledge, understanding, and in some cases a perceived increase in empathy (Dalib, Harun, & Yusof, 2016; Krajewski, 2011; Prieto-Flores, Feu, & Casademont, 2016).

In addition to the above research, recent NAfME sponsored publications and presentations have provided rigorous research related to religious music in the public schools. For example, NAfME could cite Cranmore and Fossey’s (2014) paper in Update titled: Religious Music in the Public Schools, and the Establishment Clause: A Review of Federal Case Law. In this review, Cranmore and Fossey provide a short discussion that represents various perspectives (refer to Chapter 2 of this document). In 2016, Koperniak presented his dissertation at NAfME’s Music Research and Teacher Education Conference in Atlanta, GA. The presentation and paper presented informed suggestions for NAfME to amend their position statement. In the corresponding dissertation, Koperniak (2015) asked, “How can teachers work to expand their view of sacred music to include many religious traditions?” (p. 242). While I appreciate Koperniak’s question, however, after considering the benefits associated with a music classroom
that incorporates a worldview of religion—as demonstrated in the current case study—I propose that NAfME use language that does not simply suggest inclusion, but calls for inclusion. I would amend Koeperniak’s statement to read, “Teachers should work to expand their view of sacred music to include many religious traditions.”

**Discussions of case law.** I suggest that NAfME’s position statement include recent federal court cases related to religious music in the public schools such as *Nurre v. Whitehead* (2009), *S.D. v. St. Johns Country School District* (2009), and *Stratechuk v. Board of Education* (2009). For example, NAfME could first explain the details and outcome of *Florey v. Sioux Falls* (1980), which permitted the use of Christmas carols. Then, NAfME could juxtapose that case with *Stratechuk v. Board of Education* (2009), which allowed a ban on Christmas carols. NAfME should present facts from multiple federal court cases to demonstrate both appropriate and inappropriate uses of religious music in the public schools. I argue that NAfME’s current position statement, which is antiquated, one-sided, and avoids the implications of context, presents music teachers with a rationale to continue programming mostly Christian music and avoids a worldview of religious music.

**A worldview of religious music.** I suggest that NAfME adopt a current worldview of religious music. Earlier in this Chapter (refer to page 104 in this document), I discussed the origins of choir. While choir is a Western tradition that began in the Christian church, I argued that in order to develop intercultural competence, a wide variety of music from multiple religious perspectives can encourage a global view—paying dividends in the form of respectful, curious, culturally aware, and empathetic students and communities. Finally, NAfME should remove the quote on the position statement from Abraham Schwadron’s 1970 article, which equates the study of sacred music to the study of communism. If NAfME wants its sacred music position
statement to reflect inclusion and diversity, the statement should recommend teachers adopt a
global view of religious music, encourage appropriate pedagogical approaches, and provide a
rationale that considers multiple perspectives and contexts.

**Moving Forward**

Multicultural, culturally responsive, and interculturally competent music teachers should
consider multiple religions when programming religious music, especially the religions
represented in their classrooms. In the current study, most participants appreciated the
programming, singing, and discussion of religious music. However, some participants expressed
apprehension, especially Melinda. Notably, most of the participants, including Melinda, ended
up with an appreciation for the experience.

Before I began data collection, I wondered if a unit on religious choral music from a
world perspective would alleviate some of the dissonance and tensions associated with the topic
of religious music in public schools. However, based on the results from this case study and
surrounding literature, I do not think tensions need to be alleviated. I think they need to be
experienced, discussed, and navigated in a continuous cycle. Deardorff (2006) might comment
that this continuous cycle allows us to learn, reflect, and grow in our cultural awareness, beliefs,
and behaviors. Jackson and Mazzie (2018) might encourage us to embrace these tensions as a
way of moving forward—understanding ourselves and others.

The correct amount of tension depends on context, which shifts—from state to state,
district to district, administrator to administrator, and even year to year. To start, practicing a
culturally relevant pedagogy and knowing each and every student will help teachers navigate
these tensions and move in a direction where they can discover and affirm their students’
individual identities. For example, when Melinda had students in her choir class who would have
to sit out of a concert rather than sing a religious piece of music she would find music that every student could sing. She was uncomfortable alienating students from the rehearsal and performance experience.

