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Culturally Relevant Choral Music Pedagogy and Student Feedback

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

CULTURALLY RELEVANT CHORAL MUSIC PEDAGOGY AND STUDENT FEEDBACK

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
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MASTER OF ARTS

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BY
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The purpose of this teacher action research study was to assess choral education pedagogy through the perspective of high school choir students. The research question asked: How can I utilize student interpretation and critique in order to empirically self-reflect on my choral teaching practice and its cultural relevance? Interpretation and critique are defined as student opportunities to give feedback, both positive and negative, in the form of qualitative oral discussion and quantitative, linear ranking. While research has shown that culturally relevant pedagogy allows for more student engagement and success, I hypothesized that this study would show that students who perceive their music education as culturally reflective and relevant would in turn be more interested in continuing to sing in the upcoming semester and as adults because they felt recognized and valued in the classroom setting. Qualitative-dominant data was collected from choir students grades 10-12 at a private, all-girls, Catholic Chicagoland high school. Survey data and brief, semi-structured discussion data was collected at two points during the 2017 fall semester.
Introduction

Statement of Problem

The U.S. school population is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, and millions of those students participate in choir while in high school, honing in on literacy of the music theory language, improving their aural skills, and perfecting their performance quality and etiquette through a creative outlet. All the while, these students earn fine arts credit toward their GPA and graduation, and ideally, begin a lifetime of singing in college, in a community choir, in church, or in any capacity after graduation. Educators in all disciplines have been seeking ways to engage and promote the success of this more diverse student population. One approach is culturally relevant pedagogy, “...a dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.467). In academic subjects, culturally relevant pedagogy increases the success of minority students’ academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2002; Abril, 2013). When applied to the music classroom, culturally reflective teaching, in theory, raises interest and passion in choir students. However, research on the effectiveness of CRP for choir students is young. This study sought to determine how my choir students are able constructively assess my efforts as a CRP teacher. Teacher action research studies attempt to integrate research and practice. Consulting with students to find out what they think is crucial. When students become coresearchers, they have the opportunity to either validate the instructor’s findings or to present new ideas themselves (Pine, 2008).
Significance

This study is crucial for not only music teachers, but for all educators. Culturally relevant pedagogy is an effective way to teach minority students, a population quickly becoming the dominant demographic in most urban school settings. The goal of any educator is to promote lifelong learning. This goal is no different for high school choral directors. Scholars have studied the need for culturally relevant teaching in urban classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1995, Gay, 2002, Shaw 2016), but studies that include student assessment of this pedagogy—crucial feedback for the instructor—is lacking. “When thinking about conducting research in schools, it is essential to remember that classrooms do not exist in a vacuum” (Pine, 2008, p.35). When the teacher becomes the researcher, an active agent in her own classroom, data is able to shed light on social constructs and cultural realities that the students experience. Further, the teacher is able to use raw data collected in real time to improve her own practice with a specific set of students. This is not possible when researching a classroom as an outsider (Pine, 2008).

If high school teachers choose to ignore the challenge of culturally responding to their students, they risk losing intelligent, hungry learners who do not see themselves or feel like themselves in the classroom. Similarly, teachers attempting to implement CRP who do not ask for student criticism may not be teaching effectively in the eyes of the actual students sitting in the seats. Students may start seeing the content area as a means to an end, another credit closer to graduation. Just as an English teacher hopes their students read beyond graduation, simply for the sake of exploring literature, music teachers hope students continue exploring music after performing at commencement.
**Context**

Teacher action research calls for an approach to research “that must include the role of the teacher as an active agent in creating knowledge for the improvement of teaching and learning” (Pine, 2008, p.41). In order to make myself both teacher and active researcher, my own students assessed my case study in CRP as a new pedagogical approach to high school choir. My choir students share many characteristics, making it convenient to use statistical analysis to attempt to control for potentially confounding variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The high school, located in the Chicagoland area, is all-girls, private, and Catholic. Our two academic tracks are the College Preparatory program and the International Baccalaureate program. Students could also be enrolled in a combination of the two tracks.

Due to the nature of this small, somewhat homogeneous high school environment, all of my participants are females ages 15-18. All participants come from socioeconomic backgrounds that can afford Catholic school tuition, either in full or with a partial scholarship, and travel to school from somewhere in the Chicagoland area. Because the school does not offer a wide variety of academic programs, participants are enrolled in similarly rigorous classes. Special education is unavailable at the school, meaning students with any type of physical or learning disability must be able to participate fully and successfully in the inclusive classrooms without the aid of paraprofessionals in order to attend. Just like any semester of my chorus curriculum, this 18-week fall semester culminated in a concert that included repertoire selections following a specific theme. The overarching theme of the 2017 Christmas concert was *Our Lady*. Each of my choirs performed songs that revere the Virgin Mary in some way.
Literature Review

Traditional Curriculum and World Music

American choral music students are expected to learn traditional Western art music in order to be prepared for college and simply to be well-versed in music (Shaw, 2012). In today’s standard-based frenzy among teachers, schools tend to define what needs to be taught, expecting teachers to accept what the state or the nation determines as knowledge (Sleeter, 2009). Music educators feel this pressure, but also witness classroom populations shifting. Since the 1970s, music educators have been stuffing curriculum designs with “World Music” (Palkki, 2015). Teaching music from around the world was promoted with promised results of moral teaching and culturally sensitive students. In more recent decades, the desire to include music from multiple cultures in the curriculum has become the norm (Abril 2013).

Reflecting on this trend, Davis explains that deemphasizing Western art music and including more worldly songs is a rather persuasive solution to society’s tendency to accept only certain cultures’ music as capital (2005). Shaw (2016) agrees, arguing that American music education is based on the Eurocentric framework that values Western classical paradigms. This type of framework may be incompatible with students’ prior music knowledge and experience (Abril, 2013). However, Davis warns against the appropriation of World Music. He argues that music education emerging out of this new wave of scholarship is, more often than not, reinforcing “…oversimplified notions of ethnicity, superimposing on predetermined categories of race, nation, language, and culture” (2005, p.58). Palkki agrees that taking a choir on a musical tour of the world can morph into “tokenizing and colonization” (2015, p.3). Moreover, this
approach can exclude students from competitive solo auditions, advanced and selective choirs, and notation-oriented (rather than aural-focused) pedagogy (Shaw, 2016).

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Ladson-Billings (1995), a black feminist anthropologist, set out to establish a new theory for creating and delivering curriculum. She argued that while others had explored appropriate teaching of minority students, the emphasis was on fitting the students into an already existing educational hierarchy of meritocracy. Accommodating student culture in school is insufficient. Ladson-Billings (1995) explored what constitutes student success, how academic success and cultural success compliment each other (especially in settings in which students feel alienated), and how researchers can pinpoint responsive pedagogy in action. Gay (2002) continued investigating how to improve school success of ethnically diverse student learners. She sums up Ladson-Billings’ theory of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy as, “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p.31). The overall goal of developing the theory was to provide strategies that allow students to maintain their cultural integrity without sacrificing academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The five areas of CRP to look for when observing teachers in practice include the conceptions of self and others, the structure of social relations, conceptions of knowledge, diverse curriculum content, and response to diversity through instructional delivery. (Ladson-Billings, 1995 and Gay, 2005). CRP teachers believe that all students are capable of academic success, see their own pedagogy as an ever-evolving art, see themselves as members of a community, and see their teaching as giving back to the community. Regarding the structure of
social relations, CRP teachers maintain fluid teacher-student relationships that demonstrate connection with all students and who develop learning communities in which each student feels responsible for the others. CRP does not encourage individual, competitive achievement, but rather promotes peer-learning where any student could be the teacher. Ladson-Billings identifies that CRP teachers believe knowledge is not static and must be viewed critically and who teach using scaffolding, layering knowledge on past knowledge. Most importantly, teachers must allow for multiple forms of assessment, in turn allowing for multiple versions of success. The culturally relevant teacher is better prepared to select meaningful materials and utilize successful teaching strategies that build connections between home and school for the students (Abril, 2013).

Gay identifies six outcomes of CRP in action (2005): culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. Pedagogy achieves validation and affirmation by acknowledging the legitimacy of different cultural heritages and by building bridges between not only home and school experiences, but also between academics and sociocultural reality. The teacher uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that appeal to varying learning styles. Pedagogy achieves comprehensiveness by expressing expectations and teaching skills in a collective manner in order to promote academic and cultural excellence simultaneously. The teacher builds a community of learners that rises or falls together, and it is in “the best interest of everyone to ensure that each individual member of the group [is] successful” (p.33). Pedagogy achieves multidimensionalism by examining emotions, beliefs, values, credibility, and opinions along with factual information
to make instruction more reflective of ethnic diversity. Multidimensional teaching helps students clarify their own ethnic values.

CRP achieves empowerment by putting students in small groups to compare and contrast their problem-solving strategies, learning the cultural capital of “school,” such as test-taking strategies, study skills, and note-taking, and setting up mentors for academic and social success by older students. Pedagogy achieves transformation by explicitly respecting the cultures and experiences of African American, Native American, Latino, and Asian American students and recognizing their existing strengths and accomplishments. Teachers encourage analysis of the effects of inequalities, promotes zero tolerance, and fosters change. Emancipation is achieved by contesting presumed scholarly “truth” typically taught in schools. Teachers validate multiple cultural perspectives and engaging in more than one way to know or think. The six outcomes of CRP are particularly evident in Leonard, Moore, and Brooks’ study of multicultural literature in elementary math lessons in urban schools (2014). The researchers found that using multicultural texts is a low-risk strategy for anchoring math into the students’ cultures and everyday lives.

Regarding what Ladson-Billings (1995) calls cultural competence, Leonard et al states,

Culturally relevant math tasks, if done appropriately, provide the opportunity for students to develop a strong mathematical identity by using cultural forms of knowledge. Students are more likely to remember mathematics concepts when the concepts are anchored to the culture of the community the students are most familiar with. (p.328)

This claim does not encourage educators to lower their standards for learning and performing mandatory mathematical tasks. The researchers make it clear that using cultural knowledge (capital) students are familiar with will only enhance their understanding of formal curriculum benchmarks (Leonard et al, 2014). This CRP mindset can be applied to the music
classroom. CRP in the music classroom goes beyond selecting culturally varied repertoire and instead looks into the community for cultural inspirations that will be relevant to that specific student population (Palkki, 2015). When choosing music, the culturally responsive teacher should consider students’ backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences without excluding lessons on musical elements and concepts (Abril, 2013; Campbell 2010).

**CRP in Music Education**

Kelly-McHale (2013) identifies current issues in multicultural music education today. These include teacher attitudes toward diverse student populations, music preferences of these students, approaches to teaching multicultural music, and the connection between home culture and music classroom culture. Clearly, scholarship is moving away from selection “World Music” for the choir concert and working towards more CRP. Most children arrive in the choir room with rich musical experiences, though they may not always be compatible with the prescribed aims of music education (Abril 2013; Campbell, 2010).