When teaching about religious music we need to recognize our position of power and present objective facts—teach, don’t preach. Teachers are influential and therefore should not impose their beliefs or opinions towards religions on students. In the current study, Melinda avoided presenting the facts altogether when she programmed religious music. She separated the music from the text to placate any possible controversy and intentionally left translations out of the programs. However, composers usually consider the text, and “meanings cannot be easily set aside without doing an injustice to the composer’s intent” (Perrine, 2017, p. 198). Teachers can explain the meaning of a piece of music as long as they are not trying to indoctrinate. When performing and teaching students about religious music there might exist feelings of anxiety and concern over implied indoctrination, especially if the teacher is of the dominate perspective. Teachers might consider discussing these feelings with their colleagues, administration, parents, and the students. If the teacher’s intent is to enhance students’ global perspectives of religious music, then open and honest conversations, while perhaps uncomfortable, can create collaborative learning experiences. If the teacher’s intent is to justify an overabundance of Christian music, then the conversations may anger and/or silence non-dominant perspectives.

As music teachers we need to present multiple perspectives. If the majority of religious music we teach is Christian, then we are reinforcing “the legitimacy of certain religious beliefs and practices as appropriately American” (Meizel, 2006, p. 497). We are a global nation, and when students make comments such as “I didn’t know there was any other religion besides Christianity,” then we are failing our students. Time, resources, and fear of controversy are
getting in the way of being open and honest with our students. We need to have conversations that acknowledge multiple perspectives, examine surrounding tensions, and help our students along on the important path to improving theirs—and our—intercultural competence.

**Future Research**

In the following paragraphs I have included possible projects to guide myself and others towards future research related to religious music in the public schools. First, I suggest researchers estimate how much religious music is programmed in public schools. Then, I propose researchers examine additional perspectives of religious music in the public schools, including religious music in the instrumental classroom. Finally, I recommend that researchers continue to examine how policy affects the programming and pedagogy related to religious music in the public schools.

**Programming of Religious Music**

Researchers could survey religious music programming practices during a typical school year and determine if there exists a specific time of year that tends to have an abundance of sacred music. In addition, it would be interesting to compare programming practices across the United States and across countries. Within these surveys, researchers could attempt to categorize religious music by practice, culture, region, and even large and small scale works to determine the types of sacred music programmed.

**Perspectives of Religious Music**

Researchers could take the current study and broaden the scope to the entire district from various perspectives. For example, researchers could interview elementary, middle, and high school music teachers from one district to examine how age affects programming and pedagogy related to religious music. Additional perspectives might include government, local businesses,
and colleges and universities. For example, researchers might discover how music teacher 
educators present programming and pedagogy, and the perceptions of the preservice teachers, 
other colleagues, the director, and the dean. Research questions might consist of the following: 
(a) Do preservice teachers feel prepared to talk about religion as it relates to religious music? (b) 
Are preservice teachers comfortable explaining religions with which they are unfamiliar? (c) Do 
directors and deans experience complaints in regards to religious music programming at the 
college level?

Researchers could also take the current study and narrow the focus to one individual 
music teacher or student. For example, researchers could conduct a narrative inquiry that follows 
one music student throughout the school year. The study might be of particular interest with a 
student who is not of the dominant religious perspective in their school. Researchers could 
examine their home, school, and house of worship musical experiences—examining how they 
possibly intersect, compliment, and conflict.

**Religious Instrumental Music**

Researchers could also consider sacred instrumental music without text. For example, 
researchers could explore how instrumental teachers consider context and balance when 
programming sacred and secular music. In addition to programming, researchers could explore 
how instrumental music teachers discuss the background of religious pieces with their students. 
An interesting study could also consist of comparing concert program notes between band, 
choirs, and orchestras.