Kelly-McHale’s findings revealed that when teachers choose not to address cultural, linguistic, or popular musical influences, they are in turn ignoring opportunities for cultural responsiveness (2013). Davis also examines the issue of music education acting as gatekeeper of the potential relationship between music and culture, arguing that music has the immense power to “...make realities, conjure into presence things that might not exist apart from signification” (2005, p.55). When teaching music to a specific minority population, creating inclusive learning communities in which the teacher and the student help each other with their strengths and weaknesses in the classroom is the most effective way to incorporate CRP (Kelly-McHale, 2013; Abril 2013, Campbell, 2010).
Shaw (2016) examines how choir students perceive their teachers’ CRP efforts, how they perceive choir norms such as repertoire selections, technique, and rehearsal/performance etiquette, what barriers to CRP the children perceive, and how CRP helps students self-identity as musicians while still expressing their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. Of the students who did perceive their conductor as culturally responsive, three themes emerged from the data: developing sociocultural competence, expanding cultural horizons, and enhancing cultural validity. The teacher selected culturally appropriate repertoire, fostered connections between rehearsal and experiences, engaged and validated family as culture bearer, avoided viewing the choir as one, homogenous “Hispanic” group of children, and ensured that performance practices were indicative and typical of each culture studied (Shaw, 2016; Costello-Herrera, 2010; Palkki, 2015). Further developing a nurtured, authentic relationship between music and culture helps defend minority and marginalized music from the dominant music curriculum (Davis, 2005). CRP efforts can give cultural wealth to non-Eurocentric music, feeding off of minority students’ cultural, aspirational, familial, social, and linguistic experiences (Yosso, 2006). Children preserve their music, internally storing their family and community and keeping it for some future chance to share (Campbell, 2010). Teachers have the responsibility to highlight students’ particular “heritage music,” as the potential for knowing the multicultural makeup of the music classroom lies within the students and their families (2010, p.253).

**Musical Identity Beyond High School**

Nethsinghe (2004) touches on the relationship between music and self-identity in his study of Sri Lankan students’ music education in Australia. He found three main themes that emerged from the data. Students studying multicultural music developed respect and tolerance
through appreciation of “other” music, constructed self-identity, and reaped the benefits of community music-making. Singing songs from varying cultures plays an important role in constructing one’s identity and how we perceive others, including musical, social, ethnic, racial, and cultural identities (Ilari et al., 2013). Nethsinghe suggests that “…through the understanding of one’s own musical background it is possible to develop and extend of musical and cultural self-identity” (p.8).

When Powell examined what influences Australian males to participate in choir (2017), he found that students’ image of their “ideal self” influenced their decisions. The “ideal self” includes what one desires to become, what one expects to become, and what one wishes to avoid. He emphasizes that socio-cultural constructs limit people’s formulation of their ideal selves. For example, the choir members Powell studied indicated experience of music education and past choral experience as contributing to their self-identities as musicians. While Powell does not specifically explore the blending of family social culture and school music culture when it comes to past music education experience, he implies that positive choir experiences do indeed provide the foundations for future musical pursuits (2017).

A study on college music education majors’ career choice influences follow suit (Rickels, Brewer, Councill, Fredrickson, Hairston, Perry, & Schmidt, 2013). Results concluded that future music education majors in band, orchestra, and choir were heavily influenced by their experiences in high school ensembles, especially the guidance and mentoring of their ensemble directors. Again, while this study does not identify any aspects of culture as factoring into students’ decisions, Rickels et al do identify a twofold responsibility for music teachers: providing musical opportunities to shape students’ musical identities while keeping in mind that
they are shaping their musical futures simultaneously (2013). Shaw concludes that “...music teachers can capitalize upon music’s role in conceptualizing and projecting one’s identity to help all students develop of ‘relevant personality’” (2012, p.76).

**Music Education and Teacher Action Research Methods**

In studies researching CRP, World Music in education, multicultural music education, applying CRP to music education, and identification of musician self-identity influences, scholars use similar methods to collect data and analyze findings. Ethnographic, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and surveys of parents, teachers, and students are common (Ladson-Billings, 1995, Nethsinghe, 2004, Shaw, 2016, Powell, 2017). When it comes to choir sample populations, researchers seek maximum demographic variation across the small number of choirs observed and in the cultural backgrounds of the teachers (Shaw, 2016 and Powell, 2017). Ages are limited, usually to a set of grade levels and sometimes controlling for gender (Shaw, 2016; Powell, 2017; Costello-Herrera, 2010; Palkki, 2015). Phenomenology, particularly Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, is often used to code the data and determine emergent themes (Nethsinghe, 2004 and Powell, 2017).

Education researchers often neglect the social context of research when designing studies and applying the findings (Pine, 2008). Schools are ever changing ecosystems, with factors as broad as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic factors and factors as specific as student mood, level of maturity, and natural interest in the content area affecting the classroom culture as any given moment. Teacher action research can best capture and accommodate the subtleties of changing school situations (Pine, 2008). Many education research studies utilize flawed knowledge transfer logic in that they assume that knowledge is separate from practice.
These studies also assume that teachers should use the findings of outside researchers in outside social contexts and be able to adopt, internalize, and apply them to their own classrooms in a cookie-cutter type manner (Pine, 2008). “Integrating research and practice without the full involvement of and collaboration with the person responsible for classroom life--namely the teacher--is impossible. Teacher and student interpretations of the meanings and experiences of events are the sine qua non of research that can improve student learning.” (Pine, 2008, p.40)

When teachers prepare beneficial research studies involving documentation and reflection of their practice, they can create a culture of school-based inquiry that extends beyond the scope of research in becomes part of the classroom ecosystem (Pine, 2008).

**Methodology**

This teacher action case study utilized a cross-sectional, non-experimental mixed methods design in an attempt to answer the research question (Pine, 2008 & Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The dominant research paradigm was qualitative, with the secondary quantitative data collected simultaneously. The research focused on female sophomores, juniors, and seniors during the fall semester at a small, private high school. Students at these grade levels have completed at least one semester’s worth of music theory and aural skills units and have memorized the majority of the repertoire selections for and performed in at least one choral concert. By excluding freshmen, this was true of all potential participants.

**Participants**

Using nonrandom convenience sampling, I recruited participants from my own classroom. An advantage to conducting a case study of my own classroom is having the ability to carefully “[attend] to social truths” and “represent...the discrepancies or conflicts between
viewpoints held by participants” (Pine, 2008, p.183). The time sample relationship criterion is identical, as both the qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the same participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Volunteer participants came from a pool of approximately 70 veteran choir students. This school was the ideal data site because, as a faculty member, I have effortless access to the building and the choir students. Attempting to obtain parental consent was not a daunting task when all of my students’ personal information is readily available to me. Volunteers from grades 10-12 and any of the five choirs were welcome and encouraged to participate. The only criterion for volunteers was having spent at least one full semester in the choir program.

Parents of all choir students received letters of consent while the students receives letters of assent (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). These forms fully disclosed all aspects of the research study, including both what the online questionnaires and semi-structured class discussions were to entail. Find example letters of consent and assent in the appendices section. Ideally, all of my choir students would have been willing to participate. The anonymity of the study and the fact that participation is not at all mandatory were clearly stated on both the parent consent form and student assent question. Student volunteers turned in their forms to my coworker so that I would not know which were participants during my lessons and class discussions. The proposed CRP lesson plans included activities and strategies that I was free to utilize in my role as the choir director and instructor. The entire class engaged in my proposed CRP lesson plans and discussions, even though I was only be able to analyze data from students with parental consent for this thesis.
Instruménts

The only outside instruments used for this study were the online questionnaires. I created them using the electronic software Opinio, licensed by Loyola and provided by IT. Quantitative aspects of the questionnaire include multiple choice, yes/no, and linear rating questions. All students will also had the opportunity to respond aloud qualitatively during the class discussion if they wished. Only answers from those students with parental consent to participate in the study were analyzed. Find all other aspects of data collection (lesson plans and discussion prompts) in the appendices section.

Procédure

This teacher action study sought to examine how choir students could assess and critique one high school teacher’s attempt to utilize CRP in the music classroom. For this reason, the research design was non-experimental, qualitative-dominant with secondary quantitative demographic aspects. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously. Through the research, I hoped to obtain a better understanding of how students experience my curriculum and teaching delivery in order to implement their feedback immediately in my daily lesson planning and teaching. The study explored how students see or do not see themselves within their high school choir experience. This study also sought to draw connections between students’ musical identities, cultural identities, and plans for singing in the future.

To conduct the study, participants were taken from students enrolled in a semester-long, for-credit choral ensemble. Students at all levels and in grades 10-12 were asked to volunteer for the study. Data was collected from all participants within the pool of volunteers. As there were approximately 70 veteran choir students, the 26 participants reflect a 33% return rate. Over the
18-week fall semester, students learned and were assessed in music theory, aural skills, and performance etiquette. Most predominantly, students prepared the selected repertoire and performed in the Christmas choral concert.

Data collection included two phases. Each phase consisted of lesson plan construction, teaching, class discussion and survey distribution. Both phases involved what Pine (2008) defines as conventional and inventive teacher action research data collection sources. I constructed and scaffolded lesson plans for each choir that attempted to embody the elements and outcomes of a culturally relevant choral music education classroom experience. The lesson plan template (see appendices) follow the structure required of the edTPA Portfolio Assessment, currently one of the requirements of teacher licensure in Illinois (ISBE, 2016). Rather than citing which Illinois Academic Learning Standards the lesson will address, I adapted the template so that it calls for identification of which CRP elements and outcomes the lesson will address (Ladson-Billings, 1995 & Gay, 2005). I took CRP strategies and tailored them to the predetermined repertoire being studied by each particular choir. Because four choirs are in session during any particular quarter of the school year, I created a total of eight CRP lesson plans. See specific lesson plans for this study in the appendices section. The creation and delivery of the original lesson plans are inventive data collection sources in that they are meant to deeply and qualitatively gain information from students via authentic and performance assessments (Pine 2008).

I do feel that my “normal” concert programming takes on some elements of CRP in that I always try to pick diverse music that will speak to my students. For this reason, my blank lesson plan template does not address the CRP elements of Diverse curriculum content or Structure of
social relations. My regular teaching already embodies these elements. The remaining three elements from Ladson-Billings (1995) theory appear on the template. Similarly, my template eliminate the CRP outcomes of Validating, Empowering, and Emancipatory. My regular teaching already focuses on these outcomes. The remaining three outcomes from Gay (2005) appear on the template.

This study focused on my day-to-day pedagogy in the classroom. I have certain teaching strategies and lesson plan agenda patterns that have worked--in my mind--so I cling to those strategies without any regard to which students I could be alienating. I did not plan the Christmas concert any differently than I normally would have in terms of repertoire selection. The biggest focus of these specific CRP lessons was to change my classroom strategies and become a stronger teacher in the crucial 16 weeks of class time, outside of the glitz of a successful Christmas concert. The three CRP elements I attempted to embody were Conceptions of Self/Others, Conceptions of Knowledge, and Response to Diversity Through Instructional Delivery (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The three CRP outcomes I focused on producing were Comprehensive, Multidimensional, and Transformative (Gay, 2005).

I delivered the first round of CRP lessons to all four choirs within the first nine weeks of the term. This way, all choir students (whether participating in the study or not) experienced a CRP lesson plan during the first half of the semester. All students in the room then had the chance to respond verbally to guided questions during open-ended class discussion at the end of the lesson period. While I created predetermined discussion guiding prompts, they were simply starting points. Students were free to respond to any aspect of my teaching. By the end of the class period, all students present had experienced a CRP lesson plan and had the opportunity to
verbally assess and critique the teaching. I audio recorded the class discussion. Immediately after teaching, my colleague sent out a short, quantitative questionnaire via email to participants (because only she knew which students had consented to volunteer). Participants filled out the quantitative survey using their own devices if they wished. I designed the surveys to take about five minutes to complete. The surveys are what Pine (2008) considers conventional data collection sources in that they “require communication, observation, or follow-up with members of the population and that often require instrumentation to standardize the information collected” (p.214). Only students with parental consent were sent a five minute online survey.