**Policies Surrounding Religious Music**

Researchers could examine the effects of district policies and previous conflicts on 
religious music programming and related pedagogy. For example, when districts have restrictive
policies related to religious music programming does that correlate with more or less conflict? Researchers could also study a school that does not have traditional Western concert ensembles such as band, orchestra, and choir. They could explore the programming and pedagogies surrounding religious music in various non-traditional school music settings.
CHAPTER 6. GOD AND POLITICS

I wrestled with whether or not to include this day of data collection as it takes the paper in a different direction and was not a part of my initial plan and research questions. However, when discovering the meaning specific to each participant I considered data that presented itself in the “natural social world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 52). In addition, Jackson and Mazzei (2018), indicated that research questions do not always need to come first and “analytic questions emerge in the middle of things...the doing is not to create meaning but to show how an assemblage is made” (p. 729). I should note that Jackson and Mazzei might criticize the previous chapters in this dissertation as “a series of lockstep stages,” but here I work to “unsettle” certain concepts in an effort to “think with theory” (p. 733).

Therefore, I decided to structure my conclusion to serve as a practical example of how teachers can move forward. While the following case is specific to the context of this study, teachers may find that similar issues will emerge in the future. I think this example is profound because of the diverse perspectives the students displayed on this topic. I hope this will encourage teachers to apply and consider multiple perspectives when these discussions may emerge in their music classrooms. In addition to inspiring future research, perhaps readers will consider that many classrooms consist of students with these diverse perspectives—all moving amidst an intercultural competence continuum.

An Unexpected Day

When I arrived at school on October 30th I had not planned to ask how the students felt about the word god in patriotic music. Melinda unexpectedly passed out Veteran’s Day music during my last week of data collection, and so I seized the opportunity to discover the students’ perspectives. Throughout data collection I regularly encouraged written reflections, and so when
I passed out notecards and asked the students to write down how they felt about the word god in patriotic music, the process had become somewhat routine. However, during this reflection time the intensity of their pencils was palpable. During previous reflections, students would chat, share their thoughts, and ask me questions. In addition, depending on the topic some students would not turn in their reflections, some would only write a sentence or two, and others would fill up both sides of the notecard and ask for another. But on this day I could only hear fervent pencils. The students seemed eager to turn in their notecards and share their views with me. And so to best represent their powerful voices, I composed three poems using only their words, which can be read in Chapter 4. The poems expressed three views: (a) the word god and religion are integral to patriotic music, (b) they are indifferent to whether or not the word god or religion are used in patriotic music, and (c) they are opposed to god and religion in patriotic music.

To make sense of these findings, I considered the students’ perspectives and “read theory alongside other texts” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2018, p. 725). Therefore, in this final section I first cover research related to perceptions of politics in schools. Then, I discuss researchers who have interrogated the use of patriotic music in the classroom, and more specifically The National Anthem. Next, I consider Bradley’s (2009) and Jorgensen’s (2007) philosophical papers regarding patriotic music in a contextual examination of the music and community. Finally, I discuss how music teachers might consider the current study and related research to examine patriotic music from an intercultural and global perspective.

**Perceptions of Politics in Schools**

Researchers have examined perceptions of politics in public schools. For example, Tooms, Kretovics, and Smlalek (2007) found that some administrators perceived the school environment to be more pleasant when students and teachers did not engage in political
discussions. In the current study, Student Teacher Sandra agreed and stated “if we’re talking about political parties...I don’t want to talk about that...I think in today’s climate...it divides people more than it brings them together.” In contrast, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) believed political discussions, although often conflicting, are necessary in the classroom. They examined two school programs that engaged in civic education. One school focused on civic participation, and the other took a social justice approach. They found “programs that champion participation do not necessarily develop students’ ability to analyze and critique root causes of social problems and vice versa” (p. 264). Further, they concluded civic education in schools is necessary and criticized curriculum that only focuses on personal responsibility as “reinforcing a conservative and often individualistic notion of citizenship” (p. 264). Noguera and Cohen (2006) echoed similar sentiments and encouraged political discussions to go beyond the social studies classroom and that “teachers of all kinds should raise these issues with their students, not to dictate what they should think, but simply to encourage them to think” (p. 578). To encourage these discussions, music teachers might consider singing music that embraces multiple political and cultural perspectives so that students can consider “what we ought to do as a nation and what our role in the world should be” (Jorgensen, 2007. p. 156). Therefore, in this next section I will highlight researchers who have examined patriotic music as related to U. S. schools and the music classroom.