The second phase of data collection occurred during the final nine weeks of the semester, the second half of the term. I picked a lesson period that was toward the end of the term, but before the culminating Christmas concert during week 16. Again, I constructed, scaffolded, and delivered lesson plans for each choir I felt embodied the elements and outcomes of a culturally relevant choral music education classroom experience. All students in the room then had the chance to respond verbally to guided questions during open-ended class discussion at the end of the lesson period. This round of data collection reflected not only on that day’s lesson plan, but also on the entire semester. By the end of the class period, all students present had the opportunity to verbally assess and critique my teaching. Once again, my coworker sent out a quantitative survey to participants via email. Respondents used their own devices to fill out the questionnaire, if they wished. Only students with parental consent were sent a five minute online survey.

Questions on all surveys and discussion prompts for all class discussions remained the same across all choirs, even though the content taught (song selections, etc.) will be different.
Survey questions and discussion prompts changed from the first round of data collection and the second round, however. Quantitative aspects of the questionnaire included multiple choice, yes/no, and linear rating questions, while qualitative discussion questions appeared in the form of open ended explanations or clarifications of the quantitative questions. The questionnaires asked the students to check their grade, choir (all that apply), and race (all that apply). The most important qualitative questions were predictive, occurring at the end of the second and final questionnaire of the study. These last questions asked the student whether or not she feels inclined to enroll in chorus next semester and whether or not she will continue singing after high school. If she does, she was asked to explain the capacity in which she will strive to be lifelong musician. Copies of survey questions and discussion prompts can be found in the appendices section.

Because I did not want to know which students were official participants while conducting my study, I asked a coworker to be the point person for all forms and survey distributions. After inviting students to participate in the survey, my coworker collected parental consent and student assent forms. Using my class rosters, she meticulously kept track of which students were consenting volunteers. I was totally unaware of the ongoing list. As students continued to turn in forms, I continued lesson planning, teaching, and holding class discussions. As far as I knew, every student in every choir was going to be a part of my study. This kept my teaching honest. It was impossible for me to favor consenting students during lessons over nonconsenting students. My coworker emailed out survey links only to those students who were consenting volunteers. When I facilitated the class discussions, I had students state their music folder numbers before speaking. That way, when it came time to transcribe the audio recordings,
I had an identifier to refer to without students ever having their names recorded. After the Christmas concert, my coworker gave me all of the consent and assent forms. I then went through my transcriptions, identified student responses by their folder numbers, and was able to delete responses from nonconsenting students. All in all, I had no idea which of my students were participants until after the concert was over.

**Analysis**

Phenomenology is the study of experience, an approach to qualitative research concerned with how people make sense of major life experiences and how they take on significance for them. Access to the participants’ thinking, feeling, and reflecting are of course limited to what they are willing to expose to the researcher. The assumption is that the data will tell something about “people’s involvement in and orientation towards the world” (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009, p.46). Like in my study, samples are selected purposefully, not randomly, on the basis that they can grant perspective on the particular phenomenon. The sample is usually fairly homogenous.

Analytical strategies suggested for phenomenology researchers that I plan to utilize include close, line-by-line analysis of participants’ claims and concerns and identification of emerging themes. I will then attempt to develop a frame in which the emergent themes are related, organizing the data in such a way that the reader is able trace the path from original transcription to analysis (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009).

The three areas of teacher action research validity that are most applicable to my study are consequential validity, ethical validity, and social justice validity (Pine, 2008):
Figure 1. Teacher Action Research Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequential</th>
<th>Ethical</th>
<th>Social Justice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “What are the value implication of the research?</td>
<td>• Have the elements of the human subjects protection such as permissions, confidentiality, privacy, and truth telling been present throughout the research process?</td>
<td>• To what extent has the research addressed issues of social justice, diversity, equity, civic discourse, and caring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are the potential social consequences of the research?</td>
<td>• If children have been involved, have their educational and developmental needs been addressed in the process of the research?</td>
<td>• Has the research generated changes in teaching and curriculum more responsive to the wide range of differences among students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will the research lead to useful, meaningful, and fair decision regarding student learning and teacher development?</td>
<td>• Have the researchers been explicit about the nature of the research process from the beginning, including all personal biases and interests” (p.86)?</td>
<td>• Has the research promoted more understanding and respect for cultural, racial, ethnic, class, and gender differences” (p.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are foreseen as the value, social, and emotional consequences for all the participants in the study” (p.85)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

Day 1 Description

Phase One of the study included scaffolding and constructing of four different CRP lesson plans that tried to emphasize Ladson-Billings and Gay’s standards and outcomes that I do not normally consider in my planning. My most beginner choir, Bel Coro, was working on the American spiritual *What You Gonna Call Yo’ Pretty Little Baby*. The hymn follows tradition
African American call-and-response form and addresses Mary directly as she rocks her baby.

For this class, I approached the song historically. In groups of three or four, the students received a strip of paper with a different prompt, all having to do with the history behind the genre. The strips read, “Roots in African slaves gatherings,” “Roots in Christianity,” “Call-and-Response Form,” “Used for prayer, but also to protest,” “Examples of famous spirituals (include video clips),” “Other genres of music that come out of this style of African American traditional singing (include video clips),” and “Artword portraying this rich history.”

Each group of students had a charged device (personal laptop) and worked with their partners to create an electronic timeline entry on the program Sutori. The Sutori app allows the teacher to create a timeline heading and invite students to collaborate. The student groups added text, photos, videos, audio clips, and citations to our class Sutori timeline on the subject. Then we came back together as a class to rearrange (click and drag) the timeline entries chronologically on the Sutori canvas. Then each group presented their findings as “experts” to the class. After presentations, I asked the students where they saw features of traditional spirituals within their sheet music for Pretty Little Baby. I also conducted a class discussion regarding what we could do with our style of performance to more accurately represent the genre. We concluded the lesson by singing through the piece and the students then had the opportunity to comment on their performance’s authenticity.

This CRP lesson on the history of American spirituals addressed the standard Conception of Self/Others by allowing each student to feel like they were competent enough to sing out and lead a line or two of the song, whether or not she identifies as African American or Afro-Latina. It addressed Conceptions of Knowledge by allowing students to
research and become “experts” on their assigned, specific aspect of music history. By the end of the class, all students were familiar with all entries on the timeline. It addressed Diversity Through Instructional Delivery because we almost never use technology in the choral room. With the exception of music theory online quizzes and drills, the students do not use their devices in my class. For this lesson, they dove into the historical aspect of performance using a mode of research that comes naturally to them. We then applied their historical research to our performance of this piece.

The lesson addressed the Comprehensive objective because I clearly expressed my expectation that the song would be performed authentically, both stylistically and emotionally, in a way that reflected the students’ own research presentations. It addressed the Multidimensional objective by examining what about the style of music made it credible as a religious song, as part of the high school concert, and just as worthy of learning in general. I was also sure to ask the students what the call-and-response format reminded them of and whether or not the genres that came out of spirituals were familiar to them. The lesson addressed the Transformative objective by specifically asking students why it is important to learn styles of Mary songs other than traditional Catholic 4-part hymns with Latin refrains during our class discussion.

La Trinita’, my intermediate choir, worked on the pop-style song Mary, Mary during Phase 1. My CRP lesson plan included movement around the risers in my classroom. For this acappella group-esque number, the students sing in ostinato layers. The altos have a repeating bassline pattern, then the first sopranos layer their repeating pattern on top, and finally the second sopranos add their repeating pattern as a middle layer to the sandwich. Each ostinato pattern can stand on its own as an independent melody, but all three layers are designed to work
together. For this lesson plan, I had each voice part teach their line to the rest of the choir. First, the altos worked with me to tighten up and clean their ostinato. Then, that alto section taught their line to the other students. I repeated this activity with the first sopranos and then the second sopranos.

Once all students had a bit of familiarity with all three melodic lines, we started our round-robin movement. Normally, the voice parts sit in a specific section of the risers. All singers at all levels in my program know that the center of the risers is for seconds, the right hand section is for firsts, and the left hand section is for altos. For the rest of the lesson, I had the girls physically get out of their normal seats and move (as a section) to a different voice part’s area of the risers. Once settled, the girls performed the opening 17 measures of *Mary, Mary* while singing a foreign ostinato pattern. However, they were kinesthetically reminded of which part to sing by their new seat. I continued to have the girls rotate around the room until they had sat down in each section and given each ostinato line a try. I concluded the lesson by having the students return to the their normal seats in order to perform their own assigned line.

This lesson addressed the standard of *Conception of Self/Others* by allowing every student to feel competent enough to sing out and lead a minute or two of the lesson without the instructor. All students had the chance to teach their part to the other sections, working with their fellow section members to become the experts in the room. The lesson addressed the standard of *Conceptions of Knowledge* because the pop, a cappella-style song is more accessible to my *Pitch Perfect* fans while still telling the Nativity story and revering the Mother of God. Musical elements of rhythm, syncopation, ostinato patterns, and three-part harmony were enforced for this beginning choir. I addressed the *Comprehensive* objective by teaching ostinato
patterns as a community in which each voice part (soprano I, soprano II, and alto) knows each vocal line. Responsibility was on the entire ensemble, not just the altos, for example, to master the walking bass pattern. Ultimately, a choir rises and falls together. Just as in the culture of a collegiate cappella group, any member of La Trinita’ could hypothetically step in to cover another voice part if called upon. The lesson addressed the *Multidimensional* objective through discussion prompts. I asked which out-of-school musical experiences this song reminded the students of and what made the genre credible as a religious song, as part of the concert, and as worthy of learning in general. The lesson addressed the *Transformative* objective by specifically asking students why it is important to learn styles of Mary songs other than traditional Catholic 4-part hymns with Latin refrains during our class discussion.

In A Cappella Choir, my first CRP lesson involved the hymn *Hail Holy Queen.* However, this ensemble was learning the version from the movie *Sister Act.* In this version, 4-part traditionally Catholic harmonies open the piece while syncopated, gospel-style rhythms with thick textured harmonies finish the piece. I first focused on 10 measures in the traditional opening of the song, having the girls drop their jaws and place the backs of the palms on their cheeks as kinesthetic reminder to sing their pure, tall Latin vowels. Then, in order to emphasize smooth dynamic changes during slurred passages, I had the students clasp their hands together with their fingers intertwined. Every time they saw a slur marking in the music, they were to try to pull their hands apart with their fingers still locked, creating tension. This kinesthetic motion while singing was a reminder to smoothly change dynamics to add intensity without actually breaking up the slurred phrase.
Secondly, I had the student flip to a 10-measure section in the gospel section of the piece that had a particularly tricky syncopated rhythm. I drew two blank measures of 4/4 on the board. After asking the class to call out how many quarter notes and eighth notes could fit in each measure, I filled both blank measures entirely with eight notes. With prompted, the students told me how I should label the beats using number counting. Each measure was marked “1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +” and I had the students clap the beats. Little by little, I started erasing eighth notes as well as the number counting underneath them. Each time I erased, I had the students clap the new rhythm. Once I had erased all of the appropriate eighth notes and my measures on the board matched the measures within the sheet music, the girls could see that the majority of clapped notes fell on ’s instead of numbers, or strong beats. This is syncopation! The students then applied the text to our syncopated rhythm, speaking the lyrics in time. Finally, I had them sing the lyrics in rhythm with their palms pressed against their cheeks as a vowel reminder.

This lesson plan addressed the standard *Conception of Self/Others* through the discussion prompts that asked if there any negative stigmas associated with either style of praise, traditional Catholic hymns or gospel songs. It begs the question of how we could do justice to both cultures, respecting and doing our best to understand and perform each accurately. The lesson addressed the standard *Conceptions of Knowledge* because my students are very familiar with the traditional Latin hymn from all-school liturgies and prayer services devoted to Mary. Having them reflect on their performance of grant validity and argues that it brings something to the prayer that the traditional version was lacking. I addressed *Response to Diversity Through Instructional Delivery* through the discussion prompts that asked what other types of church / worship genres praise God through song in the style of the second half of *Hail Holy Queen*. I
enforced the Comprehensive and Multidimensional objectives by expressing my expectation that good aspects of singing technique are needed in both styles no matter what: pure vowels, clean consonants, distinctions between legatos and staccatos, distinctions between dynamics (whether sudden or gradual), facial expressions, and an even blend that is alto heavy, if anything. The discussion prompts address the Transformative objective by asking students what makes a choir engaging, what captures an audience, and, on the other hand, what do church choirs do that turns the audience off or makes them tune out?

The fourth Phase One CRP lesson plan I constructed was for Le Ragazze, my smallest and most advanced ensemble. This group of six students comes from an auditioned pool of juniors and seniors. This choir covers the difficult repertoire of all four fall semester ensembles. For this lesson, we were working on Alegria, a traditional Puerto Rican carol that has become popular all across Latin America. As an opening activity, I had the girls split up into three groups of two. Each pair included a Spanish-speaking or Spanish-studying student. The girls worked with their partners to write in English words above the Spanish lyrics in an attempt to include a rough word-by-word translation. This way, even the three non-Spanish-speaking students would be reminded of what they were singing as we worked through the piece. At this point in this semester, this choir already had all of the notes learned for this piece. It was time to add in some percussive accompaniment to complement the piano part. I asked the students which types of percussion instruments we often hear during traditional Latin songs and focused on answers from my Latina students. Then I had students brainstorm ideas for percussive parts in the quick 6/8 meter.
We put up rhythmic ideas on the white board and played with the examples using claps for tambourine suggestions and rubbed palms for shaker suggestions. After we had the rhythms in our heads and were able to put the rhythms on our bodies, I pulled out the maraca shakers and the tambourine. The students took turns playing each part. Then the students voted on the rhythmic patterns they liked best. While I played the piano accompaniment, I had multiple students try playing a percussion instrument while singing their vocal part. I assessed each students’ ability to multitask in this way and ultimately decided which of six girls would also be responsible for a percussion accompaniment. Finally, as a closing activity, we ran through the opening 18 measures of Alegría with voices, piano, and percussion. I asked the students if they thought their new performance matched the style we were going for. I then informed them that one of our native Puerto Rican Spanish teachers would be visiting the next rehearsal to help us with authentic pronunciation.

This CRP lesson addressed the standard of Conception of Self/Others by allowing every student the opportunity to feel confident enough to sing out a Puerto Rican carol, whether or not Spanish is their native language or language of study. The students addressed Conceptions of Knowledge by completing a word-for-word translation of the lyrics. The girls’ translation was literal rather than the poetic translation provided by the sheet music editor. One of my students recognized this piece the second we started studying it. When I asked questions about stylistic choices that would make the song authentic, I opened the floor up to this student and focused on her answers as to how to feel the message of the song and add ownership and legitimacy to the ensemble’s performance of it. The lesson was Comprehensive in that I expressed my expectation that the song would be performed authentically, both in language and style, in a manner that
promoted academic and cultural excellence. This expectation was also expressed by a student who grew up singing the carol. The lesson was *Multidimensional* in that it made this style of carol credible as a religious song, as part of a high school concert, and as worthy of learning in general. The student who recognized the song identified as Mexican, not Puerto Rican. She expressed how important the song is to all of Latin America. Working with *Alegria* was *Transformative* in that I prompted that students to discuss the importance of studying songs other than traditional Catholic 4-part hymns with Latin refrains.

**Day 2 Description**

I taught the second round of CRP lessons to the same four ensembles the week of December 4, one week before our culminating Christmas concert. Due to time constraints (needing songs to sound clean and concert-ready but also needing to finish this case study before the performance), I focused on authenticity in all four choirs. Rather than scaffolding lessons in order to solidify notes and rhythms, I created lessons that wrapped-up authentic performance etiquette while adding in last-minute touches. I had not expected to be still be collecting data so late in the semester, so I had to adjust.

Bel Coro, my beginning choir that had been working on the African American spiritual *Pretty Little Baby*, discussed similarities between that piece and *Poor Mary*, their American folk song. We ran both songs back to back, focusing most on vowel formation. Despite the genre or style, it is always appropriate and necessary to form pure choral vowels that match across the entire choir. Whether singing an Appalachian melody or a plantation call-and-response, I expect students to pay the same amount of attention to strong vocal technique. On the opposite end of the spectrum, my most-advanced, six-student ensemble Le Ragazze continued to work through
It is difficult to multitask rhythm, pitch, lyrics in a second language, and percussion accompaniment all at once. By the time the concert comes, my goal is that most all these factors are muscle memory for the students. However, I still was not totally pleased with the cohesiveness and consistency of the Spanish pronunciation across the six students. Only three of them were Spanish speakers at home or at school. The other three only relied on my lessons to perfect their accents. Ultimately, I knew I had to bring in an expert. One of our veteran World Language faculty members is a native of Puerto Rico and has been teaching high school Spanish for over 20 years. She visited our rehearsal and created such a comfortable, warm, and inviting atmosphere and within 30 minutes had my students sounding more like a unit instead of like six individuals. Bringing in my colleague was culturally responsive in my Response to Diversity Through Instructional Delivery. As a non-Hispanic and non-Spanish speaker, she brought more authenticity to our study of Alegria than I ever could have alone. It was a Comprehensive learning experience for the students because the Spanish teacher and I expressed our expectations of authenticity in a collective manner.

In La Trinita’, my intermediate choir, the girls switched gears from the pop, collegiate a cappella-style Mary, Mary to their Spanish carol A La Nanita Nana. Throughout the semester, we zeroed in on pronunciation when we rehearsed Nanita. The Spanish is quick and needs to flow smoothly. However, for this last CRP lesson, I started rehearsal by showing the video clip in which the Cheetah Girls (a Disney Channel pop girl-group) covers the carol. My students are at the perfect age where most of them grew up watching the Cheetah Girls Barcelona film and are familiar with the soundtrack. Therefore, I was certain that even my non-Hispanic students had grown up hearing the song. In class, we studied certain sections of the
music video, identifying the spots where the celebrities sung with passion, but with horrible technique. Their vowels were extremely nasal even though the Spanish was pronounced authentically. We went back and forth between the video clip and singing the same section with our 35-student choir, weighing the pros and cons and knowing a specific version of a song before studying it in school.

In A Cappella Choir, my largest more advanced ensemble, we worked on cleaning our choreography for the quick, Gospel-style section of *Hail Holy Queen*. After spot-checking the movements with the dance teacher, we came to the choral room to discuss liturgical or praise dance. We focused on the CRP objectives, addressing *Comprehensiveness* in our technique. Pure vowels, clean consonants, and dynamic contrast are just as important as facial expressions, movement, and even blend that is alto heavy. This is true for the traditional opening section of the hymn and the louder, faster closing section. We discussed toeing the line between making sacred music a prayer rather than a performance while praise dancing. Our discussion was *Multidimensional* as we worked through existing stigmas of either style of liturgical music and how this particular piece breaks boundaries. Most importantly, our run-through of *Hail Holy Queen* was transformative as we discussed the students’ various experiences in their own faith lives. We talked about what makes church services with big choirs engaging as they capture their congregations. We also discussed what turns the audience off or makes them tune out during church. We also talked about how movement and instruments can enhance prayer, even though many Christian denominations do not allow or prefer the use of these strategies.
Limitations

Limitations to this study included obtaining parental consent and collecting truly accurate data. The participants were mostly minors, so parental consent was required. Only 26 out of 70 veteran (non-freshmen) choir students turned in parental consent and student assent forms. I was hoping for a 50% return rate, but only yielded 37% of my students. Communicating with students and/or parents via hard copy letters sent home is a struggle for every teacher, let alone a high school teacher. The fact that I surrounded this study around the students is both its greatest strength and weakness. While many of my students (over 50%) were willing to participate orally during class discussions following CRP lessons, they are still minors. Any student without the proper paperwork had to be erased from the transcripts.

Conversely, only 19 participants responded electronically to the first quantitative survey and only 20 responded to the second survey. The surveys yielded data from roughly 77% of the total participants. These electronic questionnaires were my only chance at hard demographic statistics. Only survey respondents were able to check boxes for their grade, various choir participation, and race/ethnicity. As my respondents are high school students, I assumed as much. Just as it is difficult to correspond with parents via letters sent home with students, it is also difficult to encourage teenagers to open an email, let alone fill out a survey on their own time. The following data summary images come from the second survey, including 20 out of 26 participants:
Figure 2. Grade Level

```
Frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class of '18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of '19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of '20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total answered: 19
```

Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity

```
Frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency by choice</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Hispanic)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47.63%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total answered: 20
```
There are always weaknesses to nonrandom sampling. For example, my participants are all females that attend private Catholic school. My sample looks nothing like the overall high school choir population, making it difficult to apply the study results globally. The sample does not even closely resemble my own choir population. Most of the survey respondents were white juniors from the advanced ensembles. The most underrepresented racial/ethnic group within the respondents were black students. This was not surprising as most of my African American singers participate in Gospel Choir which was not in session during the fall semester. Another limitation to the study could be students worrying about hurting my feelings. The school is a small, sheltered environment. I know all of my students by name and have built rapport with them as individuals and as choral ensembles. I hope that they understood how valuable their
data was to improving my teaching and that they responded as bluntly and honestly as they were able.

Results

The research question asked: How can I utilize student interpretation and critique in order to empirically self-reflect on my choral teaching practice and its cultural relevance? In an attempt to answer the research question, I constructed choral lesson plans that took on three major elements of Ladson-Billings’ Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The three elements I focused on within my teaching were Conceptions of Self/Others, Conceptions of Knowledge, and Response to Diversity Through Instructional Delivery (1995). I facilitated student feedback on these CRP lessons in the form of qualitative oral class discussions as well as anonymous quantitative online surveys. The three outcomes of CRP that I focused on achieving were Multidimensional, Comprehensive, and Transformative (Gay 2002). I based the survey questions and guided class discussion prompts for all four choirs on these three outcomes.

Multidimensional

Gay argues that pedagogy achieves multidimensionalism by examining emotions, beliefs, values, credibility, and opinions along with factual information to make instruction more reflective of ethnic diversity (2002). Below are results of the survey questions that attempt to measure multidimensionalism within my lessons:
Figure 5. Emotions/Opinions

Do you ENJOY singing the song we worked on today?

![Bar chart for emotions/opinions]

Frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>94.74%</td>
<td>94.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total answered: 19

Figure 6. Values/Credibility

Is the song MEANINGFUL to you and your culture?

![Bar chart for values/credibility]

Frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.58%</td>
<td>31.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68.42%</td>
<td>68.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total answered: 19
Figure 7. Opinions/Credibility

Do you feel that YOUR OWN cultural music is missing from the Trinity choir program?

Frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total answered: 20

Figure 8. Reflective of Ethnic Diversity

Are the SONG SELECTIONS of the Trinity choir program DIVERSE?

Frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Strongly AGREE)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

Total answered: 20
Students also touched on multidimensionalism with their oral responses to class discussion prompts. After a lesson on a Gospel version of the traditional Catholic hymn *Hail Holy Queen*, one student offered, “I really like Hail Holy Queen just because it’s upbeat and we get to movements with it.” I then prompted, asking what culture the song made her think of. She said, “I think just, um, more updated culture, like, you know, more current culture.” Another student responded, “I liked how we were able to incorporate the traditional kind of music we might be used to into different forms of music that might be more exciting to learn.”