**Patriotic Music**

In an effort to find values common to Americans but separate from organized religion, American sociologist Robert Bellah coined the term *civil religion*, which he described as “beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things” (Bellah, 1967, p. 8). Forty years later, Meizel (2006) analyzed the songs *God Bless America* and *God Bless the U.S.A* through
Bellah’s concept of *civil religion* in relation to history, current politics, and pop culture. For example, Meizel considered major events such as adding “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 and changing “E Pluribus, Unum” (Out of many, one) to “In God We Trust” as the national motto in 1956 (p. 498). These events may have been in response to war as “the United States became a nation under God—because the socialist republics of the Soviet Union were not” and so “we may say that American music eagerly took up the call to arms” (p. 499).

American-Jewish composer Irving Berlin originally wrote *God Bless America* in 1917 (Lesser, 2014, p. 183), however it was not until the 1940s when the song became popular and sparked controversy. Some felt the song promoted religious propaganda, and Woody Guthrie even composed *This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land* in response (Cray, 2006). At the other extreme, “some religious leaders took issue with the nonsectarian invocation of God’s name” (Meizel, 2006, p. 499). In the current study, 70 years later, the students stated similar opposing views. I should note that the conversation occurred during football season, in which the controversy over San Francisco 49ers player Colin Kaepernick’s decision to take a knee during *The National Anthem* the previous year was still present. Meizel might consider that the current study provides further evidence that Bellah’s concept of a “transcendent” civil religion has not come to pass, but has helped “to balance a global economic and political hegemony on the fulcrum of the commodified American Dream” (p. 502).

**The National Anthem**

The students expressed three distinct viewpoints when it came to God and religious music. However, when examining these perspectives through an intercultural competence lens I found myself wondering, as music teachers, what is our responsibility to teach patriotic songs such as *The Star Spangled Banner*? In addition, should choirs learn anthems from around the
world? I was curious about the position that the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), which was previously the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), took on this topic. On NAfME’s website I found a 2009 article by Anne Wagener regarding an event titled, National Anthem Day. In the article Wagener stated, “MENC encourages these celebrations as an excellent opportunity for teachers to educate students about The National Anthem and to demonstrate the important role music teachers play in passing on our cultural heritage” (Wagener, 2009). In a critique of this position, Bradley (2009) argued that MENC was basing their rationale “upon an assumption that it is both a social and cultural necessity to sing The Star Spangled Banner” (p. 66). In order to develop intercultural competence in ourselves and our students, anthems from other cultures, especially those with which our students identify, should be included in the repertoire. As one student stated when considering the word god in patriotic music, “It’s not very diverse.”

Wagner’s (2009) statement regarding “our cultural heritage” does not consider the diverse cultural identities of our students. In addition, MENC partnered with The National Anthem Project (NAP) and encouraged music teachers across the United States to teach The Star Spangled Banner. Bradley (2009) described the images on NAP’s website as “predominantly white, American identity...that indeed pictorially erases difference from the collective and...flies in the face multicultural education” (p. 67). I examined NAP’s current website (www.nationalanthemproject.org), and found these predominantly white images still dominate the website. For example, there are updated pictures with current Vice President Mike Pence standing with his hand on his heart. In addition, one recent blog post stated, “It is our duty to respect national symbols as a citizen” (NAP, 2018). On the homepage, the project is clearly defined as an “MENC initiative...spotlighting the important role that music education plays in
giving Americans our patriotic voice” (NAP, 2018). Their current slogan, “The Campaign to Restore America’s Voice,” reminded me of the recent presidential campaign, “Make America Great Again.” When considering Deardorff’s (2006) framework, I might argue that our students’ voices do not need to be restored, they need to be embraced—every language, genre, and style, that make up our diverse country. While the current NAfME website did not contain any recent articles addressing the NAP, I found an article from 2015 titled, “Red, White, and Blue: Patriotic Lesson Plans and Classroom Activity Ideas,” and a 2015 announcement for a chance to win a Star Spangled Banner music box when teachers send in ideas for teaching The Star Spangled Banner to students. These items on NAfME’s website indicate that singing about ramparts and rockets are central to American music culture and do not promote peace and unity.