The respondents had an in-depth conversation of what is considered traditional in our Catholic educational setting. One student said, “...the stigma might arise from, like, people that are different faiths. Like, even though this is, like, a Catholic school, there are people of different sorts of denominations, or, like, different religions.” Another added, “I think going to a Catholic high school might expect that we sing more...traditional church hymns...and I think it’s interesting and gives us a new perspective when we get to sing something that’s not traditional.” Another student reminded the class that singing is a form of prayer and that “…newer versions of, um, the songs that we’re doing get people more involved and...that has a more positive impact on how people see the music.”

Two participants mentioned diversity specifically. One stated, “I think that having diversity in our styles of music at Trinity is important because we can embrace all cultures and faiths and expose ourselves to something that is different than what we’re used to.” Immediately following this comment, the second student reflected on Gay’s emotion of comfortability. She said, “...going off diversity, um, within our school, we have student from different denomination and different religions and I think that incorporating, um, the school of faith as a community but
allowing it to differentiate in a way that makes everyone feel comfortable is a positive thing for our choirs…”

Comprehensive

Pedagogy achieves comprehensiveness by expressing expectations and teaching skills in a collective manner in order to promote academic and cultural excellence simultaneously. The teacher builds a community of learners that rises or falls together, and it is in “the best interest of everyone to ensure that each individual member of the group [is] successful” (Gay 2002 p.33). Below are results of the survey questions that attempt to measure comprehensiveness within my lessons:

Figure 9. Academic Excellence (Singing Ability)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (I was betting it out!)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total answered: 19
Figure 10. Academic Excellence (Accessibility)

Could you easily follow along with the LESSON PLAN today?

![Bar chart for Academic Excellence](chart10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Absolute Frequency</th>
<th>Relative Frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted Relative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (I got it! No problem!)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total answered:</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. Cultural Excellence (Confidence)

Do you feel confident in your ability to CONNECT with the cultural style of this song?

![Bar chart for Cultural Excellence](chart11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Absolute Frequency</th>
<th>Relative Frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted Relative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (I love singing in this style!)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total answered:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 12. Cultural Excellence (Connections)

Are there any connections between what we sang in SCHOOL today and your musical interests OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum: 20</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered: 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total answered: 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13. Cultural Excellence (Comfortability)

Do you feel more COMFORTABLE or have more FUN in a specific choir as opposed to the others?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum: 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered: 3</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total answered: 17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Students addressed comprehensiveness within their oral responses to the specific class discussion prompt that asked whether they felt choir was an individual or “team” activity. One student’s opinion was that choir is group activity, saying, “...we’re all working together...and if we’re singing against each other, the music doesn’t sound right and it sounds more beautiful when we’re all singing together.” Another student countered, “...it could be an aspect of individuality and a group because we all have different talents and different voices that bring different sounds. But when we bring them all together and find a way to work together, it can really make something beautiful.” A third participant agreed, saying, “...improving yourself improves the choir.” A student in the more beginner choir placed more responsibility on the individual, responding, “So, as a group, you can sound really good but then as an individual, you need to understand what you’re singing and how you’re supposed to sing it.” A singer in a more advanced ensemble placed the responsibility on the team, saying, “...even though, individually, we all have, like, our own style, and we can go on individually...together is sounds even better. Originally for this song we thought that, oh, maybe there’s going to be a solo...but instead...with more people singing, we’re improving as a group.” One last student emphasized shaping the
group, saying, “...it can be seen as both ways, as an individual and a team. An individual because you get to know your part and you get to, not change it, but shape it in a way. And also as a team because you have people to back your up, even...if you mess up or anything.”

Transformative

Pedagogy achieves transformation by explicitly respecting the cultures and experiences of African American, Native American, Latino, and Asian American students and recognizing their existing strengths and accomplishments. Teachers encourage analysis of the effects of inequalities and fosters change (Gay 2002). The only quantitative question on the surveys regarding inequalities asked if students felt their cultural music was missing from my program:

Figure 15. Inequality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Absolute frequency</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>Adjusted relative frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum:</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total answered: 20

However, I attempted to address transformation within the discussion prompts. When asked what students like or dislike about learning styles of music that honor Mary outside of
traditional Catholic hymns, I got a variety of responses. One student reflected, “I think that, um learning to sing, like, different types of songs and different styles...helps us gain a better grasp of music in general…” Another responded, “…I think that after hearing the different types of music, um, we all gain a better appreciate for different cultures.” After a lesson on the American spiritual *Mary Had a Baby*, a student stated, “...I absolutely love singing, um, different genres...especially, you know, African American music. I love the melody it has. You know, and when we sing a new genre, it introduces us to a new melody that we, um, might welcome into our lives, you know, for the rest of our lives.” Another student expressed her apprehensiveness while singing in this style, saying, “I think that some negative stigmas with other types of music is that people believe that they might not be able to, like, do it justice because it might not be their culture. Or they might not relate to it in, like, that way. But I feel like people should expose themselves to different cultures and embraces other cultures by singing them.”

After a lesson on the traditional Latin American carol *Alegria*, a member of my most advanced choir responded, “...I love that we’re singing a song in Spanish because, um, I am Catholic, but I went to church in Spanish. So all of the [Catholic] songs that we sing in English...like, it’s new to me….I also enjoy, you know, still getting a taste of...what I heard when I was little growing up…” The same student address potential stigmas people might associate with changing up church music at our school. She stated, “...we [have to] find the positive in it, because, um, with adding these new changes, well, we become, like a better version of ourselves, and a better version of the school.” Another non-Spanish speaking student expressed a transformative experience with the same Latin American piece, adding, “I like singing Alegria
because it’s in a language that I’m...at the beginning, when we started learning the song, I wasn’t very comfortable singing the vowels...but it kind of, like, opened me up to, like, a new part of music…”

Other students reflected on the comfort of singing a song or within a style that was already familiar to them. However, many enjoyed the challenge of learning genres outside of their prior knowledge. Students responded, “I really like the variation because I think it really helps to make it more fun because you get to try different kind of styles of singing.” “I think it’s really good to have, like, different types of music just so you can see different genres...so that way you can, like, more more or see which one you like better.” Two other students commented, “I think that being familiar with a type of song is comforting...I really like La Nanita because it was a part of The Cheetah Girls and I think that we all kind of grew up listening to that...but at the same time, going out of your comfort zone is really, really, really good for, you know, especially our age…”

Conclusions

Reflections on Teaching Practice

The student feedback came as a surprise and prompted a deep reflection on how I can achieve my intended CRP pedagogical strategies in my daily teaching. I mentioned earlier that for this study, I focused on my everyday teaching. I already felt like I was skilled at selecting repertoire that spoke to my students and kept them interested. In my mind, the choral literature I taught each semester was already culturally responsive in that my students either felt a personal connection with the songs or, by the end of the term, felt comfortable singing in the style of the songs required. Much of my survey data reflects my intuition. 95% of respondents enjoyed
working on the song from said lesson plan even though 30% thought their culture was missing from that day’s teaching. While only two thirds of respondents could make connections between the music from choir class and their musical culture outside of school, 0% of them felt our literature was meaningless to them.

These quantitative results from authentic student feedback confirm that many of students do see their own cultures reflected in my song selections and are able to make connections between it and their other musical experiences. Those who feel that their cultures are not reflected in choir class seem to be enjoying the learning experience nonetheless and feel confident enough to sing music of other cultures authentically. Looking to the future, the next step after completing this study is obviously to implement CRP in my daily teaching going forward. The two biggest things I wished I had seen during my initial study were firstly, more of an introspective mindset from my students and, secondly, more attention to the details of my new lesson plan strategies within student critiques.

Regarding the first hope for this study, more introspective student responses, I reflected on my students’ tendencies to view the repertoire from the Christmas concert as Catholic music or non-Catholic music. Students responded with comments such as, “I think…that it’s important to remember that song is a form of prayer, and newer versions of…the songs that we’re doing get people more involved and I think that has more of a positive impact on how people see the music,” “I think that Catholicism is a religion, in general, of tradition and I think that whenever we bring in new types of music… we all enjoy, like, hearing traditional Catholic music but in…a more fun way because we’re used to pop songs and stuff,” and, “…we have students from
different denominations and different religions and I think that incorporating, um, the school…as a community but allowing it to differentiate in a way that makes everyone feel comfortable is a positive…thing for our choirs to do or provide for the community.” For the most part, students orally discussed culture and music in terms of faith-based beliefs. Much of this was out of my control. Because of my school setting (all-girls Catholic), a good amount of my choral teaching revolves around the music of the Catholic church. However, the theme of this past Christmas concert was Mary, not Mary Through Catholic Eyes. I tried my best to pick Mary songs that we do not normally hear during the Catholic masses and prayer services, but instead Mary songs that would evoke memories, familiarity, and hopefully a sense of comfortability.

Many of the girls’ responses described the variety of songs as appealing to people of “other faiths” or “other beliefs” rather than reflecting on whether or not the songs hit home for them personally. Only one student mentioned a disconnect between what my school considers a “Catholic sound” and what Catholicism sounds like within her own Latina culture. The rest spoke on the importance of diverse music for praise reasons, or even for the purpose of inclusiveness within prayer. While my prompts elicited interesting and intelligent responses, they were not as introspective as I had hoped they would be. One of the discussion prompts after each lesson asked, “What culture does this song make you think of?” Only two of eight class discussions elicited responses from students that reflected their own personal outside-of-school cultures. The students working on the Latin American carol Alegía made the connections I was looking for:

Well…for me, Alegria makes me think of my own culture…and I’m Hispanic, you know, I’m Mexican, and particularly, like, not…I don’t know much of, like, Argentina or Colombia or any other Hispanic cultures but, um, this is a song…that we sing
especially in the month of December because we have that entire month dedicated to the Virgin Mary. And this song is about the Virgin Mary so I feel like this song makes me think of that and, like, aside from just thinking of this certain fact, it makes me also feel happy about it, you know, content.

…and it makes me think of my grandma’s culture because, um, in the Philippines…Everyone’s Catholic and Christmas is, like, a really big thing and they have these…parades, like, because it’s warm during Christmas…they have these big parades outside and they sing songs in Tangalle which is, like, an infusion of Spanish and, like, the native culture, so that’s what it makes me think of.”

It reminds me of the Cuban culture. I know a lot of Cubans are Catholic, or, like, they believe in Santeria, which comes from Africa. But I know my Grandma is Catholic, and so she would sometimes sing this song during, like, December. And even in Cuba, they have a whole month where they post pictures of…at the cathedral of…the Virgin Mary and her journey and what she had to do.

If I had conducted this study during the spring semester when the culminating concert consists of most secular music, I wonder if all of the responses would have been more focused on the students’ own cultures rather than a comparison of Catholic-sounding music versus music that does not sound Catholic at all. My goal was that some participants would reply that our repertoire reminded them of their own cultures.

Regarding the second hope for this study, it seemed that the students were not affected enough by my lesson interventions (as Ladson-Billings had promised) to mention many in-class activities in detail during open discussion time. However, the literature on CRP is not unlike other educational theories in that it describes the classroom as some sort of vacuum. In real-life settings, so many social factors can affect student perception of a lesson plan. In my study, Ladson-Billings and Gay do not account for environmental and/or social constructs that certainly
already exist in a classroom setting when they suggest their CRP interventions. The social setting of a traditional, predominantly English-speaking Catholic school may have tainted my students’ interpretations in that they responded mostly to my careful song choices, as they contrasted with more traditional Catholic Christmas hymns.

The students were not shy in their opinions of chorus being a team or an individual activity. This discussion prompt focused on the element *Conceptions of Knowledge* and the outcome of *Comprehensiveness* in which a good CRP teacher does not encourage individual, competitive achievement but creates a community of learners that rises and falls together (Ladson-Billings 1995; Gay 2005). After my lessons, students, for the most part, voted for choir being a team activity. Responses included, “I think it could be an aspect of individuality and a group because we all have different talents and different voices that bring different sounds. But when we bring them all together and find a way to work together, it can really make something beautiful,” “Speaking from personal experience, I think that it’s, um, a team activity because you’re able to feed off of the people around you and what they’re singing. And if you mess something up, then you can, like, coach yourself by listening to the people around you,” and, “I think by listening and improving with the choir, you improve yourself, which helps to improve the choir as a whole.”

Yet, only one ensemble during either phase of the study had anything to say about the actual activities that went on in class during that day’s lesson. I led a round-robin style rehearsal in which my beginning choir was honing their ostinato layering skills. In moving around the risers, sitting in new seat, and singing other sections’ parts, the girls seemed to feel more confident in their own harmonies. One student commented,
I thought it was a really cool activity...I felt like it did help me a little bit with remembering my part and being able to pick it out of the group... I felt like this lesson was really, really fun...um, it was slightly different from what we normally do... it’s really interesting, like, the relief I felt when I came back to my own part because it’s the one that I know the best and I also realize that, like, the other parts are...definitely have their own challenges.”

Another agreed,

I think that it was a good experience to experience other people’s trouble with the parts. So experiencing other people’s troubles made our part easier.... You mentioned that some of us were having trouble holding our own part against the other parts. And I think that knowing each others’ parts, like, helped us center on our own part, being able to hear both sides...

Apart from this class discussion, which was one out 8 discussions throughout the semester-long study, no students specifically mentioned anything about the strategies I worked so hard to implement in order to achieve academic success while still remaining culturally competent. My students, for the most part, responded to my song selection rather than my careful activity planning.

Looking ahead to future lesson planning, I now have strategies to conduct things a bit differently than my normal, comfortable routine. I can confidently implement all of the successes from Days 1 and 2 and attempt to make them a part of my regular routine. The students responded positively and enthusiastically—both orally during disucssions and electronically via surveys—whenever I incorporated movement into their lessons. Examples include adding simple but expressive choreography, having the whole ensemble rotate around the risers and making a stop at the “director spot” at the front of the room, and any and all kinesthetic activities during which the students performed rhythms on their bodies. Getting my
students out of their assigned seats on the risers embodies the CRP element of *Conceptions of Self/Others* and *Conception of Knowledge* because it allows the students to become the teacher, emphasizing my belief that all students are capable of success and that their contributions are a crucial part of my pedagogy. Movement activities make choir less of an individual, competitive activity and more of a peer-learning community in which any student could lead (Gay 2005). Rarely are my students sitting up tall, feet flat on the floor in an assigned chair when they experience music outside of school. Making connections between rehearsal experiences and past experiences promotes engagement (Shaw, 2016; Costello-Herrera, 2010; Palkki, 2015).

The singers also appreciated and respected guest teachers I brought in for their specific expertise, such as the dance and world language faculty members. Continuing to bring in experts of other cultures and disciplines embodies the CRP element of *Conceptions of Knowledge* and the outcome of *Comprehensiveness* by promoting academic and cultural success simultaneously and recognizing that the choir director’s strengths and beliefs is not the end-all be-all of classroom, musical, and cultural knowledge (Ladson-Billings 1995 & Gay 2005). Bringing in teachers from outside my discipline also helps ensure that performance practices will be indicative and typical of the culture studied (Shaw, 2016; Costello-Herrera, 2010; Palkki, 2015).

Finally, I would be sure to include forms of technology in the choral classroom whenever possible. This strategy *Responds to Diversity* in that it allows for multiple forms of assessment and multiple forms of success (Gay 2005). Some students are much more comfortable displaying their knowledge electronically rather than performing a solo. One student responded specifically to the comfort of this type of lesson, saying, “I do confidently like to…actively sing during class. Um, I do…I think it’s normal for people to get nervous. Um, I know I get nervous
sometimes and…you just gotta keep trying. I just think this class itself [was] fun...” During my initial study, I only allowed the students to use their devices during one of the eight CRP lessons I conducted. I would love to use technology more often, especially for music history unit wrap-ups.

All in all, I am like most high school teachers in that I am easily discouraged when my students do not seem to respond the way I would like them to. Whether conducting a research study or not, secondary education as a whole often expects teachers to tangibly prove their effect on students. Buzzwords in faculty meetings and professional development activities like measurable growth, meeting benchmarks, teaching to standards, formative assessments are frightening. They expect teachers to not only implement change in their students, but to also recognize it in them immediately. I treated this study the way I treat my everyday teaching: with the expectation that my strategies would work or that they would fail. I was sure that the students’ interpretations and critiques would indicate the success of my CRP attempts after a thorough analysis of the discussion transcripts and the survey responses.

I was initially very discouraged when so few students recognized the changes in my teaching and disappointed when fewer students reflected on their own cultures and identities. However, asking teenagers to reflect on a learning experience 30 seconds after teaching has its limitations. Few children have the ability to reflect and articulate openly and fully within the 10 minutes I allotted for discussion time. My students pulled out meaning in my teaching in unexpected areas. They responded to what most resonated with them in the moment. I hope that my students recall, reflect on, and benefit from some aspect of my teaching in the future, even if they did not mention it in their immediate critiques.
Reflections on Teacher Action Research

The research question asked: How can I utilize student interpretation and critique in order to empirically self-reflect on my choral teaching practice and its cultural relevance? I answered this question in terms of the “how.” It was not difficult to try new teaching strategies and simply take the time to ask the students what they thought. I scaffolded my lesson plans in the task-assess format encouraged by EdTPA. The two aspects of “student interpretation and critique” in this study—qualitative data via aloud discussion and quantitative data via electronic survey—have indeed shed light on my attempts to respond to my students’ cultures. This study sought to determine how my choir students could constructively assess my efforts as a CRP teacher.

Teacher action research studies attempt to integrate research and practice. Pine argues that when students become coresearchers, they have the opportunity to either validate the instructor’s findings or to present new ideas themselves (2008). I found this to be true in my case study. Students can easily give constructive feedback on lesson plans and curriculum to their teachers.

There are some changes I would make to my research methodology. First of all, I would reword my discussion prompts in a manner that hopefully encourages students to critique their own cultures’ reflections in my teaching rather than wording that steers them to think about connotations of faith and prayer inclusiveness. I worry that my discussion questions from Days 1 and 2 did too much guiding, so much so that students who do not identify as Catholic or even as “church goers” or “religious” started making critiques on the Catholic sound. For example, one student reflected,

As someone who doesn’t come a family that really goes to church, and as someone who’s not particularly that religious, I think I did kind of have, like, a stigma based off just not knowing that, um, just, traditional, like, religious music is kind of boring, just from, like, the maybe some things
that you might hear. But, I think it’s a good thing that I…that we sing both types of songs…

New discussion prompts could include inquiries like, “Which activities kept you actively involved during the lesson?” “What do you like or dislike about singing this style of music?” “Were you familiar with the genre before today’s class?” “What culture does this song make you think of?” “If you were not familiar with this style before this class, which activities help give you the confidence to sing it authentically?” “Did you feel like we were improving as a whole choir—as a team—at any point during the lesson?”

These new discussion prompts are different from my original ones. My Day 1 questions had the words *traditional, Catholic hymns, praise music, and honor [Mary]* in built into them. In hindsight, it makes a lot of sense that my students took a Catholic vs. non-Catholic stance in their initial responses. I allowed our environment to color my prompting. These new questions are less rooted in the actual song selection and more grounded in genre/style familiarity, comfortability, and confidence. The new prompts also guide students to think about the musical knowledge they bring to school with them while encouraging them to reflect on specific activities from the lesson plan. Most students arrive in the choral room with rich musical experiences (Shaw, 2016; Costello-Herrera, 2010; Palkki, 2015). Acknowledging them is crucial.

Similarly, I would adjust my methods for collecting quantitative data. While I would retain simple, concise questioning that requires a Likert scale ranking from one to five, I would avoid sending out electronic surveys. The response rate just was not high enough to be meaningful the first time around, and part of that is due to teenagers’ tendencies to ignore teacher e-mails. Rather, I could utilize an interactive, online audience participatory app such as
PollEverywhere. An app of this nature allows the teacher to pose a question on the board for the class and doubles as another self-reflective strategy that utilizes technology. Students use their devices to electronically and anonymously respond.

I would adjust some of the original questions from the survey that had loftier goals and vague implications, such as “Do you enjoy singing the song we worked on today?” and “Do you plan to continue singing after high school?” My original hypothesis, which came out of the literature on CRP, was not strongly supported by the data. I expected that the girls who ranked the songs and lesson activities low in terms of personal cultural meaning and who did not feel connected to the lessons during class discussion responses would also be the girls who did not expect to keep singing after high school. Surprisingly, there was no strong correlation. My students spoke freely on the reasons they planned or did not plan to continue singing after high school, but none of them spoke to the relationship between home/community music culture and school choir culture as a deciding factor.

Rather, I would stick to the prompts that ask about lesson strategies and activities. New questions could ask students to select their preferred learning mode (oral, aural, visual, kinesthetic, etc.) and then to rank the lesson plan’s ability to appeal that learning mode. For example, if the lesson focused on syncopated rhythms, I might poll students on their preference for listening to the rhythmic excerpt, clapping it, and seeing it written out on the board (notation). After integrating the new rhythms within the context of an entire piece, I could poll the students again on their performance confidence. Finally, I might ask the students to respond aloud with any songs they listen to outside of school that rely heavily on off-beat syncopation.
Teacher Action Research allows for empirical application of educational theory and philosophy. The need for action research studies that occur within the classroom, a living and breathing ecosystem, and that are carried out by an actual member of the ecosystem, is great. Factors as broad as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and factors as specific as student mood, level of maturity, and natural interest in the content area affecting the classroom culture as any given moment (Pine 2008). As much as the CRP literature makes it sound as though the theory is separate from the implementation and that the interventions are applicable to any situation, these factors make it impossible to apply strategies in a cookie-cutter manner. Many research studies apply this flawed transfer logic by utilizing outside researchers to test and posttest specific interventions across a student population.

Pine argues that only the teacher and the students are privy enough to the ins and outs of the ecosystem to implement real change and monitor growth. I found this to be true in my study, particularly in its slant towards faith/religion as the main contributor to my students’ perceptions of musical culture. My advice to any educator studying a specific theoretical approach to pedagogy is to test it, reflect, and test it again. If a scholar suggests certain strategies, adjust them to your content area, your students, and your ecosystem and try it out on in regular teaching situations. Do not take your own word for it. Once you reflect on the implementation, determine what you think went well and what failed, and then ask the students. They will be candid in their responses, and, if they are anything like my students, they will be thrilled to participate in a low-risk, evaluative manner.

My students earn fine arts credit toward their GPA and graduation, and ideally, begin a lifetime of singing in college, in a community choir, in church, or in any capacity after
graduation. Educators in all disciplines seek ways to engage and promote the success of their students as lifelong learners. I found that one approach to engaging my choir students was through culturally relevant pedagogy, “...a dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.467). Ladson-Billings and Gay, however, focus on underrepresented students, mostly minority and poor children, in their educational philosophy. This study showed me that while my marginalized students responded positively to my CRP teaching strategies, so did the rest of my students. It behooves teachers across all disciplines and from all levels of experience to teach with CRP in mind because it benefits all students.