Aside from the shared social and cultural beliefs that The Star Spangled Banner assumes, the difficult melody and large range make the piece inaccessible. In addition to musical considerations, Jorgensen (2007) suggested we teach songs that promote peace and not war. For example, she offered America the Beautiful, but still problematized the “monotheistic male deity evoked in the phrase ‘God, shed his grace on thee’” (p. 155). She offered up other suggestions for the phrase such as including the feminine and embracing polytheistic perspectives. She also suggested that the song tends to paint an inaccurate rosy picture of American’s past and recommended additional verses that recall “the price at which this country has been bought and of those who are silenced in the public spaces, who do not see beauty anywhere, and for whom living here seems more a curse than a blessing” (p. 156).

**Considering Context**

Even if teachers consider Jorgensen’s statement and program new patriotic music, Bradley (2009) suggested that the community and audience can push the performance boundaries
based on the context. For example, communities who accept a variety of cultures can propel an audience towards what she called “multicultural human subjectivity” (p. 57). On the other side, similar performances in a different context, “may also be performative for fascistic forms of community” (p. 57). She recognized this delicate line of demarcation and cautioned against an “imagined community” that can generate “seductive feelings of unity that are easily manipulated” (p. 70). NAfME might consider the delicate balance that Jorgensen and Bradley presented: musical considerations, texts that narrowly defines American culture, and the context and community in which the music is presented. There cannot be a one size fits all approach. Jorgensen (2007) suggested that perhaps teachers look at their local communities, the nation, and the world so that the music we teach does not forward “limited claims of nationalism to the exclusion of building international and local affiliations and identities” (p. 153).

In the current study, students challenged both sides of the performance boundaries when considering the word god in patriotic music. One student stated, “Religion is the founding of our great country,” while another student expressed a concern that “it doesn’t really make sense, the impression that American and Christianity are one in the same.” Perhaps these sentiments express why “if teaching is a political act, teaching music is even more so” (Bradley, 2012, p. 194). In the current study, the student teacher expressed concern over engaging in political topics with students. Similarly, Bradley explained that her preservice and in-service graduate students were fearful of engaging in political discussions in the music classroom. Bradley designed a “World Music Pedagogies” graduate seminar class in an effort to “elicit discussion about the politics of world music in education” (p. 189). Through the lens of critical race theory, Bradley explored their opposition and suggested,

One technology for ensuring its own continuation is to control the discourses in which educators engage. Thus politics generally becomes something to be avoided, and when
politics implies race and racism, even the most obvious historical examples of racism, such as South African apartheid, U. S. Jim Crow laws, or the genocide of Native Americans in the 1800s, become topics deemed unfit for the classroom. (p. 193)

Moving Forward

Several times throughout the study Melinda would say, “I avoid confrontation,” or “I hate controversy.” She sees politics and religion as controversial. Melinda talked about how she has a hard time with religions because she only accepts “scientific facts” as truth. Thomas (2006) writes, “frequently, adherents of a nonreligious system test the truth of assertions by applying principals of scientific inquiry” (p. 18). However, as suggested in the current study regarding patriotic music, students assign their own meaning to the facts presented. From one intercultural competence perspective, the teacher could manage “interaction in ways that are likely to produce more appropriate and effective individual, relational, or group, or institutional outcomes” (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 6). However, these interactions “could lead to more open attitudes toward others, or conversely, may contribute to a hardened boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Bradley, 2009, p. 60).

When we engage in patriotic music in an attempt to bring people together under one “national identity,” we might “conflict with the desire to preserve one’s ethnic, cultural, or religious identity” (Bradley, 2015, p. 15). In fact, Bradley criticized the use of the term intercultural as it “offers little to no challenge to the oppression of minority groups by the majority culture” (p. 21). The concept of cultural humility in the medical field as outlined by Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) as a “lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critique, to redressing the power imbalances” (p. 123) in combination with multicultural and intercultural education might offer new perspectives to Bradley’s critique. In the current study, Melinda placed a high priority on getting to know her students “as their own person.” However, her fear
of controversy when engaging in religious or political conversations limited her ability to develop a multicultural, intercultural, and culturally humble music classroom.