Just as music education scholars warn against selecting repertoire that appears to be diverse and simply hoping for the best, Ladson-Billings argues that “accommodating student culture is insufficient” (1995). Literature choice is crucial, whether it be the way a situational geometry word problem is posed, the novels listed on a syllabus that supposedly represents American literature, or painters presented as “masters” in an art history text. But repertoire selection is not enough. Globally, it is every teacher’s responsibility to learn about the students sitting in the desks as if their background information, outside-of-school knowledge, and self-identities were going to be the grounds of a research study. Creating a sense of community in the classroom must involve promoting academic and cultural success simultaneously. Emotions, beliefs, values, and credibility must be a part of the discussion, along with factual information within the content area (1995). Explicitly representing and respecting the cultures and experiences of African American, Native American, Latina, and Asian American students not only recognizes their existing strengths and accomplishments, but also presents the strengths and
accomplishments as captial for the white students in the room (1995). Diverse curriculum is not synonymous with relevant or reflective curriculum.
APPENDIX A

CRP LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE AND SAMPLE RESEARCHER PLANS
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Choral Lesson Plan

Musical work(s) to be rehearsed: Alegria, Alegria, Alegria

Grade/Period: Le Ragazze (3rd period)
Grades 11-12

Materials/Equipment Needed: Sheet music, piano

CRP Standards Addressed (Ladson-Billings, 1995):
- Conception of Self/Others
- Conceptions of Knowledge
- Response to Diversity Through Instructional Delivery

CRP Objectives (Gay, 2005):
- Comprehensive: (ex. Expressing expectations in a collective manner that promotes academic and cultural excellence)
- Multidimensional: (ex. Examining emotions, beliefs, values, etc. to make instruction more reflective of ethnic diversity)
- Transformative: (ex. Explicitly respecting the cultures and experiences of minority students)

Procedure

I. Introduction (attention getter, opening activity)
   - In three groups of two, students will work on a word-for-word literal translation of the text
   - Each group will include either a native Spanish speaker or a Spanish student
   - Students will write in English words above the text, reminding them what they are singing about as they work through the piece
## II. Activities/Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time allocation</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Issue/Content</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 mins</td>
<td>mm.1-10</td>
<td>Percussive style</td>
<td>• Multiple learning modes—visual, aural, kinesthetic</td>
<td>• 5 out of 6 students will accurately fill in their desired beats on a black 6/8 staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>— Ask what types of percussion instruments we often hear during traditional Latin songs: [NCCAS respond]</td>
<td>• NCCAS [create, perform]</td>
<td>• 5 out of 6 students will accurately perform the rhythms (on the board) on their bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>— This song is in a quick 6/8. Thinking about the fast six-eight rhythm, experiment with different types of percussive rhythms: [NCCAS create &amp; perform]</td>
<td>• Have students put up some examples on the board: [visual, kinesthetic] [NCCAS create]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>— Play out the examples using clave for the tambourine and rubbed palms [kinesthetic] for the shakers: [NCCAS perform]</td>
<td>• [NCCAS perform]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td>mm.1-10</td>
<td>Rhythm execution</td>
<td>• Pull out the maraca shakers and tambourine, having students take turns adding in the percussion [kinesthetic]: [NCCAS perform]</td>
<td>• 5 out of 6 students will accurately transfer the rhythm patterns from their bodies to the instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Have students pick which rhythm patterns they like the best: [NCCAS respond]</td>
<td>• Teacher adds to piano accompaniment, allowing multiple students to try the instruments along with. Teacher will assess each student, ultimately deciding who will be responsible for those parts [kinesthetic]: [NCCAS perform]</td>
<td>• 4 out of 6 students will accurately perform the rhythm patterns on instruments while the pianist accompanies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## III. Closure

- Once students are chosen for the percussion parts, the ensemble will sing through mm.1-18 with piano accompaniment.
- Finally, percussionists will add their parts as a final layer. Ask the students if their new performance matches the style we’re going for.
- Let students know that one of our Spanish teachers, a native Puerto Rican, will be visiting our next rehearsal to help us with cultural authenticity.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Choral Lesson Plan

Musical work(s) to be rehearsed: Mary, Mary  
Grade/Period: La Trinita’ (3rd period)  
Grades 9-10

Materials/Equipment Needed: Sheet music, pitch pipe or piano

CRP Standards Addressed (Ladson-Billings, 1995):
- **Conception of Self/Others**: Allowing every student to feel like they are competent enough to sing out and lead a minute or two of the lesson, with students facing them, instead of from the risers with the director front and center, dictating.
- **Conceptions of Knowledge**: Not every song song about Mary is our traditional, Catholic “Ave Maria.” This pop, a cappella-style song is more accessible to my *Pitch Perfect* fans while still telling the Nativity story and revering the Mother of God. Musical elements of rhythm, syncopation, ostinato patterns, and three-part harmony are enforced for this beginning choir.
- **Response to Diversity Through Instructional Delivery**: This refrain comes back verbatim three times throughout the piece. You simply cannot stand still while performing this song. Opening up the floor to the students as to how to move and feel the message will add diversity, ownership, and legitimacy to their natural performance tendencies.

CRP Objectives (Gay, 2005):
- **Comprehensive** *(ex. Expressing expectations in a collective manner that promotes academic and cultural excellence)*: Teach ostinato patterns as a community in which each voice part (soprano I, soprano II, and alto) knows each vocal line. Responsibility is on the entire ensemble, not just the altos, for example, to master the walking bass pattern. Ultimately, the choir rises and falls together. Just as in the culture of an a cappella group, any member could hypothetically step in to cover another voice part if called upon.
- **Multidimensional** *(ex. Examining emotions, beliefs, values, etc. to make instruction more reflective of ethnic diversity)*: Discussion prompts ask what outside-of-school music experiences this song reminds the students of. What about this style of music makes it credible—as a religious song, as a part of the high school concert, as worthy of learning in general.
- **Transformative** *(ex. Explicitly respecting the cultures and experiences of minority students)*: After explaining that this song has little in common with the traditional, 4-part Latin hymn (generally with Latin refrains if mentioning Mary) from most of our school liturgies, opening up discussion about what other church traditions this particular song has more in common with. Explicitly focus on answers from minority students.

Procedure

I. Introduction *(attention getter, opening activity)* 2 mins
   - Remind choir of alto ostinato refrain, speaking in rhythm only. Call and response, by note (mm.1-9 on a loop).
   - Repeat with sop. II ostinato refrain (mm.18-25 on a loop).
   - Repeat with sop. I ostinato refrain (mm.10-17 on a loop).

II. Activities/Steps
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time allocation</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Issue/Concept</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5 mins          | rm. 1-9  | pitch, triad leaps  | -Mode (visual) outlined triad in solfege (S-M-S-D) using hand signs (aural, kinaesthetic)  
-Add the swung eighth note rhythm, still on syllables  
-Add lyrics and teach the rest of the line by rote  
-Have entire choir facing the alto section. Altos will lead them in their ostinato, while the teacher drops out [NCCAS perform] | -90% of students will independently outline the triad both on solfege and on words in rhythm |
| 5 mins          | rm. 18-25| pitch, chromaticism | -Mode (visual) S-D hand signs (aural, kinaesthetic)  
-Add lyrics for opening “Mary, Mary...”  
-Mode: D-R-M hand signs (aural, kinaesthetic) and add “baby rock” to these pitches  
-Ack for student volunteer for a way to show chromatic fall on “heavenly light” somewhere on the body (kinaesthetic) [NCCAS respond]  
-Sing through entire line with swung eighths  
-Have entire choir facing the second section. Seconds will lead them in their ostinato, while the teacher drops out [NCCAS perform]  
-Face the altas again to remind the class of their baseline | -90% of students will independently climb from D-M both on solfege and on words  
-When reviewing the alto baseline, altas will hold up fingers (1 to 5) as a peer assessment of how the firsts and seconds did. Will repeat until 93% are holding up 4 or 5 |
| 5 mins          | rm. 16-17| pitch, chromaticism | -Mode (visual) the difference between M-R and D-R using hand signs (aural, kinaesthetic)  
-Teach line by note, emphasizing the two different “baby” solfege spots  
-Make sure first sopranos are using whatever kinaesthetic motion the section created when the fall chromatically on “heavenly light”  
-Have entire choir facing the first section. Firsts will lead them in their ostinato, while the teacher drops out [NCCAS perform] | -90% of students will independently be able to sing the ascending and descending “baby” solfege spots.  
-When reviewing the first soprano ostinato, firsts will hold up fingers (1 to 5) as a peer assessment of how the firsts and seconds did. Will repeat until 90% are holding up 4 or 5 |

### II. Closure - 5 mins

- Have the entire choir rotating their attention around the risers so they don’t get bored, moving clockwise around the room. At all times, there is an entire section (alto, sop II, sop I) “leading,” facing their peers in other sections. This group is leading the rehearsal and making sure the whole choir knows their line. [NCCAS perform, respond]
- With all students back on the risers, facing the director, start attempting to layer the ostinatis.
  - Everyone on alto baseline. After a couple of runs, ask the firsts to drop out and layer their line on top.
  - Everyone on alto baseline. Ask the seconds to drop out and layer their line on top.
  - Everyone on alto baseline. Ask all sopranos to drop out and let the altos sing their solo.
  - Layer in the seconds, then the firsts. [NCCAS perform, respond]
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Choral Lesson Plan

Musical work(s) to be rehearsed: What You Gonna Call Yo’ Pretty Little Baby

Grade/Period: Bel Coro (4th period)
Grades 9-11

Materials/Equipment Needed: Sheet music, charged device, Sutori account

CRP Standards Addressed (Ladson-Billings, 1995):
- **Conception of Self/Others**: Allowing every student to feel like they are competent enough to sing out and lead a line or two of the traditional African American spiritual, whether or not they identify as African American or Afro-Latina.
- **Conceptions of Knowledge**: All students will work with a partner to research and become an “expert” on their specific aspect of music history. By the end of class, all students will be familiar with the timeline.
- **Response to Diversity Through Instructional Delivery**: We almost never use technology in the choral room. With the exception of music theory online quizzes and drills, the students do not use their devices in my class. For this lesson, they will dive into the historical aspect of performance using a mode of research that comes naturally to them. We will then apply their historical research to our performance of this piece.

CRP Objectives (Gay, 2005):
- **Comprehensive**: (ex. Expressing expectations in a collective manner that promotes academic and cultural excellence) The expectation that this song will be performed authentically, stylistically and emotionally, is expressed through the students’ own research presentations.
- **Multidimensional**: (ex. Examining emotions, beliefs, values, etc. to make instruction more reflective of ethnic diversity) What about this style of music makes it credible— as a religious song, as a part of the high school concert, as worthy of learning in general? Ask students what the call and response style of singing reminds them of.
- **Transformative**: (ex. Explicitly respecting the cultures and experiences of minority students) Why is it important to learn styles of Mary songs other than traditional Catholic 4-part hymns with Latin refrains? Focus on answers specifically from minority students.

Procedure

1. **Introduction (attention getter, introduction, opening activity)**
   - Make sure each student has a charged device.
   - Count off and divide students into groups of 2.
   - Explain that today we are exploring the history behind African American spirituals in order to better understand and more accurately perform Pretty Little Baby.
   - Have each group grab 1 paper strip, each with a different prompt.
   - Make sure each student is signed onto Sutori and working with the blank “African American Spirituals” timeline.

   **I. Activities/Steps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 mins</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>History review</td>
<td>Multiple learning modes—visual, auditory, kinesthetic</td>
<td>Teacher will be following along with student work, watching them fill in information on the Sutori timeline. 90% of students will fill in accurate information and cite a credible source within their entries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Chronological ordering</td>
<td>· Students will work with their partners to rearrange their timeline entries chronologically on the Sutori canvas (visual)</td>
<td>90% of entries will be accurately ordered chronologically. As a class, we will look for any errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td>whole class</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>· “Where do you see features of traditional spirituals within our version of this song? [NCAS respond] · What can we do with our style of performance to more accurately represent this genre? [NCAS respond and perform]</td>
<td>Students will accurately identify biblical motivation in the piece. Students will accurately identify call and response form.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**II. Closure**
- Sing through the piece and ask students for feedback on their authenticity.
APPENDIX B

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES
Survey 1

This survey is completely voluntary.
You may SKIP any question for any reason.

1. Please select your GRADE.
   *Mark only one oval.*
   - [ ] Class of ‘20
   - [ ] Class of ‘19
   - [ ] Class of ‘18

2. Please select your CHOIR (check all that apply).
   *Check all that apply.*
   - [ ] Bel Coro
   - [ ] La Trinita’
   - [ ] Gospel
   - [ ] A Cappella
   - [ ] Le Regazze

3. Please select your RACE (check all that apply).
   *Check all that apply.*
   - [ ] Asian or Pacific Islander
   - [ ] Black (Hispanic)
   - [ ] Black (non-Hispanic)
   - [ ] Native American
   - [ ] White (Hispanic)
   - [ ] White (non-Hispanic)
4. Which factors do YOU feel contribute to your culture (check all that apply)?
   Check all that apply.
   - Race/ethnicity
   - Food
   - Music
   - Clothing / Style of dress
   - Language / Style of speech
   - Hometown / neighborhood
   - Religion
   - Other: ____________________________

5. Is there a specific type of MUSIC that you consider a part of your culture?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No

6. Do you feel that there are other CHOIR STUDENTS who identify with the same culture as you do?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No

7. Do you ENJOY singing the song we worked on today?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No
   - Neutral

8. Is the song MEANINGFUL to you and your culture?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No
   - Neutral
9. Could you easily follow along with the LESSON PLAN of the day?
   Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4  5
   I was lost. □ □ □ □ □ I got it! No problem!

10. Do you feel confident in your SINGING ability today?
    Mark only one oval.

    1  2  3  4  5
    Too shy to sing. □ □ □ □ □ I was belting it out!

11. Do you feel confident in your ability to CONNECT with the cultural style of the song?
    Mark only one oval.

    1  2  3  4  5
    I don't relate to this song. □ □ □ □ □ I love singing in this style!

12. Are there any connections between what we sang today in SCHOOL and your musical interests OUTSIDE of school?
    Mark only one oval.

    1  2  3  4  5
    Strongly disagree. □ □ □ □ □ Strongly agree.
Survey 2

This survey is completely voluntary.
You may SKIP any question for any reason.

1. Please select your GRADE.
   *Mark only one oval.*
   - Class of '20
   - Class of '19
   - Class of '18

2. Please select your CHOIR (check all that apply).
   *Check all that apply.*
   - Bel Coro
   - La Trinita'
   - Gospel
   - A Cappella
   - Le Ragazze

3. Please select your RACE (check all that apply).
   *Check all that apply.*
   - Asian or Pacific Islander
   - Black (Hispanic)
   - Black (non-Hispanic)
   - Native American
   - White (Hispanic)
   - White (non-Hispanic)
4. Please describe your culture in a sentence or two.


5. Do you feel that your own CULTURAL MUSIC is missing from the Trinity choir program?
Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes
☐ No
6. Are the SONG SELECTIONS of the Trinity choir program diverse?
   Mark only one oval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

7. Are the song selections MEANINGFUL to you and your culture?
   Mark only one oval.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree.</td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Do you ENJOY singing the song we worked on today?
   Mark only one oval.

   | Yes | No |

9. Could you easily follow along with the lesson plan today?
   Mark only one oval.

<p>| I was lost. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I got it! No problem!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Are there any connections between what we sang today in SCHOOL and your musical interests OUTSIDE of school?
    Mark only one oval.

    | Yes | No |
11. Do you feel more COMFORTABLE or have more FUN in a specific choir as opposed to the others?  
Mark only one oval.  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  

12. If yes, explain your answer.  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  

13. Do you plan to participate in choir NEXT BLOCK?  
Mark only one oval.  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  

14. Do you plan to continue singing AFTER high school?  
Mark only one oval.  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  

15. If yes, make your best guess at HOW you’ll continue singing (check all that apply).  
Check all that apply.  
☐ Church choir  
☐ College choir  
☐ College a cappella group  
☐ College music major/ Private lessons  
☐ Community choir  
☐ Other: _____________________________
APPENDIX C

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION GUIDING PROMPTS
PHASE 1 DISCUSSION PROMPTS
1. Were you actively involved during the lesson, and did you feel confident enough to participate without being nervous or afraid?
2. We are used to traditional, Catholic “Ave Maria” type hymns at Trinity. What do you like or dislike about singing other styles of music that honor her?
3. Are there any negative stigmas associated with singing traditional Catholic hymns? How about negative stigmas associated with singing OTHER types of praise music?
4. What culture does it make you think of? This can be an ethnicity, race, age group, church parish, radio station, artist, or band who this song reminds you of?
5. Did you feel like you were working towards improvement on this song more as an individual or as a part of the group? Do you feel like choir is a team?
6. Do you enjoy singing this song? Why or why not?

PHASE 2 DISCUSSION PROMPTS
1. What makes you fan of a certain song?
2. What culture does it make you think of? This can be an ethnicity, race, age group, church parish, radio station, artist, or band who this song reminds you of?
3. Do you ever think, “Wow, I’m really not into this one song we’re doing.” What makes you disconnect with a certain song?
4. Do you prefer to sing in styles that were already familiar to you?
5. Are you interested in singing after high school is over? Be honest!
APPENDIX D

SUTORI TIMELINE
African American Spirituals

Spirituals served as a way to express the community’s new faith, as well as its sorrows and hopes when they were enslaved. Spirituals are typically sung in a call and response form, with a leader improvising a line of text and a chorus of singers providing a solid refrain in unison. The vocal style abounded in freedom alludes, turns and rhythms that were challenging for early publishers of spirituals to document accurately.

Many spirituals, known as “sorrow songs,” are intense, slow and melancholy; they also describe the slaves’ struggles and identification of the suffering of Jesus Christ. Other spirituals are more joyful. Known as “jubilee,” or “camp meeting songs,” they are fast, rhythmic and often syncopated.

(https://www.loc.gov/item/has.200197495/)

Spirituals were sung in forms of prayer and protest. African-American slaves believed in God and were Christians. Even though their lives were terrible as slaves, they remained hopeful. The slaves would sing songs in the fields to take their minds off the world around them. These songs would also have multiple symbolic meanings. The slaves would sing these songs to others slaves, without the slave owners understanding them. The secret messages would notify them about secret meetings at night. These meetings would be a secret to only them and not the slave owners. They also included codelles wording to escape slavery. Such as the song “Go Down Moses” which Harriet Tubman used to tell slaves to escape North.


(https://www.loc.gov/item/has.200197495/)

Africans built their religious and secular rituals, festivals, and social gatherings on the foundations of song, dances, and rhythms they invented to cope with and express their New World realities. When slave “masters” and overseers in the United States discovered that drums could be used as a secret means of communication.


Fisk Jubilee Singers circa 1879
You may have heard of the Von Trapp family, from the movie "The Sound Of Music". There were ten Von Trapp children who all sang and got help on how to sing again with the help of Maria who cared for the children at the time. She was very helpful and loving towards them. Maria soon became their stepmother who cared for them alongside their father. https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2005/winter/von-trapps.html

What you gonna call your pretty little baby was sung by the Von Trapp Children in 2003. https://www.bing.com/search?q=the+von+trapp+b band&filters=rf%3a%22the+von+trapp+band%22+sid%3a%223ef0ed5fe72a-8423-6c80-e36d1f9e437%22&FORM=SNAPST

Contemporary Influences

This song is called Say It Loud. This is an example of a call and response song.

The song "Pretty Little Baby" is about the time of Jesus' birth otherwise known as the Nativity story. What were people going to call him. Were they going to call him Jesus or Emmanuel. He was born of the virgin Mary, in Bethlehem In a Manger. People were probably wondering what Mary was going to call him since he is the son of God.

Slaves would play instruments and sing their spiritual songs to help them remain happy and hopeful.

Call and response is a form of a song with the communication between a speaker and an audience where the speaker "calls" and the listener replies. Spirituals are apart of that song form call and response, but spirituals are Christian songs created by African Americans slaves.
Rap is the most complex and influential form of hip-hop culture, combining elements of the African American musical tradition (blues, jazz, and soul) with Caribbean calypso, dub, and dance-hall reggae. Source: http://lcpgalegroup.com

Jazz was born in New Orleans about 100 years ago, but its roots can be found in the musical traditions of both Africa and Europe. Some people say that jazz is a union of African and European music. From African music, jazz got its rhythm and "feel." Source: http://www.jazzinamerica.org/LessonPlan/5/12/46

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" was probably first sung by black American slaves, which gives the image of the chariot, "coming for to carry me home" a rather gruesome cast. It is a plea for escape from the miserable human exshistence, a plea to be transported "home," to heaven, essentially, a plea for death. Source: http://phish.net/song/swing-low-sweet-chariot/history

Wade in the water: Because many slaves knew the secret meanings of these songs, they could be used to signal many things. For example, Harriet Tubman used the song "Wade in the Water" to tell escaping slaves to get off the trail and into the water to make sure the dogs slave catchers used couldn't sniff out their trail. Source: http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/music2.cfm
Gary Clark Jr - Come Together (Official Music Video) [From The Justice League Movie Soundtrack]

Come Together is a part of the modern day Blues, Blues having roots in Africa, compared to Tenskaft, Desert Blues seems to have mixed with many of the popular American genres, such as techno and maybe even rock.

Tenere Wer Tat Zincheh - Tenskaft
This song is part of a genre called Desert Blues, as you listen you can hear the iconic bass guitar and lead guitar that is very common with most of the songs in the United States. It gives a very old Wild West kind of feel and is very laid back.

The bass and lead guitar are both very apparent in these songs.

Our groups research was about trying to explore other genres of music that came out of this style of African American traditional singing. One of the genres that we found was rhythm and blues (R&B) and also Gospel music. “Rhythm & Blues (abbreviated R&B) is a term used to describe the blues-Influenced form of music which has been predominantly performed by African-Americans since the late 1930’s.” from ThoughtCo.

Desert blues refers to the music of the Mandinka and related nomad groups of the Sahara, who perform a style of music considered the root of the American Blues genre.
Gospel music began to rise in the mid 1900's from African American culture.
Source: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/African_American_music
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Theoni Richardson was born and raised in Oak Park, a western suburb of Chicago. She earned a Bachelor of Music Education from Illinois Wesleyan University and a Professional Educator License to teach K-12 music and 9-12 English in Illinois. She has been teaching high school chorus for three years in the western suburbs. Working with teenagers of the Chicagoland area developed her passion for culturally relevant teaching, especially through music. Richardson is an aspiring teacher and life-long learner of music, culture, and communication.