Music teachers can move forward by challenging expectations to perform *The Star Spangled Banner*, *God Bless America*, or *America the Beautiful*. Teachers can consider the cultures within their classroom and embrace individual identities. In addition, we can look beyond our walls to the surrounding town, county, state, nation, continent, and world—embracing the unique differences, exploring the similarities—uniting not one nation under god, but a universe for all.

**Final Thoughts**

Amidst conflicts solutions can emerge, or at least compromises. As a final thought, I would like to review broad themes that I have discovered to inspire future research, including conflicts surrounding religious music. Many music teachers indicate they are conflicted when it comes to programming religious music (Gianuzzi, 2014; Luke, 2004). Based on the current study and related research these conflicts can be sorted into three categories: (a) The “political preacher conflict,” in which music teachers avoid discussing sensitive subject matter as it relates to religious music because they are concerned parents, administration, and the community will perceive them as crossing the line (Bradley, 2012; Mercado, 2017). (b) The “traditionalist conflict,” which occurs when teachers feel pressured to include religious music as it relates to concerts, ceremonies, and traditions within their school environments (Kallio, 2015). (c) The “curriculum conflict,” which occurs when teachers struggle with issues of power and how religious music is situated within the curriculum. (Kallio, 2015).

Prior to this study, I wondered if the concern over ideological indoctrination when singing religious music affected how teachers program. An examination of recent court cases suggested
that there exist concerns over ideological indoctrination. For example, the courts sided with plaintiffs in *Nurre v. Whitehead* (2009) and *Stratechuk v. Board of Education* (2009) who argued that religious music does not have a place in the public schools. However, other courts have ruled that music provides an outlet to freely express religious beliefs (*Bauchman v. West High School*, 1997; *Doe v. Duncanville Independent School District*, 1995; *Florey v. Sioux Falls*, 1980). There seems to be a controversial line that teachers do not want to cross, but Bradley (2012) suggested that “educators who present sanitized contexts for the music they teach or who avoid contexts altogether contribute to the ongoing devaluation of the arts in education” (p. 194).

In the current study, the teacher, students, parents, and administration did not reveal concerns over ideological indoctrination. However, concerns and conflicts emerged that related to programming diverse music, pedagogy associated with religious music from unfamiliar perspectives, and creating a safe and inclusive classroom where all students felt valued and welcomed. I chose Cypress Middle Magnet because Melinda, the teacher, avoids discussing the background of religious music, does not program religious music from the non-dominant perspective, and she has students with diverse religious perspectives in her choir class. Bounding this case study within a new school environment would most likely yield different results. The researcher-designed unit, *Religious Choral Music from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worlds*, which was framed from an intercultural competence perspective (Deardorff, 2006), was designed to elicit acceptance through the examination of differences and similarities using the topic of world religious music.

After designing the unit, I wondered if students would widen their cultural perspectives and reduce biases towards diverse religious perspectives when singing and learning about perspectives with which they were unfamiliar. In this case, the students expressed positive
attitudes, increased knowledge, and looked for solutions to “make sure history does not repeat itself.” This last quote emerged after discussions surrounding religious discrimination. Some students appeared concerned with issues of social justice related to religious minorities. In their sincere responses I heard the potential for future action against injustice. Issues of inclusion and diversity are present in many facets of our lives. I hope music education can continue to play a meaningful role in communities around the world to increase our understanding of and appreciation for diverse perspectives and experiences.
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Stratechuk v. Board of Education, Appeal, No. 08-3826 (3rd Cir. 2009).


U. S. Const. amend I.


ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Emily Mercado  
Music Education

FROM: Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: September 5, 2017

RE: IRB# E10585

TITLE: Perceptions of Religious Music in the Public Schools


Review Date: 9/5/2017

Approved X Disapproved

Approval Date: 9/5/2017 Approval Expiration Date: 9/4/2020

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 1; 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING – Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU’s Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*  
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.

3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.

4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.

5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.

6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.


8. SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsue.edu/irb
APPENDIX B. PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION FORM

Project Title: Perceptions of Religious Music in Public Schools

Performance Site: Sherwood Middle Magnet, Baton Rouge, LA

Investigator: The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Emily Mercado, School of Music and Dramatic Arts, LSU (541) 207-8942, emerca3@lsu.edu
Dr. Ann Marie Stanley, School of Music and Dramatic Arts, LSU, (225) 578-2562, astanley1@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this narrative instrumental case study is to gain a deeper perspective of a middle school choir program that incorporates religious music.

Inclusion Criteria: The teacher, students, parents, and administrator involved in the Advanced Women’s Choir at Sherwood Middle Magnet.

Exclusion Criteria: Teachers, students, parents, and administrators who are not associated with the Advanced Women’s Choir at Sherwood Middle Magnet.

Description of the Study: The purpose of my narrative instrumental case study is to gain a deeper perspective of a middle school choir program that incorporates world music, and how they navigate the topic of religion when it pertains to the music they are singing. As part of this project I will observe Ms. DeFoe teaching the Advanced Women’s Choir and assist her when needed. I will also conduct interviews with Ms. DeFoe, Ms. Noel, one choir parent, and six choir students. The six choir students will be interviewed as a group where students can engage in conversation with the researcher and each other. The first focus group will take place during the second week of the study, and the final focus group will take place during the sixth and final week. All interviews will be recorded, but will only be available to the researchers. All recordings and participant information will be kept confidential.

Benefits: Students will have an opportunity to learn music from varying perspectives. For this study the pieces are chosen specifically to serve the music curriculum and further students’ musical knowledge.

Risks: There are no known risks.

Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary, and a student will become part of the study only if both student and parent agree to the student's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the subject's parent may withdraw the subject from the study without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study, nor is there any compensation to the subjects for participation.
Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I will allow my child to be interviewed and participate in the study described above. I acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Parent’s/Guardian’s Signature: _______________________________ Date: __________________________
APPENDIX C. CHILD ASSENT FORM

I, ____________________________, agree to be in a study to gain a deeper perspective of our middle school choir program when we program world music, and how we navigate the topic of religion when it pertains to the music we are singing. I understand that I am being interviewed along with five other students for this project. I can decide to stop being in this study at any time without getting in trouble. I also understand that these interviews will be recorded, but that only the researchers will hear the recordings. I understand that the recordings, my name, age, and other personal information will be kept confidential.

Child's Signature: ___________________________  Age: _____  Date: ________________

Witness: ___________________________  Date: ________________
APPENDIX D. ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Perceptions of Religious Music in Public Schools

Performance Site: Sherwood Middle Magnet, Baton Rouge, LA

Investigator: The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Emily Mercado, School of Music and Dramatic Arts, LSU (541) 207-8942, emerca3@lsu.edu
Dr. Ann Marie Stanley, School of Music and Dramatic Arts, LSU, (225) 578-2562, astanley1@lsu.edu

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Exclusion Criteria: Teachers, students, parents, and administrators who are not associated with the Advanced Women’s Choir at Sherwood Middle Magnet.

Description of the Study: The purpose of my narrative instrumental case study is to gain a deeper perspective of a middle school choir program that incorporates world music, and how they navigate the topic of religion when it pertains to the music they are singing. As part of this project I will observe Ms. DeFoe teaching the Advanced Women’s Choir and assist her when needed. I will also conduct interviews with Ms. DeFoe, Ms. Noel, one choir parent, and six choir students. The six choir students will be interviewed as a group where students can engage in conversation with the researcher and each other. The first focus group will take place during the second week of the study, and the final focus group will take place during the sixth and final week. All interviews will be recorded, but will only be available to the researchers. All recordings and participant information will be kept confidential.

Benefits: Students will have an opportunity to learn music from varying perspectives. For this study the pieces are chosen specifically to serve the music curriculum and further students’ musical knowledge.

Risks: There are no known risks.

Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary, and a student will become part of the study only if both student and parent agree to the student's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the subject's parent may withdraw the subject from the study without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study, nor is there any compensation to the subjects for participation.
Signature:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb.

As a representative of Sherwood Middle Academic Magnet School, I grant permission for the proposed research to be conducted on school property. I understand that the researcher will keep all student information confidential and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Administrator’s Signature:_________________________ Date:_________________________
APPENDIX E. ADULT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Perceptions of Religious Music in Public Schools

Performance Site: Sherwood Middle Magnet, Baton Rouge, LA.

Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
   Emily Mercado, School of Music and Dramatic Arts, LSU (541) 207-8942, emerca3@lsu.edu
   Dr. Ann Marie Stanley, School of Music and Dramatic Arts, LSU, (225) 578-2562, astanley1@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this narrative instrumental case study is to gain a deeper perspective of a middle school choir program that incorporates religious music.

Inclusion Criteria: The teacher, students, parents, and administrator involved in the Advanced Women’s Choir at Sherwood Middle Magnet.

Exclusion Criteria: Teachers, students, parents, and administrators who are not associated with the Advanced Women’s Choir at Sherwood Middle Magnet.

Description of the Study: The purpose of my narrative instrumental case study is to gain a deeper perspective of a middle school choir program that incorporates world music, and how they navigate the topic of religion when it pertains to the music they are singing. As part of this project I will observe Ms. DeFoe teaching the Advanced Women’s Choir and assist her when needed. I will also conduct interviews with Ms. DeFoe, Ms. Noel, one choir parent, and six choir students. The six choir students will be interviewed as a group where students can engage in conversation with the researcher and each other. The first focus group will take place during the second week of the study, and the final focus group will take place during the sixth and final week. All interviews will be recorded, but will only be available to the researchers. All recordings and participant information will be kept confidential.

Benefits: Students will have an opportunity to learn music from varying perspectives. For this study the pieces are chosen specifically to serve the music curriculum and further students’ musical knowledge.

Risks: There are no known risks.

Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary, and a student will become part of the study only if both student and parent agree to the student's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the subject's parent may withdraw the subject from the study without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study, nor is there any compensation to the subjects for participation.
Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Participant Signature: ___________________________________ Date: ____________________
APPENDIX F. LETTER TO REQUEST PARENT INTERVIEW

Dear Parents,

My name is Emily Mercado and I am a PhD student in Music Education at Louisiana State University. For the past few weeks I have been working with Ms. Emily DeFoe and the Advanced Women’s Choir at Sherwood Middle Magnet as part of my dissertation. Your daughter took part in the group interview a few weeks ago and I thoroughly enjoyed talking with her. She is very bright, kind, and articulate.

The purpose of my narrative instrumental case study is to gain a deeper perspective of a middle school choir program that incorporates world music, and how they navigate the topic of religion when it pertains to the music they are singing. I would like a parent’s perspective on this topic, and I was hoping that I could interview you. The meeting could take place at your convenience and would last approximately 20-30 minutes. If you are interested please email me at Emerca3@lsu.edu, or call/text me at 541-207-8942 so that we can set up a time to talk.

Sincerely,

Emily Mercado
PhD Candidate, Music Education
Louisiana State University
Emerca3@lsu.edu
APPENDIX G. PERMISSION OF USE FORM

Title: Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization

Author: Darla K. Deardorff

Publication: Journal of Studies in International Education

Publisher: SAGE Publications

Date: 09/01/2006

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VITA

Emily Mercado received her Master of Arts in Teaching in 2006 and Bachelor of Arts in 2005 from Oregon State University. Before arriving at Louisiana State University, she taught choir for nine years at Crescent Valley High School and Cheldelin Middle School in Corvallis, Oregon. Mercado was also the associate conductor of the Corvallis Repertory Singers and worked as a staff member on two trips to Europe with the Oregon Ambassadors of Music.

Mercado has presented at national, regional, and state conferences. She served as district and choral chair for the Oregon Music Education Association and choral liaison for Oregon American Choral Directors Association. Primary research interests include the use of religious music in the public schools, multicultural music education, and popular music education.